

# **New Skills for New Futures Higher Education Guidance and Counselling Services in Belgium (French Community)**

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FEDORA Project

New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education in the European Union

With the support of  
the Commission of the European Communities  
under the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme



**New Skills for New Futures  
Higher Education Guidance and Counselling Services  
in  
Belgium (French Community)**

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**A country report of a study on  
"New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education"  
carried out under the auspices of FEDORA,  
with the support of the Commission of the European Communities  
under the LEONARDO DA VINCI programme**

1998

This report is published and distributed by the European Forum for Student Guidance / Forum  
Européen de l'Orientation Académique (FEDORA)

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## FOREWORD

This country report is part of larger study on "New Skills for Vocational Guidance in Higher Education". The study has been carried out under the auspices of the European Forum for Student Guidance - Forum Européen de l'Orientation Académique (FEDORA). It has been funded by the European Commission as part of its LEONARDO DA VINCI programme.

FEDORA provides a platform for counsellors and advisers in higher education to meet and exchange their experiences. Its activities have enabled practitioners to gain insight into the wide range of guidance methods and activities in Europe, and to benefit from the richness of this diversity.

In particular, the FEDORA Summer Schools have provided opportunities for practitioners to learn from each other's experience, and to relate this experience to recent theoretical developments. The Summer Schools revealed the strong demand for more systematic training in this field, and the potential benefits of responding to this demand at a European rather than purely national level. It was felt, however, that before planning any initiatives of this kind, a clearer map was needed of guidance and counselling services in higher education in Europe, and of current training provision for practitioners. A proposal for the study was presented to the European Commission, and the Commission agreed to fund it under its LEONARDO programme.

The study is of wide significance. For the first time, a comprehensive analysis is available of higher education guidance and counselling services across the whole of the European Union. In several cases, the study has provided the first such analysis even at national level. Because it is based on a common structure and methodology, the study also enables practices in each country to be contrasted with the others.

This report, together with the 15 other national reports on all Member States of the European Union and the synthesis report written by A.G. Watts and R. Van Esbroeck, is an important one both for FEDORA and for guidance and counselling in higher education in Europe.

This resource will be invaluable for international and national policy-makers, for higher education managers, and for guidance and counselling practitioners, as well as for employers in planning their higher education recruitment links. In particular, it enables the strengths and weaknesses of the different national systems to be identified, and is a powerful source of ideas on how the services in each country might be improved. It will also give clearer direction to the work of the European Commission, FEDORA and other European bodies in supporting such development.

Joachim Klaus  
President, FEDORA



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## Acknowledgements

We wish first and foremost to express our thanks to Raoul Van Esbroeck. By providing pertinent comments, patient explanations and by being available and giving freely of his time he made a substantial contribution to ensuring that this report conformed to the format imposed by the project, while remaining faithful to the guidance process in the French-speaking part of Belgium.

We also wish to thank Jean-Paul Broonen and Annick Messian for their contribution to certain parts of the report and their valuable comments.

We wish to thank the members of the CID for the moral support they provided throughout the work. Particular thanks go to Ms Filon, the translator, who displayed professionalism and accuracy in this difficult subject. Throughout the two month period we appreciated her availability and personal commitment in working to meet existing deadlines.

However, we may not forget Tony Watts, who corrected the draft of this text conscientiously and with great precision.

## Preface

This report is a contribution to a joint European project. Its methodology is based on a uniform pattern in order to facilitate cross-national comparisons and to provide the basis for the Fedora synthesis report on "New skills for vocational guidance in higher education" in Europe.

The report is based on documents or reports emanating from universities, *hautes écoles* (non-university institutions of higher education), specialised guidance services, public services and non-profit organisations.

It is also based on the author's experience and on contacts established with guidance professionals.

Throughout the work, we have sought to give an accurate description of the present situation in French-speaking Belgium despite the fact that there is no homogenous, official structure covering services in all the universities and *hautes écoles*.

A further difficulty lies in deciding on the most appropriate translation for the terms in use in Belgium, which reflect differences in culture, history, and the approach to education (such as *enseignement libre, orientation, conseiller à l'information, projet de vie, éducation au choix*) that vary from country to country and do not necessarily correspond to the terms used in English.

That is why French terms have regularly been included throughout the text and in the tables.

Chantal Wouters  
Directeur du CID - UCL

## 1. Summary

This report represents the contribution of the French Community of Belgium to the Fedora (Forum Européen de l'Orientation Académique) project on "New skills for vocational guidance in higher education", funded by the European Commission under the Leonardo programme. Its aims are :

1. To provide an up-to-date overview of the current structure of guidance and counselling services within higher education, the roles of those who work in these services and the training for such roles.
2. To identify the extent to which training provision exists within the European Union to equip those in guidance and counselling roles in higher education with the new skills they require to meet the changing needs of an increasingly diverse student body, within a European labour market.
3. To provide a basepoint for exploring the extent to which postgraduate and post-experience training modules might be made available across Europe, possibly leading to a European Master's degree in guidance and counselling in higher education.

It is important to keep in mind that this survey concentrates on « guidance and counselling services ». Therefore the other traditional student welfare facilities (financial aid, housing, medical support) are not included.

In each EU Member-State, a similar country-study has been prepared, based on a common structure and methodology. This approach will increase the comparability of the national reports and facilitate the writing of a coherent synthesis report.

In section 2, the main guidance and counselling services and systems in higher education will be discussed, covering educational and/or vocational and/or personal guidance, with special attention to learner support.

To help international readers to get a better insight in the why's and how's of the guidance system in Belgium (French Community), a review of the general system of education and the some recent developments in this system are included.

Section 3 gives, for each service/system listed in section 2, the main occupational roles, the number of people occupying these roles (when it was possible to identify them), and the focus of the roles. For each occupational role, a detailed analysis is provided of the tasks performed. Attention is also given to changes in the tasks.

A more in-depth analysis is offered for three occupational roles : information advisor, guidance counsellor and careers director. These roles were chosen because of their importance in the guidance system.



For each occupational role, the nature of training provided is analysed in section 4. This section is rather short, since guidance education and training is not well developed in Belgium.

The conclusions in section 5 indicate that educational guidance, particularly learner support, is well developed in most universities and *hautes écoles*.

Educational and vocational guidance have still to be developed, especially concerning advice, counselling and careers support, as part of preventing failure and contributing to the accomplishment of individuals and their integration in society.

A new approach to the guidance system analysis is proposed, based on student demand and the means brought into play in responding to this demand.

## 2. Structures

### Structures of education in Belgium, French Community

#### 2.1. The general organisation of education in Belgium

##### Three Communities

Authority is divided between the Federal State, the Communities (French-language, Dutch-language and German-language), the Regions, the Provinces and the "Communes".

Essentially, **education** forms part of the subject matters which come under the responsibility of the French, Flemish and German **Communities**.

The following subject matters continue to be the responsibility of the Federal State:

1. the determination of the beginning and the end of mandatory schooling (until the age of 18)
2. minimum standards for the granting of diplomas (M.B. 17/2/94 - Constitution coordonnée).

##### Three languages

Primary, secondary and non-university higher education lasting 3 years takes place in the **language of the region**, i.e. in French in the French Community, in Dutch in the Flemish Community, in one or the other of these two languages in the Region of Brussels, and in German in the German Community. Non-university higher education (lasting four or five years) and university education take place in French or Dutch. Certain courses are taught in English.

##### Three networks

Three networks have been developed among the teaching institutions:

1. a network of "official" institutions, set up and managed by each **Community**;
2. a network of "official" institutions, set up and managed by **the Provinces or the "Communes"**;
3. a network of independent (**libre**) institutions, managed by an organising authority (*pouvoir organisateur*).

All three networks are subsidised by the French, Flemish or German Community, each within their Community.



### Equivalence of the diplomas

Irrespective of the organizing authority at the head of an institution (whether it be Community, Province, "Commune", or independent (*libre*))<sup>1</sup>, all diplomas are equally valid provided they are granted in accordance with the law by institutions organised or subsidised by one of the Communities.

## 2.2. The organisation of higher education in the French Community of Belgium

Since the seventies the Belgian educational system has aimed to provide the majority of the population with access to secondary schooling and higher education.

In this context a "renovated" type of secondary education was introduced in the French-language part of the country. This was progressively extended to the majority of institutions. The objective was to develop the individual potential of each pupil based on a wide choice of optional subjects and thus to enable all pupils to progress as far as possible and to successfully complete their secondary education by the time they come of age.

This same trend led to greater democracy in higher education, which progressively became an "open" type of higher education, i.e. accessible to anyone who has been awarded the required certificate at the end of their secondary education (irrespective of the results achieved).

In Belgium, "open" higher education means that 50% of the school leaving population goes on to higher education, the numbers being equally distributed between non-university institutions (either 3-year courses or 4/5-year courses) and universities.

Higher education comprises three types of education :

### **2.2.1. Non-university higher education consisting of a three-year full-time**

**course** (day course) leading to the diploma of *graduat* or *régendat*. This consists of one cycle only and aims to provide vocational training through theoretical courses on the subject being studied and on closely related areas (knowledge), practical work experience (skills) and the acquisition of the attitudes and behaviour appropriate to the profession (behaviour).

Approximately 80 such three-year courses exist; they are mainly centred on the following seven subject areas: economics, social sciences, paramedical, technology and science, agriculture, teaching, and the arts.

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<sup>1</sup>Over half the primary and secondary schools in the French Community are headed by an organisational authority that is independent of the French Community but recognised by the latter.

**2.2.2. Non-university higher education consisting of a four- or five-year full-time course**, comprising two cycles, of which the first lasts two years and leads to the title of *candidat* and the second lasts two or three years and leads to the title of *licencié* or *ingénieur*.

Five different courses of study lead to this type of degree: architecture, business studies, applied communications, industrial engineering, interpreting-translating.

During the first two years, this type of education aims to provide a theoretical foundation that is more broad-based than that offered in the three-year courses. During the second cycle, there is increased specialisation and the objective is to acquire the necessary skills and attitudes. Most courses of this type also include practical training periods.

These courses of study are legally recognized as being equivalent to "university level".

Some courses of study included in non-university higher education (both 3 and 4/5 years) take place as evening courses, and are organised along different lines.

### **The setting up of *hautes écoles***

An important structural change took place in 1996 with regard to schools belonging to both types of non-university higher education. The main objective was to achieve economies of scale but also to reorganise the administrative, geographical and educational basis of higher education. As a result, 107 schools were reorganised to form 30 *hautes écoles*. Higher education in the field of the arts have not yet carried out this type of restructuring.

This restructuring is likely to bring about far-reaching changes which will have considerable implications for guidance. It will allow pooling of financial resources belonging to the institutions that participate in each *haute école*, formulation of a common guidance policy, closer coordination of work and the carrying out of new projects.

**2.2.3. University education.** The first degree is awarded after two cycles: a first cycle lasting two or three years -*candidature*- and a second cycle lasting two, three or four years, devoted to a *licence* or *ingénieurat*.<sup>2</sup> A university education encourages learning in order to provide students with wide-ranging knowledge of the subject being studied, but also of related fields, thus enabling students to develop a capacity for analysis and reflection as well as exercising their critical faculties in the area they have chosen to study.

University teaching is closely related to research activities, which constitute one of the fundamental tasks of universities. The distinctive feature of university studies is thus that they develop students' capacity for analysis, conceptualization, innovation and research.

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<sup>2</sup>Two degrees lead to a different title: the course of study in pharmacy leads to the title of Pharmacist (*Pharmacien*); the course of study in medicine and veterinary medicine leads to the title Medical Doctor and Veterinary Medicine (*Docteur en médecine et Docteur en médecine vétérinaire*).



There are 6 universities and 3 Faculties in the french-language part of Belgium<sup>3</sup>:

3 complete universities (which offer degrees in all areas of university education : Université catholique de Louvain (UCL :19,659 students), Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB : 17,059 students) and Université de Liège (ULG :13,027 students);

3 partial universities (which offer only a limited number of courses of study or only certain first cycles (*candidatures*): Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix à Namur (FUNDP : 4,221 students), Université de Mons-Hainaut (UMH : 2,522 students), Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis (FUSL : 1,252 students);

3 independent Faculties : Facultés Universitaires Catholiques de Mons (FUCAM : 1,347 students), Faculté Polytechnique de Mons (F.P. Mons : 945 students) and Faculté Universitaire des Sciences Agronomiques de Gembloux (FSA Gx :1,022 students).

The following networks exist at university level:

- 5 independent universities (*universités libres*): Université catholique de Louvain, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix à Namur, Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis and Facultés Universitaires Catholiques de Mons;
- 4 universities belonging to the french Community : Université de Liège, Université de Mons-Hainaut, Faculté Polytechnique de Mons, Faculté Universitaire des Sciences Agronomiques de Gembloux.

### 2.3. Some figures<sup>4</sup>

- Population figures in the French Community : 4,121,731<sup>5</sup>
- Number of students registered in 1994-95 as being in higher education

Full-time non-university higher education	73,359
Evening course higher education	20,142
University education	62,300

- Number of foreign students in university education

13,437 (21%) total

5,732 students from European Union

7,705 students from outside European Union

- Overall percentage of young persons in full-time education

At 18, 59% of young persons are in secondary school and 30% in higher education. Overall percentage of young persons in full-time education: 89%.

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<sup>3</sup>source : CREF.

<sup>4</sup> Source : Tableau de Bord de l'enseignement, indicateur statistiques, n°1, 1996. Communauté française de Belgique.

<sup>5</sup> The population figure is made up of 3.312.888 inhabitants in Wallonia and 85% of the 951.580 strong population of Brussels (no population statistics are available on a language basis). The German-speaking Community (68.961 inhabitants) is not included in these figures

At 19, 35% of young persons are in secondary school and 42% in higher education. Overall percentage of young persons in full-time education: 77%.

At 20, 17% of young persons are in secondary school and 42% in higher education. Overall percentage of young persons in full-time education: 59%

## **2.4. Financial aspects**

### **Fees**

In Belgium, fees charged by non-university institutions of higher education vary from 125 to 500 euros per academic year.

University fees for one year's study amount to 650 euros.

The above figures are full fees, which are substantially reduced for students who receive a grant.

### **Funding of institutions of higher education**

Funding of higher education in schools and universities is the responsibility of the French Community, which fixes the amount due on the basis of the number of registered students.

In a society where the non-profit sector is governed by the rules applying to a market economy, this situation has a certain influence on the way in which higher education institutions disseminate information relating both to their programmes of study and to the academic and living environment they offer.

## **2.5. Access to higher education**

At present, access to the three types of higher education requires students to obtain the certificate of secondary school (*Certificat d'Etudes Secondaires Supérieures - CESS*), with the exception of certain courses of study where access is governed by special requirements.

Students may freely choose at which institution they wish to study.

From a purely administrative point of view, access to higher education is therefore wide open. Entry is not selective (with the exception of certain courses such as civil engineering and some arts courses). Choosing the right type of higher education is thus a matter for each individual, and a successful choice rests on the capacity of each individual to take the right personal steps in planning the future and on the quality of analysis and advice provided by those seeking to clarify his/her choice.

It should be pointed out that contrary to the situation in many other countries, students are allowed to enroll in universities and *hautes écoles* until October, i.e. after the beginning of the academic year. As a result, pupils in secondary school often put off their decision until the last moment.



These aspects of our system of education constitute its variety and its value in terms of respecting egalitarian principles. On the other hand, this system is more likely to entail a wrong initial choice and thus produces a high failure rate, especially during the first year of higher education. That is why issues relating to educational and vocational guidance, learning to make choices during secondary education, are now more topical than ever before.

## **2.a. Structures of guidance systems before, during and after studies in university and in the *hautes écoles***

In the French-language part of Belgium, instructions produced by the Ministry on guidance do exist for secondary schools; for higher education they are scarce, so this leaves the *hautes écoles* and universities free to determine, in accordance with their respective policies, the tasks they wish to perform and to set up the relative services to carry out such tasks.

This absence of an overall policy in this area has also led to a range of services being set up in the French Community; these differ in terms of names, objectives, degree of specialisation, level of professionalism, funding sources and coverage.

In the French Community the successful completion of higher education depends largely on whether the right choice was made at the end of secondary school. Since no selection is operated before entry, the role of the information and counselling services is critical in preventing wrong choices and failure during higher education. For this reason a limited number of services outside the higher education institutions, which are strongly involved in working with students in higher education, are also included in the survey.

### **2.a.1. Terminology and translation**

#### **Terminology**

Before going any further, it may be useful to specify the meaning of the French term "*orientation*" and its use in the French-speaking part of Belgium. The terms "guidance and counselling" are not yet widely used in the French Community and the literal English translation of "*orientation*" and "*conseil*" does not cover what is actually undertaken in the French Community.

In its wider meaning, the term "*orientation*" covers the process whereby an individual seeks to define his/her objectives and the choice of a course of study or occupation that suits him/her. The process of "*orientation*" takes place throughout secondary and higher education and is based on a number of components :

- an awareness of the socio-economic framework into which the individual will be integrated in adult life;
- knowledge of existing occupations;
- knowledge of the world of higher education;



- self-knowledge: aptitudes, interests, values ...

During the course of this process an individual may meet a number of different persons including: parents, family, friends, teachers in secondary schools, counsellors in PMS centres, information advisors in information and documentation centres, counsellors in educational and vocational guidance centres, etc.

The present confusion over the use of the word "*orientation*" stems from the fact that this word is used to describe both of the following:

- a process that is limited to an individual (wider meaning)
- and a psychological consultation (*la consultation d'orientation*) which uses specific techniques in order to provide educational and vocational guidance (restricted meaning).

### Translation

• *Orientation*: in specialised dictionaries this word is translated by "guidance", which does not entirely correspond to its meaning in a French-speaking context since "guidance" relates to any type of support, whether it be choice of studies, choice of profession, or educational or psychological assistance. In order to remain close to reality, in this report the term "orientation" will be translated by "educational and vocational guidance".

• *Conseiller à l'information*: in this occupational role, "*conseil*" describes an activity without specifying the type of advice. In English "counselling" commonly refers to a guidance activity in which a more psychological oriented approach is essential. The "*conseiller à l'information*" is involved in the process of educational and vocational guidance, but does not use the sort of techniques used by psychologists. *Conseiller à l'information* would be called an educational and vocational advisor. In order to shorten it, the term "information advisor" will be used.

• The *psychologue d'orientation*, taken into account the activities as assessed in the French Community, will be referred to as "educational and vocational counsellor". In order to shorten it, the term "guidance counsellor" will be used.

## **2.a.2. Preparing for higher education in secondary school**

### Secondary schools

Secondary school lasts 6 years and covers pupils between the ages of 12 to 18. Preparation varies according to the type of schooling. After the initial two years of secondary school, during which all pupils follow the same course of study, the following four years are organised along two separate strands:

- general and scientific humanities, called transition section (*section de transition*), which prepares pupils for higher education;
- professional and technical humanities, leading to a *certificat de qualification*, without excluding access to higher education.

### The PMS counselling centres - (*centres psycho-médico-sociaux*)

All secondary schools are linked to a PMS centre whose job it is to help all pupils to make the most of their potential and thus to promote their successful integration into the work place. This task involves provision of information about programmes of study and occupations, choice of an occupation, choice of a course of study, success in school, the maturing of vocational choices, personal and family-related problems, handicaps and learning disabilities and education on health matters.

#### Staff<sup>6</sup>

Staff in the PMS centres include university-trained psychologists, social workers, psychological assistants and nurses.

Number of PMS centres : 165

Number of guidance workers : 1,260

Number of pupils covered : 913,248 pupils

Student/guidance worker ratio: 1 guidance worker to 725 pupils.

Additional information on the PMS centres in relation to their activities and the occupational roles can be found in the CEDEFOP and E.U. surveys (Watts, 1992; Watts et al, 1994).

#### **Trends**

- The Ministry for Education has launched a reform of the secondary education system. This reform is at present analysing and reviewing the final skills (*compétences terminales*) that need to be mastered by the end of secondary school.
- During the last two years of secondary school, each school is allowed to devote the equivalent of two weeks over this entire two-year period to activities designed to assist pupils in reaching a decision concerning their future occupation and the consequent choice of studies. The importance at present being given to information advice and counselling is due to a greater awareness of the gap that now exists in this area in secondary schools.
- The Federation of catholic secondary schools (*fédération de l'enseignement secondaire catholique*) regularly sets up relevant training for teachers active in the last two years of secondary school to give support to pupils during their process of defining a personal project and in choosing the form of higher education they wish to pursue.
- Some universities organise round table discussions between secondary schools and university teachers in order for both sides to gain a better perception of their respective expectations. As a result, possible steps to improve the transition between these two levels of teaching are under review, with the aim of achieving a substantial increase in pass rates during the first year of higher education.

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<sup>6</sup>Figures referring to 1996. Source: Fédération des centres PMS libres, 18 rue P. Baucq, 1040 Brussels.



### **2.a.3. Guidance at entry and during higher education**

#### **Educational & vocational guidance**

A process of educational and vocational guidance that is well perceived by the client and well thought out constitutes the corner-stone of success, both during higher education and in an individual's professional life. It forms an essential part of an educational system which does not restrict access to higher education, but allows all holders of a school-leaving certificate to enter higher education without going through a process of selection or imposing a *numerus clausus*. That is why it has an important place, and is present in the current political debate, which centres on providing everyone with the best possible conditions for success.

The main actors in educational and vocational guidance in higher education are the information advisors (*conseillers à l'information*) and the guidance counsellors (*psychologues d'orientation*).

Their activities cover both secondary school pupils and students already in higher education.

The purpose of information advice is to :

- make individuals aware of the factors involved in choosing a course of study;
- provide access to all data relating to courses of study, professions and the relevant socio-economic context, in order to promote the progressive maturing of a personal choice through an active and critical search for information.

Information professionals are advisors who provide support to individuals searching for information with a view to planning their future studies and occupation.

Information can be found in certain locations : information centres linked to universities, providers of information such as PMS information centre (CEDIEP), information centres out of higher education structures (SIEP, Carrefour-formation ), ...

Information can also be found at certain times : open-door events, student fairs, career promotion events (Rotary Club)...

Information can be made available through various media : interviews, written documents, audiovisual documents, CD-Roms.

The term vocational and educational counselling refers to the provision of support to a student engaged in

- trying to recognise who he/she is, what he/she has and what he/she aspires to;
- making his/her decision and undertaking the necessary steps to carry it out.

Psychologists providing educational and vocational counselling (*psychologues d'orientation*) help individuals to plan their future while taking into account their underlying aspirations and their personal capacities.

They do not direct individuals on what to do but rather help them to guide themselves, in some cases using evaluation techniques.

Specialists in educational and vocational counselling are usually psychologists with a university degree.

Traditionally educational and vocational counselling takes place in the following locations : PMS centres, guidance centres in universities, certain other guidance centres, private sector professionals or non-profit organisations.

The different media used in educational and vocational counselling are essentially interviews, sometimes accompanied by lists of a candidate's interests and sometimes by computerised or non-computerised tests (aptitude, learning styles).

### **Psychological support**

As part of the personal guidance and counselling, universities offer specialist psychological support to students experiencing difficulties, especially if they have personal or relational problems, are distressed or depressed, and in cases of conflict, stress, insomnia and study-related difficulties.

### **Learner support**

Learner support, an activity within educational guidance, is taken to mean the study of the structures to promote acquisition of knowledge, skills and behaviours in university and non-university higher education.

One particular phenomenon has led to "learner support" being at present a highly topical subject in French-speaking Belgium,<sup>7</sup> i.e. a failure rate of approximately 60% during the first year of higher education, or even more, especially in universities.

This rate has remained virtually stationary for the last 20 years, with a slight tendency towards a worsening of the situation. However, nowadays failure seems less acceptable. There are probably three major reasons for this:

- In the current socio-economic crisis, higher education is seen as a chance to find a job.

Socially speaking, failure has therefore become more intolerable.

- New rules are in operation concerning the repetition of a year of study, with a reduction in the number of times a student can take an exam in order to successfully complete a year's study.

This makes failure individually speaking more intolerable.

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<sup>7</sup>This text is based on extracts from the following article : " Les dispositifs d'accompagnement pédagogique au premier cycle " Marc Romainville et Bernadette Noël. Gestion de l'enseignement supérieur. Facultés universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix à Namur.



- Failure entails a high financial cost. In view of the number of students now concerned (76,178 students in higher education in 1975-76, 133,178 students in 1993-94<sup>8</sup>), failure has become economically intolerable.

Moreover, many countries wish to increase the level of education of their population. Turning out a qualified work-force contributes to ensuring the competitiveness and growth of a nation's economy.

Failure in the first year of higher education is at present being analysed and is the subject of numerous discussions. Universities have started to examine the causes and possible solutions to this situation.

The "Conseil de l'éducation et de la formation"<sup>9</sup> stated that "in order to acquire knowledge, students need to receive learner support at a personal level and/or in small groups. At present, this approach is insufficiently applied and is likely to be difficult to implement due to lack of necessary resources.

Although teaching is an integral part of the job of lecturer-researcher in the university system, the teaching component is often considered less important than the research component.

"It is therefore necessary to propose ways and means to make up for the deficiencies and to make every effort to ensure that the desire to improve the quality of teaching really does take shape within the overall policy of the *hautes écoles* and universities"<sup>10</sup>.

Although questions are being asked concerning a revision of the entire system of university education, there are also repercussions upstream affecting secondary education. Possible deficiencies at entry into higher education are linked to educational methods, which vary according to the schools, and the teaching methods applied. This results in the fact that the student levels at entry into higher education are very uneven.

#### **2.a.4. Transition towards a career : the provision of career support**

The provision of career support to final-year students or recent graduates is not specifically mentioned as belonging to tasks attributed to the *hautes écoles* and universities.

This state of affairs has not prevented institutions of higher education, Faculties or universities from providing career support nor from defining the role of universities in this connection, as will be seen hereafter.<sup>11</sup>

Although career support is first and foremost a matter for career centres, it is also a matter of more general concern. It forms an integral part of the role of higher education in fulfilling two of their fundamental tasks: provision of education and providing a service to society.

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<sup>8</sup> *Statistiques rapides*. Service des Statistiques. Communauté française de Belgique. 1994-95.

<sup>9</sup> CEF.

<sup>10</sup> CEF.

<sup>11</sup> Extract from the «Rapport du Réseau des services d'emploi».

On the one hand, higher education must encourage students to establish and carry out their personal plan, for which, however, they assume full responsibility. The accent is on independence: the methodological support provided to students progressively enables them to associate plans for a future career with their education and their subsequent search for a job.

On the other hand, a contribution must be made towards developing contacts and relationships between universities and the socio-economic partners, with whom graduates from higher education will find employment. The latter are their institution's ambassadors : they contribute to its reputation and provide privileged contacts in attempting to define the requirements and the expectations of their professional environment.

This dual approach responds to the permanent desire to assess the quality of any institution of renown.

Careers centres (*les services d'emploi*) have developed unevenly in the various universities. In some *hautes écoles*, they are in evidence on account of the privileged links that exist between certain schools and the labour market as a result of the organisation of practical training periods and their supervision.

It should be noted that in Belgium use of careers services is mainly a matter for students to pursue. Academic staff generally take little part in this matter and rarely talk to students about matters relating to the workplace. This is one of the reasons why students often wait too long before starting to think about a future career.

### **2.a.5. Conclusions**

Three characteristics and one objective should be borne in mind in connection with the systems and structures to provide support to students (*structures d'accompagnement*) before, during and after higher education.

#### **3 characteristics**

- the diversity resulting from individual initiatives set up by the institutions;
- the commitment of most professionals who seek to achieve a standard of high quality;
- the beginnings of an attempt at coordination between services.

**1 objective** : Making pupils and students responsible for their choices, preventing them from taking the wrong direction by providing access to a wide range of information advice, offering competent "educational and vocational counselling" services, providing adequate assistance in various types of learning, organising the transition between secondary and higher education,



between higher education and labour market and coordinating existing services : all these belong to the major challenges to be faced in French-speaking Belgium today.

**Table 1 : Educational and vocational guidance, psychological support, learner support and career services in the French Community of Belgium**

The present situation relating to guidance and counselling provision in the French Community is analysed following a descriptive model of a student-centred holistic guidance approach (see Van Esbroeck, 1995, 1997; Van Esbroeck and Watts, 1997).

The result of this analysis is reflected in table 1. This table shows the main guidance and counselling services and systems in higher education, covering educational and/or vocational and/or personal guidance, and including both general services and those aimed at particular target-groups. The following descriptive categories are used :

Service/system : the usual title of the service or system is given . Only services and systems that work mainly with students in higher education are included.

Funding/administrative control : a brief indication of the major funding source and the administrative control over the service.

Location : indicates whether the service is based inside or outside the institution.

Extent : indicates whether the service or system present in all institutions, in most, in some, or in a few.

Level : indicates whether the service is:

First-in-line (1): part of the formal teaching function.

Second-in-line (2): linked to the formal teaching function, but with some degree of specialisation.

Third-in-line (3): separated from the formal teaching function, and offered by specialists.

Target-group : indicates who the service is designed to cover.

With regards to the services/systems included in this table, it should be noted that their names, their roles and the level of specialisation of these roles vary from one university to another, and from one *haute école* to another. Various examples are provided in the table and in the commentary.

**Table 1**

Service/system	Funding/administrative control	Location	Extent	Level	Target-group
<b>Universities</b>					
Information centre ( <i>Centre d'information et de documentation, centre d'information et de counselling, bureau d'information et d'accueil...</i> )	funded and controlled by university	within university	5 universities	3*	students & prospective students (some : general public)
Educational and vocational counselling centre ( <i>Centre médico-psychologique, centre d'orientation, centre d'information et de counselling, ...</i> )	funded and controlled by university	within university	5 universities	3*	students & prospective students (some : general public)
Psychological support service	funded and controlled by university	within university	6 universities	3	students
Educational service ( <i>Service de pédagogie</i> )	funded and controlled by university	within university	2 universities	3	lecturers
Educational support service ( <i>Service d'aide pédagogique</i> )	funded and controlled by university	within university	6 universities	3	mainly first-year students
Faculty tutorial system ( <i>structure facultaire d'aide pédagogique</i> )	controlled and funded by university	within university	all universities	1	mainly first-year students
Disabled students support system ( <i>structure d'aide aux étudiants handicapés</i> )	funded and controlled by university	within university	3 universities	3	disabled students
Careers service ( <i>Service d'emploi</i> )	funded and controlled by university or by faculties with occasional input from alumni associations	within university	4 universities	3	students and graduates
Faculty careers support system ( <i>Structure facultaire d'aide à l'emploi</i> )			all universities	2	

## **2.b. Commentary**

This section explains the main services and systems identified in the table, their structures, their functions and the links between them. Points of discussion include:

- The main functions of the services.
- The stages in the student career at which the services operate (pre-entry, induction, on-course, exit).
- The guidance worker/ student ratios.
- The degree of integrational separation between the services, and the linkages between them, including structures of co-operation and referral practices.
- Variations between institutions in all these respects.
- Whether users pay fees for the services.

Also, some reflections on the services that cover the needs of particular target-groups are included :

- Disabled students.
- Work-based, part-time, mature and distance students.
- Students from other countries (including those on European exchange programmes).

### **2.b.1. UNIVERSITIES**

The decrees organising the *francophone* universities are extremely vague on the subject of structures and tasks relating to educational and vocational guidance, psychological or learner support, assistance in seeking employment.

Most of the French-speaking universities have in fact decided to provide their students or future students with the relevant services; the emphasis on quality is such that some of these services have acquired an international reputation. In the absence of clear-cut and precise instructions, these services vary greatly in terms both of definition and of extent from one university to another.

#### **Educational and vocational guidance**

##### **Information and advice**

All teaching institutions fulfil an important information role in regard to secondary school pupils, and also students in non-university higher education and university students, as regards information on first degrees and on continuing education, on administrative matters and on the study environment.



Teaching staff (lecturers and assistants) participate actively in all such activities.

The larger universities have an information service, whereas in the smaller universities this function is integrated into a structure that offers a variety of services.

In some cases these services belong to the university's department for external affairs; in other cases they are incorporated into the social services or they belong to the central or academic administrative structures. Information may cover the programmes of study (contents, requirements, outlook), support provided to students (departmental tutorial system), quality of life (housing, social activities, information on social and financial matters); sometimes information on occupations is provided, or comparisons are made between courses of study. Some information activities are carried out by the public relations service. In this case a dual objective may be pursued:

- to provide information on the available courses of study;
- to promote recruitment of first-year students.

From the point of view of professional conduct, it is necessary to recognise and lay down the objectives and content of the information role of universities and *hautes écoles*, and to distinguish it from the "public relations" role.

Provision of information, in fact, involves an ethical question: do the actions favour the interests of the individual, those of the institution, or is it possible to mix the two ? Events such as some information fairs and certain types of sometimes misleading publicity go beyond what is expected of institutions whose main purpose is education and whose subsidies are intended to meet this objective.

One of the universities (UCL) has developed a more extensive information service. This centre provides all year long advice and comprehensive information, not only on all aspects of higher education (universities and *hautes écoles*) but also on studying abroad, occupations and jobs.

#### Educational and vocational counselling

The guidance counsellors generally belong to the student support services. Their role either has several facets (they are sometimes responsible for educational and psychological support) or is specialised, depending on the size of the university. An educational and vocational counselling service, staffed by psychologists and practising special skills and intervention techniques, is to be found in 5 universities.

Universities that do not have their own service suggest clients should contact the educational and vocational centres that they work with on a regular basis.

In some universities there is a fee attached to this service. It may vary from 2 to 10 Euro per consultation.

## **Personal guidance**

6 French-speaking universities run services providing psychological support to students.

Among these services the psychological support unit occupies a position that varies according to the university. Sometimes this service is independent from other services (social or medical support, educational and vocational support); in other cases one person offers several types of support (vocational guidance, educational guidance, psychological support).

The size of the institution and the origin of the financial resources also play a part in determining the type of consultation. The services are usually funded through the social subsidies provided to universities by the French Community, and sometimes by funds provided by the university's organising Authority. In one instance the service is partly funded by the Ministry of Health (Psycampus), which explains why this service has an almost exclusively therapeutic role.

The demand for psychological support is constantly increasing and now equal to the demand for educational and vocational guidance. The psychological support services treat an increasing number of age-group-related affective problems and those linked to adapting to student life.

## **Learner support**

Teachers and assistants are the professionals who are mainly involved in learner support, especially during the first year (*première candidature*).

### **• Pre-entry courses**

Certain teachers who are aware of the difficulties in adapting to the first year of higher education organise preparatory courses, also known as summer or induction courses.

Most universities and some *hautes écoles* organise these courses during the summer in order to:

- raise awareness of the requirements during the first year;
- help students to develop a method of study;
- familiarise students with their future study and living surroundings.

Most universities and some *hautes écoles* allow secondary school pupils to attend a few hours of first year lectures during their last year at school.

### **• During higher education**

The degree to which educational support is developed ranges from the personal commitment of some lecturers to educational support activities, to the setting up of structures or services to promote acquisition of theoretical and practical knowledge.

Broadly speaking, three types of educational support service can be distinguished.

**1. Central educational services** which seek to enhance the teacher's role by organising teacher training sessions and by making useful teaching tools available.

first year. A broader approach in the first year or first half year would enable students to have a better idea of the various subjects and to be a year older before taking a more definite decision.

- Developments in teaching methods with a view to associating teachers and students in a common search for knowledge in place of the traditional teacher-student relationship.
- Developing teaching methods that aim to give students greater responsibility in their education rather than limiting them to a role as consumers.

### **Career services**

As far as career services are concerned, the key word is once again diversity. Depending on the different universities and *hautes écoles*, career support will be carried out at various levels of competence and in various forms, ranging from the voluntary assistance provided by alumni to the setting up of a career centre, and including the organisation of seminars and the dissemination of a bulletin with job offers.

Three career support systems exist in universities :

1. Central careers services (employment units) for students and graduates from the various Faculties. The following belong to this category: ULB, ULG, UMH, UCL. Such central services may be funded either by the university and/or by alumni associations. At ULB the employment unit employs 2.75 FTE to handle the demand from students and graduates ( $\pm 2,845$  graduates and postgraduates a year).
2. Faculty employment services. Depending on the Faculty, such services are carried out and funded by the alumni association or by the Faculty. This applies to the Faculté Polytechnique de Mons, Facultés Notre-Dame de la Paix at Namur, Faculté Universitaire des Sciences Agronomiques de Gembloux and UCL.
3. A network of employment services coordinating the activities of a central service and faculty services. This is the structure that exists at UCL. The careers service operates as a "network", composed of a central service that is part of the information and documentation centre, and a number of careers service units attached to the Faculties. The staff is equivalent to 4.75 FTE for final-year students and graduates ( $\pm 4000$  graduates and postgraduates a year).

The role of the central service is :

- to provide a central information and documentation resource;
- to tackle employment questions from the generalist angle provided by a university education;
- to handle requests from students in Faculties that do not have their own careers service;
- to represent a point of contact for employers;
- to provide a link between the different services.

**Faculty career services :**

- target a specific group of students;



- offer the possibility of preferential contacts with the outside world directly involved in the faculty's discipline;
- have specialised knowledge of developments in training and occupations linked to a specific subject.

The public consulting employment services can be divided into two main groups: the users and the socio-economic partners.

Users mainly comprise :

- students still studying;
- students on the point of finishing their studies;
- graduates.

Partners comprise : private companies, institutions from the non-profit sector and public companies.

## **Support to special target groups**

### Disabled students

The main aim of services providing assistance to disabled students is to promote their integration into and their chances of success in the educational and general context. Such services also play a role as mediators and assistance providers. Their work involves both disabled students and other students, teachers and services, in terms of both training and information.

Certain structures that exist in universities (social and administrative services, psychological support) can be used for disabled students, as long as the staff can specialise in providing support to this type of user.

The present trend is to introduce specialisation within existing services, so that they may cater for a wide range of users (foreigners, disabled persons) rather than to create specialist services for each type of user. This new type of organisation is more conducive to integration.

From an academic point of view, all students undertake the same programme of study, but some disabled students are allowed to spread the programme over several years.

From an educational point of view, students with a sensory disability have a right to benefit from learner support that is subsidised by the regional government<sup>13</sup>. Three universities (UMH, ULB and UCL) are at present officially recognised as organising learner support for disabled students.

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<sup>13</sup> AWIPH (Agence wallonne d'intégration des personnes handicapées) et le Fonds bruxellois pour l'intégration des handicapés.

With regard to interpretation and material and technical matters, all expenses are paid for by the relevant non-profit organisations (e.g. *Oeuvre nationale des aveugles*, *Ligue braille*, *Comprendre et parler*, ...)

With regard to the service providing help to disabled students, the supervisor's role consists of ensuring that existing infrastructure is functioning properly and of making sure that these students with special needs are taken care of by academic and administrative staff.

The present services in the French Community are insufficient and there is growing awareness of this fact. A report produced by persons actively involved in these services sets forth a common policy and recommendations to improve the situation.<sup>14</sup>

Ratio supervisor :   UMH   1/4 FTE per 10 students

                          UCL   1/2 FTE per 30 students

### Varsity sport students

Students wishing to combine higher education (including a university education) and intensive sports training (students recognised by the sports federation) may spread one year's programme over two years. They may also be granted certain facilities relating to the timetable or training periods. Specific matters such as these are handled by the lecturers and the Faculty's administrative staff since no specific service exists.

### Foreign students

The large number of foreign students (20% of the university population) means that this category deserves to be considered in some detail. The problems vary according to the origin of the students:

1. Foreign students of immigrant parents. They can be considered as forming one group with Belgian students from an underprivileged background.
2. Students from developed countries. They may experience administrative problems (recognition of foreign diplomas), logistical problems (housing, insurance and medical coverage) or language problems. Erasmus students ( $\pm$  1,000 students) have similar questions but there are specific services which provide assistance to them.
3. Students from developing countries. In addition to educational difficulties, the (few) students who start their higher education in Belgium (1st cycle) in this category are faced with numerous financial and administrative problems.

Students from countries or regions with political instabilities (Rwanda, Kivu) also show signs of psychological strain because they may have suffered from considerable stress.

Moreover, the present immigration policy of the Belgian authorities tends to admit such students into the country solely with educational purposes and does not allow them to bring their families. The fact that these students have to leave their family in their home country, where

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<sup>14</sup> • L'accueil et l'accompagnement des étudiants porteurs d'un handicap dans l'enseignement supérieur et universitaire •

there is often a climate of social, economic or political instability, increases their personal problems and need of guidance.

Until now, some universities had some special services for foreign students. Now the trend is to refer these students to the same services as those for Belgian students.

As yet, staff and support services lack training to help them to handle this types of questions and difficulty.

### Adult education

At present, adult education is not much developed in the French Community of Belgium. In terms of education leading to a basic degree, evening courses has developed mainly in three-year non-university higher education courses (*graduat*).

As regards further education, university and four-year non-university higher education courses provide certain possibilities. At Université de Mons-Hainaut (in Charleroi), evening courses are provided in the areas of psychology and economics. A special staff of educationalists support students in their particular problems.

Distance education does not yet exist in Belgium. This subject is at present under study. A pilot experiment in the field of distance learning is under way in six universities. The project, called "learn-net", consists of setting up a connection between two students in two separate universities in order to enable them to produce a joint assignment over the Internet.

As far as we know, at present no special structures exist for mature students.

### 2.b.2. The *hautes écoles*

Each *haute école* is based on a common educational, social and cultural *projet*, a sort of charter, which lays down the tasks of the *haute école* and how these tasks are to be carried out, in terms both of teaching and of the socio-cultural environment.

Guidance tasks are also set forth under this *projet*. These may vary from one *haute école* to another, but have certain points in common. The difficulty lies in the fact that the *hautes écoles*, which are all recent, are in a transitional phase and are at present setting up new guidance structures.

The following analysis is based on the present situation in 4 *hautes écoles*:

- Haute école mosane d'enseignement supérieur (HEMES - Liège and Angleur);
- Haute école Lucia de Brouckère (Brussels);
- Haute école Communauté française (Liège, Verviers, Huy, Gembloux);
- Haute école Léonard de Vinci (Bruxelles, Nivelles and Louvain-la-Neuve).

Out of the 13,209 students enrolled in these schools, 863 are foreign students (7%).



Guidance activities are usually organised along the following lines:

**On information**, the director and the teachers in the different institutions act as information advisors. The latter are in a position to provide information on higher education requirements, career opportunities, prerequisites, assessment.

Information sessions, open days, and meetings with the teachers are organised by all the institutions.

The *hautes écoles* also cooperate with the universities in information activities organised for future students.

Cooperation exists between the institutions, secondary schools and PMS centres with a view to improving the available information on the programmes offered.

A few *hautes écoles* have exceptionally chosen to entrust one person, whose role is officially recognised, with the provision of information on all the courses of study offered. This approach has been adopted by HEMES in Liège, and IESN in Namur.

When more specialised action is necessary, the *hautes écoles* refer students to specialised services for instance in universities.

With regard to **redirecting students or providing psychological support**, requests usually go to the social service which, after an initial interview, proposes consultation with specialist professionals (psychologists in the guidance centres, family planning centres and other services). It is not possible to take on specialist staff, even part-time, because the budget for social services including guidance and counselling is only 2,000 BEF per student per year (50 euros).

**For learning support**, the schools organise induction courses (*propédeutiques*) to help students adapt to higher education, plus learner support sessions to raise awareness about methods of study and remedial sessions.

These activities are undertaken by existing teaching staff, occasionally supported by an outside expert. In the larger institutions, a social worker is responsible for coordinating learner support activities. Students may be asked to make a financial contribution.

With regard to student mobility, the *hautes écoles* cooperate with other higher education institutions in Belgium and abroad in order to promote contacts between teaching staff and students from the different countries.

**Regarding career guidance**, some institutions have a specialised service, while in other institutions teachers or alumni provide help in the search for employment. As a result of industrial internships, which are an essential part of non-university higher education and are closely supervised by the teaching staff of the institutions, close contacts with employers have

been developed. This, together with the alumni support, ensures in some *hautes écoles* relatively effective placement support.

### **2.b.3. The services outside higher education**

Though these services are only included at one specific stage of the educational career and are limited to specific tasks, they are included here to provide a complete picture of the support available in the French Community. They are either public services or non-profit organisations.

In relation to educational and vocational guidance, the main services include :

- The **SIEP** ( Service d'Information sur les Etudes et les Professions). This is a non-profit-making organisation which provides services in the following areas:
  - information about higher education and occupations;
  - educational and vocational guidance;
  - training in work methods and remedial tuition;
  - publication of information.

35% of its funding comes from the French Community and is intended solely for the service's main information activity. The service has to find its own funding sources for its other activities. For this reason a fee is sometimes charged. Staff salaries are partially paid under a scheme funded by the regional government (financial support through special contracts).

#### **- CEDIEP**

The federation of independent PMS centres ("centres PMS libres") has set up a centre for documentation and information on higher education and professions (CEDIEP - Centre de Documentation et d'Information sur les Etudes et les Professions).

This centre :

- produces written information on higher education and universities for the use of counsellors in the PMS centres, as well as secondary school pupils, students in higher education or any other interested persons;
- meets students and provides educational and vocational guidance.

Unlike PMS centres, CEDIEP also caters for students in higher education, and those undergoing training or redirection.

#### **- Mental health centres**

In relation to personal guidance, reference must be made to mental health centres. Such centres, commonly called guidance centres, came under the remit of the Ministry of Health until 1991. Since then, along with the restructuring of federal government, these centres are now answerable to the French Community.



This personal guidance structure does not form part of higher education. However, students form a relatively large proportion of the clients of the mental health centres located near higher education institutions and these centres face the same type of problems as those encountered by psychologists in university guidance centres.

Mention should be made of one particular mental health centre in the Brussels area, which is established in three different locations, one of which is on the ULB campus, i.e. Psycampus. For political, historical and financial reasons, Psycampus services are mainly intended for students in higher education and for ULB staff members.

In relation to **career guidance**, reference should also be made to the activities of two public services operating in the French Community : **ORBEM** (for the region of Brussels) and **FOREM** (in the region of Wallonia). One of their tasks is to help clients to establish and carry out a career plan. Various services are offered :

- the employment advisors support job seekers in their search, give advice and provide guidance;
- employment workshops aim to give job seekers the necessary tools to help them in searching for a job;
- intensive three-week training (active job search club) is provided for motivated job seekers who are ready to work in a group applying a specific method;
- the FOREM participates in the European network of Euro-advisors.

These services have also set up a training forum called "les Carrefours-formation" which provides information and advice to anyone seeking training.

Graduates from higher education constitute a limited proportion of the users of these services.

#### **2.b.4. Links between the various services and the different roles**

##### **Institutional links**

The definition of the roles of the various services is undertaken by the institutions themselves (public service, universities, *hautes écoles*). Consequently, the objectives pursued, the target group and the means devoted to carrying out these objectives all depend on the policy of each institution.

Up to now, it has not been possible to talk of a common policy on educational and vocational guidance, learner support and assistance in searching for employment, either within the universities, or within the *hautes écoles* as a group. However, the situation is now changing, both because of the reduction in the budgets available to higher education and because of the desire to improve the service provided to future and present students.



The interuniversity centre for French-language universities, CIUF (*Centre interuniversitaire des universités francophones*), has the task of organising coordination between francophone universities. In matters concerning cooperation between such institutions it is competent to give an opinion and make proposals.

Coordination of certain services, for instance information services and career services, must continue to progress.

Regarding the *hautes écoles*, the grouping of institutions of higher education into large units may mean that this sort of concentration around a common policy and centralised financial resources will make it possible to develop services that are better equipped than was previously the case.

### **Personal links**

In regard to information, the following can be seen :

- contacts between persons in different services;
- consultation with reference to certain limited activities;
- partnerships in a series of activities (training of contact teachers in secondary schools, information intended for secondary school pupils).

Much work remains to be done to improve coordination between these services.

In regard to educational and vocational guidance and learner support, work is undertaken more on an individual basis and it is less a matter of coordinating activities between the different services than of sharing skills and experience. This type of exchange is carried out in the framework of meetings between universities or professional staff.

In regard to provision of assistance in seeking employment, links are now being set up between the responsible persons in the various institutions (universities, public services, private services).

As an example, the services of UCL, ULB and FOREM have carried out a joint project on an active method for seeking employment, which is intended for final-year students and recent graduates of higher education.

Participation by the various guidance professionals in associations such as FEDORA,<sup>15</sup> and in the meetings regularly organised by this association (colloquia, summer seminars, meetings based on a special subject), promotes the setting up of a movement of cooperation, coordination and exchange between various services and countries, thus increasing the level of professionalism of participants and providing them with a European dimension in the skills used in their work.

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<sup>15</sup> FEDORA (Forum Européen de l'Orientation Académique) est une association de personnes concernées par tous les aspects de l'information et de l'orientation des étudiants dans l'ensemble des institutions d'enseignement supérieur en Europe.

### 3. Roles and tasks

#### 3.a. Introduction

Table 2, which follows, summarises the main roles presented in the preceding chapter, the number of persons carrying out these roles and their role priority. The analysis is based upon a student holistic guidance model (Van Esbroeck, 1995, 1997; Van Esbroeck and Watts, 1997) which distinguishes three types of guidance.

Educational (E) is defined as "guidance on choices of educational options, and learner support". In the universities, the main players are teachers, assistants educationalist (*assistants pédagogiques*), monitors (*moniteurs*), information advisors (*conseillers à l'information*), and guidance counsellors (*psychologues d'orientation*); in the *hautes écoles*, they are teachers and multi-skilled social workers.

Vocational (V) is defined as "guidance on choices on, and placement into, occupations and work roles". In the French-speaking universities of Belgium, the main players are the careers advisors (*conseillers à l'emploi*), information advisors (*conseillers à l'information*), and guidance counsellors (*psychologues d'orientation*); in the *hautes écoles*, they are multi-skilled social workers.

Personal (P): guidance and counselling on personal and social issues. In the universities, the main players are psychologists providing personal guidance (*psychologues pour étudiants*) and guidance counsellors (*psychologues d'orientation*); in the *hautes écoles*, they are multi-skilled social workers.

The focus of each guidance service/system has been analysed on a 7-point scale. The allocation of the 7 points is based upon a combination of several variables: time spent, and how the focus is perceived by the counsellor, by the client and by the institution.

The figures in the "Number" column represent the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) persons employed, even though several roles, especially in the educational field, are in fact carried out on a part-time basis. The figures in brackets are estimates of the number of staff in this role.



**Table 2 : Main occupational roles and focus**

Service/system	Occupational roles	Number	Focus		
			E	V	P
Universities					
Information centre	Director ( <i>directeur</i> )	2	3	3	1
	Information advisor ( <i>conseiller à l'information</i> )	15	3	3	1
Educational and vocational counselling centre	Director ( <i>directeur</i> )	2	2	2	3
	Guidance counsellor ( <i>conseiller en orientation</i> )	8	2	2	3
Psychological support service	Psychologist ( <i>psychologue</i> )	6	2	1	4
Educational service	Director ( <i>directeur</i> )	2	7	0	0
	Educationalist ( <i>pédagogue</i> )	11	5	1	1
Educational support service	Educationalist ( <i>pédagogue</i> )	20	5	1	1
Faculty tutorial system	Teacher, assistant ( <i>professeur, assistant</i> )	*	7	0	0
	Assistant educationalist ( <i>assistant-pédagogue</i> )		7	0	0
Disabled students support system	Disabled students supervisor ( <i>superviseur pour étudiants handicapés</i> )	3	2	2	3
Careers service	Careers service director ( <i>Directeur service emploi</i> )	2	1	5	1
	Careers advisor ( <i>conseiller à l'emploi</i> )	6	1	5	1
Faculty careers support system	Careers advisor ( <i>conseiller à l'emploi</i> )	6	1	5	1
Schools of higher professional education ( <i>Hautes écoles</i> ) **					
Guidance system	Study advisor ( <i>conseiller à l'information</i> )	23	3	3	1
	Educationalist ( <i>conseiller pédagogique</i> )	29	7	0	0
	Social worker ( <i>Assistant social</i> )	22	3	2	2
Departmental tutorial support system	Teacher, assistant ( <i>professeur, assistant</i> )	*	6	0	1
Careers service	Careers advisor ( <i>conseiller à l'emploi</i> )	19	0	7	0
Departmental careers support system	Careers advisor ( <i>conseiller à l'emploi</i> )	26	0	7	0

\* The number of staff involved cannot be estimated.

\*\* The number of staff working in the *hautes écoles* has been estimated based upon the schools mentioned in section 2.b.2 and a projection of it for the totality of these institutions.



For each of the occupational roles, a task analysis has been performed. The following task classification has been used.

1. **General management** : general administrative management, including service/programme planning and evaluation. Includes managing guidance activities within the institutional setting, and general liaison with external bodies (e.g. educational institutions, guidance agencies, social services, official bodies, and employers). (A)
2. **Information management** : the collection, production and display of information in relation to education and training opportunities, and/or careers, occupations and the labour market . (B)
3. **Information-giving** : providing relevant information to individuals or groups in relation to to education and training opportunities, and/or careers, occupations and the labour market . (C)
4. **Counselling** : helping clients to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present situation, about the options open to them, and about the consequences of each option.
  - 4.1. **Short-term individual counselling** : helping clients on a one-to-one basis in a single or limited number of sessions.(D)
  - 4.2. **Long-term individual counselling** : as 4.1 but representing a planned programme over a longer period and more sessions. (E)
  - 4.3. **Short-term group counselling** : as 4.1 but on a group basis. Tends to be in smaller groups than teaching, to be composed of individuals who share some common characteristics, to focus on their expressed needs rather than on predetermined learning aims, and to be organised to encourage active participation by all the individuals involved.(F)
  - 4.4. **Long-term group counselling** : as 4.3 but representing a planned programme over a longer period and more sessions.(G)
  - 4.5. **Facilitating self-help groups** : encouraging individuals to form themselves into ongoing groups to share experiences and to support each other.(H)
5. **Advice** : making suggestions based on the helper's own knowledge and experience and on assessment results. (I)
6. **Assessment** : making judgements about individuals' suitability for certain options, based on inventories, tests, observations, interviews, etc.
  - 6.1. **Facilitate self-assessment** : supporting individuals in choosing their own assessment devices and drawing conclusions from them.(J)
  - 6.2. **Diagnostic assessment** : selecting assessment devices, interpreting the results and making appropriate recommendations.(K)
7. **Referral** : referring individuals to service better equipped to deal with their problem.(L)
8. **Teaching** : programmes of planned experiences, designed to develop the skills, concepts and knowledge that will help individuals to manage their educational, vocational and personal development. (M)

9. Placement : into education or training programmes, and/or into employment.
- 9.1. **Liaison with providers** : liaison with employers and with education and training providers to obtain information on the opportunities they offer.(N)
- 9.2. **Coaching** : helping individuals to present themselves effectively (on application forms and in interviews etc).(O)
- 9.3. **Vacancy information** : providing individuals with information on particular vacancies in education, training or employment.(P)
- 9.4. **Preselection** : preselecting individuals for particular vacancies in education, training or employment. (Q)
10. **Advocacy** : negotiating directly with institutions or agencies, within and/or outside own institution, on behalf of individuals, especially those for whom there may be particular barriers to access. (R)
11. **Supporting other guidance sources** : providing training sessions and disseminating information materials to teaching staff and other guidance providers.(S)
12. **Feedback to providers** : collecting information on the unmet needs of particular groups, and encouraging providers of opportunities to respond by adapting and extending their provision.(T)
13. **Follow-up** : contacting former clients to see what has happened to them. Its purposes may include data for use with subsequent clients, evaluating the effectiveness of the guidance given, and offering further support needed (U).

For each of the tasks listed, a rating on the importance of the task is given on a 0 to 4 scale, on the basis of the work normally carried out within the role :

- 4 major involvement
- 3 considerable involvement
- 2 some involvement
- 1 minor involvement
- 0 no involvement

These ratings have been made by the expert practitioners of each of the occupational roles and reviewed by the national correspondent and the two experts who completed the detailed profiles in section 3 c. The full set of draft ratings has been reviewed by various practitioners representing different types of institutions and abroad regional distribution.



**Table 3 : Tasks performed in the main occupational roles**

Occupational roles															
UNIVERSITIES															
Information service director	4	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	3	1	3	0	1
Information advisor	2	4	4	4	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	0	1
Director	4	2	1	2	0	2	1	2	3	4	2	3	2	0	1
Guidance counsellor	2	2	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	2	2	1	0
Psychologist	2	1	1	4	4	0	0	1	1	4	0	2	0	0	2
Director educational service	4	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	0	0	1
Educationalist (central service)	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	2	0	0	4
Educationalist (central support service)	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	0	4	4	3	4	0	0	2
Teacher, assistant	3	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	4	1	2	0
Assistant educationalist	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	0	0	1
Disabled students supervisor	4	2	1	3	4	3	3	3	2	0	3	0	0	1	2
Careers service director	4	3	4	3	1	2	1	1	2	0	2	3	3	3	2
Careers advisor (Central)	3	4	4	3	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	3	1	4	3
Careers advisor (Faculty)	3	3	3	2	1	2	0	1	4	1	0	2	0	4	2

SCHOOLS OF HIGHER EDUCATION															
Study advisor	2	3	3	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	1
Educationalist (new role*)	N. A.														
Social worker	3	2	3	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	3	3	0	0	1
Teacher, assistant**	0	0	0	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	0	1
Careers advisor	3	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	4	3

\* A new role for which no task analysis is yet available.

\*\* Tasks are very different from one teacher to another, from a three-year course to a four- or five-year course, and from one subject area to another.



One university, UMH, runs a service similar to that found in some Flemish universities : the CICO deals with all the aspects of guidance mentioned in this report, including special target groups such as disabled students.

Information activities provide pupils or students with information on the organisation of higher education, course programmes, entry requirements and basic requirements, the course of an academic year, work opportunities, continuing education, grants, etc.

Information advisors provide information on higher education (C) in individual or group meetings (pupils and parents in secondary schools), provide clients with non-directive advice (I) and try to clarify their choice of studies. They also have frequent contacts with other education professionals. They are familiar with other services in their institution or outside in order to refer visitors (L) if necessary. They contact such services (R) in order to pass on their visitor's requests.

Advisors collect information and produce documents (B) to support their information activities.

The case of the information centre at UCL can highlight this role analysis.

This centre provides advice and complete information on all aspects of higher education (universities and *hautes écoles*), on studying abroad and on occupations and jobs.

The tasks of this centre are:

- to provide students faced with choices with a place to seek advice, to exchange ideas and reflections and to gain an overview of the available information regarding courses of study, occupations and employment;
- to encourage an active approach to the collection of information and its integration into the development of their plans for the future.

Each year this centre, whose staff includes 7 information advisors, welcomes an average of 7,000 persons (pupils, students, recent graduates, teachers, parents); in the course of their activities outside the centre, as a result of their participation in group information sessions, the staff are in touch with some 10,000 secondary school pupils and their parents, as well as with students already in university education or recent graduates.

Extensive information is also provided to partners in the field of information, educational and vocational guidance and placement, i.e. secondary school teachers, PMS centres, representatives of the *hautes écoles*, university lecturers, FOREM and employers.

For a more detailed description of the task of "information advisor", refer to the relevant section 3c.

Some activities such as participation in student fairs, and production and dissemination of documents providing information, may in some universities be carried out by the public relations services or in partnership between information services and public relations services.

Educational and vocational counselling activities are carried out either by specific services, or in the framework of broader services or in partner services linked to the universities.

The work of a guidance counsellor is mainly based on individual meetings and will be described in greater detail in section 3c.

#### b. Psychological assistance

Psychological assistance can be either linked to or distinct from the educational and vocational counselling service. It concerns relational difficulties, family conflict, personal difficulties, symptoms of depression, eating disorders, etc.

Affective difficulties concerning the 18-25 age group are on the increase. The type of assistance tends towards support rather than therapy, with the exception of one university (ULB) which, for reasons that are both historical and financial, uses the services of a mental health centre that is attached to the university (*Psy-campus*).

When there is a need for therapeutic assistance, the service refers clients to other services or private therapists (L). In the main, the psychologist's work takes the form of individual (often long-term) counselling (D, E). Often sessions take place on a weekly basis, continuing for several weeks or months. The objective is to help students clarify their position and manage their difficulties in an independent manner (J). In addition to his/her support role, the psychologist takes on general management tasks and maintains contacts with other psychological support centres and other services in the university (A). In most cases, the support is provided by psychologists, although in some institutions initial psychological support is provided by social workers.

#### c. Learner support

Learner support mainly can be considered as part of educational guidance. Due to its importance and specificity, it is treated separately from the other aspects of educational guidance. The learner support in the French Community refers in particular to support in learning skills and attitudes necessary to acquire the needed theoretical knowledge and its applications.



The following table summarises the occupational roles involved in educational support (*Italics indicate that the role concerns activities whose aim is to improve educational quality, without being directly targeted at students*).

Location	Administrative staff Teacher/Assistant	Educationalist	Educational support worker	Student-monitor
Central Service	<i>Structured service or support provided to teachers or assistants in order to help them in their teaching activities</i>	Educationalists : help students in their learning activities : method of study, time management (carried out in central service or in the Faculties).	<i>Workshops organised by discipline: a place for meetings, discussions and reflection between teachers from secondary schools and the lecturers teaching first-year courses.</i>	-----
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Teacher-tutor</u>: the human aspect of this role is as important as the educational one.</li> <li>• <u>Assistants</u> act as supervisor of practical work in their specific discipline</li> </ul>	<u>Assistant educationalists</u> ( <i>assistants pédagogiques</i> ) : specific supervision in various disciplines : learning methods, note-taking, study techniques, time management	Secondary school teachers are responsible for educational supervision of first-year students on a part-time basis	2nd-cycle student supervises 1st-cycle students: this activity sometimes produces academic recognition, or sometimes confers a financial benefit

The degree to which educational support is available varies according both to the university's political options and to the Faculty.

With reference to the table, some educational roles need to be explained:

1. Teachers/assistants or administrative staff from the central educational service provide assistance to teachers and assistants in their teaching tasks. The assistance is provided by the Director (a university professor) and a staff of educationalists (*pédagogues*). They are responsible for organising seminars, initial and further training sessions, and meetings with secondary school teachers to ensure a smoother transition between school and university. At UCL, this service is called "the institute of university education and multimedias" (*Institut de pédagogie universitaire et des multi-médias*). It is responsible for coordinating, setting up and disseminating learning initiatives. It likewise coordinates activities relating to the use of multimedia and provides its users with access to existing resources.
2. The educationalists of the central service organise, in agreement with faculty staff, individual meetings or group sessions on a variety of subjects : study methods, note-taking, time management, stress management, organisation of work, etc. Such a service exists either as an independent service, or as an unit within other services. The following institutions have developed this support as a separate service : educational guidance - ULG; educational support service - University of Louvain; university educational service - Faculties of the University of Namur; educational support - FUCAM.



3. The assistant educationalists (*assistants-pédagogues*) in Faculties introduce students to general learning skills necessary for a successful educational career. This is done through teaching (M), sometimes as a type of long-term workgroup, giving information on educational objectives, learning skills, time management, etc.(C). Also support to developing adequate self-assessment techniques (J) and the setting up of self-study groups is enhanced (H). These activities with the students are not limited to one specific course but rather are applied through the entire programme.

#### d. Placement support system

Within the vocational guidance, the placement support system tends to be frequently linked to support with educational and personal aspects.

The advisor meets students and helps them in their search for employment in taking stock of personal competencies and in developing a strategy for job research. Such activities concern students and graduates alike, as well as exchange students.

The advisor organises information sessions on jobs, careers, selection interview techniques or career plans. Documentation available to visitors for consultation is updated on a daily basis. Regular contact is maintained with employers : presentation from companies, participation in student fairs, management of vacancy announcements, training periods, and student jobs in Belgium and abroad. Care is taken to ensure that information is made available through channels such as mailing lists, e-mail, and the Internet.

Careers services have also set up a placement support seminar (ULB and UCL).

The role of careers service director will be explained in detail in section 3c.

#### **3.b.2. The *hautes écoles***

Many institutions offer a general student support service which undertakes various tasks:

- enabling future students to seek advice;
- informing students on various matters: failure, re-orientation, financial matters, housing, looking for a job.

The staff (social worker or clerical staff) provide a point of contact, analyse requests, and either deal with requests or refer students to other more specialised services.

Some institutions provide specialist services. Experts are available in schools to answer specific questions on methods of study, adapting to higher education, or seeking a job. Some staff members specialise in specific areas: learning support, or information-giving on educational and career issues.

Guidance structures in the *hautes écoles* are changing. Some have already undergone changes.

An example of such change is the structure at the HEMES. In this institution, one service provides to students on its 5 campuses support related to adapting to student life. A social

worker is responsible for this task. Furthermore, an educationalist is available to supervise students who are in difficulty (assessment, re-orientation, method of study, etc.)

### **3.c. Detailed profiles**

In view of the diversity of the services that exist in the French Community, it may be helpful to provide more details of three of the roles found in higher education: information advisor, guidance counsellor and careers director.

Each role has been chosen for its high degree of professionalism and is the product of the practical experience acquired in the three full universities. Each role is also carried out in other universities and in certain guidance centres (*centres de guidance*), private centres, and at FOREM and ORBEM, either by persons or services for whom this is the main task, or by persons or services who also carry out other tasks.

The main elements of the three roles are as follows :

- The information advisor's role is to intervene during the transition from secondary to higher education (choice of studies and occupation), during higher education (re-orientation, choice of educational options, additional training, acquisition of special skills in languages, practical training, etc.), or preparing for employment after higher education. In the latter case, the role overlaps to a certain degree with that of careers advisor (*conseiller à l'emploi*) (see later).
- The role of guidance counsellor is to meet secondary school pupils who need to make a choice relating to higher education, students already in higher education and persons already in a job.
- The role of careers director is to help students, postgraduate students and recent graduates to find a job.

### **1. Information Advisor**

The primary role of information advisor is to encourage individuals to build up a personal plan, and to facilitate client autonomy in decision-making by providing access to information that is as complete as possible and by encouraging a critical approach to such information.

To carry out this task, the advisor :

- makes available to visitors complete and up-to-date information on higher education, occupations and the labour market;



- encourages them to undertake the steps required to collect the necessary information about the various considerations that influence choices.
- provides the opportunity for meetings and discussions.

In order to gain a better understanding of the role of the advisor, it is necessary to explain the methodology of decision-making on which the work is based. This can be outlined as follows:

1. In exploring the components of the decision, three considerations are dealt with: "occupations", "education" and "personality".

The information advisor has a good knowledge of the information relating to occupations and education, and suggests a series of steps that will enable a knowledge of these components to be acquired.

With regard to the "personality" component, the client may be referred, if necessary, to an educational and vocational counsellor.

2. On the basis of the exploratory phase, a series of questions are asked about three sets of links:

- between education and occupation,
- between education and personality,
- between occupation and personality.

3. Once these questions have been answered, candidates can progressively work out an initial plan of study and future career that is likely to suit them.

It is difficult to distinguish the educational and vocational part of the information advisor's work. That is why equal weight has been attributed to each part.

The educational aspect of the information advisor's work has priority since it is concerned with giving support to clients who are faced with an educational choice, at a time of transition, and with promoting decision-making through critical use of a wide range of information relating to higher education, occupations and the labour market.

This role requires the knowledge of the different educational systems in Belgium and the aptitudes required in each case, the programmes of study, the objectives and how to achieve them, and the educational systems in other countries.

The vocational focus, or vocational guidance, represents another major part of the advisor's work since students must be encouraged to see the connection between decisions taken about education and occupations. Because of this, advisors must have a particularly wide knowledge of occupations (descriptions, contents, requirements, access), the latest developments (new occupations, new content), and the socio-economic context (globalisation, communications, industrialisation of services, developments relating to the concept of work).



This vocational guidance role is more developed in some of the services, which are more active in the area of placement into employment, as is the case at CID.

The personal support role plays a less important part in the work of an advisor. It does not attempt to reveal a client's personal features, especially as most of the information advisor's has a unique character, encouraging steps to be undertaken rather than making an in-depth analysis of an individual's motivations. When personal support is necessary, the information advisor refers the client to other specialist services. However, the personal component is maintained because the advisor stresses the importance of personal choice.

## Tasks

- Providing advice is the most important role. This is carried out in individual meetings.

It makes possible in-depth analysis of the various aspects of future student demand, provides visitors with the desired information and makes it possible to define the course of action with the client (D, C, I).

Time spent : 3 half-days per week: consultations with pupils, students or recent graduates having to make a choice or requiring re-orientation.

- Group meetings are intended for future students. They take place in secondary schools during the day-time or in the evening. Their aim is to make future students aware of the choices to be made at the end of secondary school, and to provide them with some information upon which to reflect (C).

Meetings are also organised for students who are in their last year at school or at university; their purpose is to make students more aware of matters relating to additional training and placement into employment.

Time spent : 3 half-days per week

- The advisor collects documentation on education, occupations and the world of work, and designs information tools (B). These include producing :

- collections of information brochures: original soft-cover documents on a given subject (computer science, the environment, journalism, etc), professions and the studies leading to them;
- documents on university studies (brochures, video presentations);
- books on methodology: "*Il était un choix*" (once upon a choice) (on the transition from secondary school to higher education) and "*cahier de bord pour l'emploi*" (logbook for employment) (transition from higher education to the workplace).

Time spent : half-day per week on information tools; half-day per week on individual information through other channels (mail, telephone, Internet).

- The advisor participates in the training of students who have given up their studies or failed exams and have registered for remedial tuition (M). Advisors also participate in teacher training for secondary school teachers (to provide support to pupils in making choices) (S).

- Finally, the advisor participates in the general organisation of the service (A), carrying out administrative tasks and participating as an expert in various commissions inside or outside the university; keeps abreast of developments by reading or participating in information sessions, training sessions, colloquia, etc.; and represents the university in external activities.

Each year each information advisor meets the following approximate number of people:

individual meetings	600 persons
providing documentation to individual visitors	1,500 persons
group meetings	3,000 persons
requests via mail and telephone	1,200 persons

#### **Users :**

- pupils at the end of secondary school (30%),
- students in higher education at university or non-university institutions who wish to continue their education in Belgium or abroad (25%),
- students in higher education who for a variety of reasons decide to change their studies (20%).
- final-year students or recent graduates in search of employment (15%),
- adults who wish to pursue their training (6%),
- parents, teachers, and PMS counsellors (2%),
- foreign students wishing to inquire about education in Belgium (2%).

## **2. Guidance counsellor**

The counselling activities are divided between three distinct target groups. The three different categories of users who consult the psychologist are:

- secondary school pupils in their last year at school;
- students who are already enrolled at the University of Liège or other Belgian or foreign universities, or in non-university higher education (3- or 4-year courses);
- persons already working who wish to undertake additional training.

### **1. Pupils in the final year of secondary school**

In most cases by far, counselling takes place on an individual basis (when one or both parents take part in the meeting, which is rare, this is always with the agreement or at the request of the client) (D). The objective is to reflect on how to answer questions related to choice of studies



and future occupation. Basically it is a matter of providing support in self-assessment by the client to establish what implicitly determines his/her representations and values, and the emotional and cognitive resources available. Clients are encouraged to explore the various parameters involved in choosing a future occupation, to ensure greater autonomy in making a decision. Clients are often asked to make an objective assessment of their capacities and personality in relation to a possible course of study. Psychometric tests or projective tests are carried out at the specific request of a client or are proposed on the basis of the overall picture produced by analysis of the parameters; they provide data which is interpreted with the client within the overall process of elucidation. In certain cases, if a client so requests or if he/she is likely to take an unproductive direction, recommendations are made based on the analysis of data collected, as described above (I).

Choices in higher education are nearly always linked to the vision, however vague, of a future occupation. In order to respond to the apprehension of young people, which is heightened by the present situation in the job market, it is necessary to be familiar with the nature of occupations and able to foresee medium-term or even, if possible, long-term future developments in the labour market (C). It is also useful to develop a network of relationships with people employed in different areas, who are willing to meet students wishing to obtain more than just a verbal description of a specific occupation, and to see for themselves what is actually involved in doing a specific job (N).

Alternating with other colleagues, the guidance counsellor regularly participates in information activities about university education that are held at the university or outside (B).

## 2. University students

Those seeking advice because they no longer feel happy with their initial choice need re-directing, which involves carrying out the specialist process described above.

Some students find themselves in a very difficult academic situation, for instance if they have overstepped the maximum number of years allowed for completion of an examination or "cycle". In such cases the head of the university (*Recteur*) can make an exception and allow the student to repeat a year. In some specific cases an opinion is then requested from the guidance counsellor regarding the student's chances of success should he/she be allowed to enrol for a further year. A detailed examination is undertaken of the student's motivation, objectives and capacities, which leads to a report in accordance with the fundamental ethical rules applicable to the profession (K).

Some students, who have financial difficulties, can be given financial aid through the social services. The guidance counsellor regularly attends meetings of the social assistance committee



(*Comité d'aide sociale*) to furnish an opinion, within the limits of his/her capacity, on these students' chances of success (K).

Regarding students who seek assistance in connection with emotional difficulties, the psychologists' role consists of diagnosing the nature of the complaint, offering specific support and, if the need arises, proposing someone who can provide assistance inside the institution or outside (L).

In the case of the above two categories of students, it is not unusual for contact to be established over the telephone or during a visit made by one (or both) parents.

There is one category of students that deserves a special mention, i.e. foreign students. Whether they belong to the Erasmus programme or not, they have certain special features (see Broonen, 1996a, 1997a, 1997b). However, very often their problems are of a personal nature rather than relating to their choice of studies (D).

### 3. Requests for post-graduate studies

The main emphasis here is on facilitating reflection on expectations in terms of career strategy, change of professional direction or continuing education (D).

#### Other tasks

1. The management of the department implies the following specific tasks (A, B):

- a. Selection of administrative staff (subject to approval by the administration), and selection of extra staff (psychologists) at times of overload (subject to approval by the administration).
- b. Report of activity to the board of governors.
- c. Selecting and ordering of books, booklets and periodicals relating to education and occupations.
- d. Organisation of or participation in liaison meetings with other departments providing assistance to students : educational guidance service (*service guidance-étude*), the commission for the prevention of suicide (*commission prévention du suicide*), etc.

2. The guidance counsellor also participates as an expert in various inter-faculty commissions on the difficulties of students in adapting to university education, and conducts or participates in **scientific research** (e.g., Broonen, 1993, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b, 1997d) or **surveys** (1994, 1997c) to obtain and analyse various types of data. These are published in connection with scientific conferences or in specialist journals, or are the subject of internal reports by the institution that employs him/her.

3. No group activities (E, H) are carried out on account of the lack of available staff.



4. Sometimes students seek advice before preparing to take recruitment tests (O) organised by companies or by educational and vocational counselling centres (*centres d'orientation*) linked to secondary education. Associations or groups sometimes ask to receive information on techniques related to the development of vocational maturity or the transition from secondary school to university (S).

5. "Follow up" action is very rare, essentially because it is difficult to combine this activity with the liberty required in a counselling relationship and also for practical reasons (lack of time) (U).

6. Some counsellors are involved in teaching (M). This is e.g. the case at the University of Liège where the counsellor is responsible for the practical training period undertaken by students in clinical psychology (*clinique d'orientation*).

### **3. Careers director**

Activities relating to general management are carried out by the director of the careers service (A). These activities are directed both towards administrative and academic services within the university and towards the outside world (public service dealing with employment, public and private employers, etc.).

Information giving is also an essential part of the work of the careers service director (B and C). As well the contributions to the development of information materials, the actual information-giving is essential. A large part of the information-giving is related to vacancy information (P). Some services publish bulletins in which vacancies are announced; this publication is sent to all graduates whose name is included in the database (e.g. ULB). Also, the distribution of this information is sometimes done via a WWW server, where all the information on vacancies can be found except the name of the employer. This has had the effect of increasing the service's visibility (with American companies, for instance, who like to use this medium and with foreign students/graduates).

A large part of the information-giving activities are connected to individual interviews, of which advice (I) is sometimes part.

The principal functions of the careers director are:

- to provide support to graduates in search of employment, throughout their career - this involves orientation, search methodology, information, and placement (mainly through a bulletin publicising vacancies - published approximately every 3 weeks);



- to increase students' awareness of the need to reflect on their vocational choice (seminars, lectures);
- to set up links between the university and world of work.

Individual contacts take up most of the director's time. These individual interviews can sometimes be extended to short-term individual counselling (D), often on a specific subject. Group counselling (F and G) is less frequent, though some short-term group counselling might be provided.

The participation in the EURES network within some services (e.g. ULB) has since 1994 added a European dimension to information (research and processing) on employment. Provision of advice on an individual basis increases through participation in these international networks. It has led to frequent contacts with students/graduates telephoning from abroad on matters relating to mobility.

The most important group activity is a 30-hour seminar (M). This seminar is dealing with such topics as how to position oneself on the job market and make use of specific techniques in searching for employment. The seminar is mainly attended by final-year students (80% of the participants in this type of activity) and, to a lesser extent, by recent graduates and persons from outside (e.g. associations to promote placement into employment). The total number of persons registered in 1996-97 was 380. The career service director's work in connection with the seminar concerns the choice of subjects, the choice and "preparation" of contributors, the organisation of the event and assessing its effectiveness.

Other activities are organised by various Faculties, very often with the collaboration of an alumni association or students or teachers association. These are lectures, debates on establishing a career plan, meetings with former students (especially those who have followed less traditional pathways) or meetings with employers.

The referral of individuals (L) mainly covers establishing contact with educational and vocational counsellors (*conseillers psychologiques*) or legal advisors (*conseillers juridiques*) in other services.

Regarding placement (N to Q) the careers service director limits his/her activities to establish contacts between graduates and employers (N). The objective of the service is to ensure equality among graduates seeking placement; there is no involvement in the selection process. In some cases (for instance, an urgent offer that appears to be of interest) some preselection may be effected in the database among graduate candidates on the basis of strictly objective criteria (type of degree, knowledge of languages, etc.) in order to send the offer quickly to the candidates thus preselected (Q).



Links with Belgian and foreign employers (N) encompass two aspects: assessing their needs with regard to staff, and informing employers about the educational content of courses. In some cases (small companies with little knowledge about recruitment) the careers advisor may be required to specify the profile of the person to be recruited.

Finally, the director continues to provide support to graduates throughout their career (U).

## 4. Training and qualifications

4.A. Table 4 : Training and qualifications

Service/system	Occupational roles	Minimum educational qualifications for entry	Initial training in guidance and counselling	In-service training in guidance and counselling
<b>UNIVERSITIES</b>				
Information centre	Director	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT)	none	optional seminars, colloquia, lectures, summer courses
	Information advisor	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) or 3 yrs <i>haute école</i> (social worker)	none	id
Educational and vocational counselling centre	Director	min. 4 yrs (FT) first degree	training in clinical psychol.	id
	Guidance counsellor	min. 4 yrs (FT) first degree	training in clinical psychol.	id
Psychological support service	Psychologist	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT)	training in psychotherapy	id
	Social worker	3 yrs <i>haute école</i> (social worker)	none	id
Educational service	Director	PhD	none	id.
	Educationalist	min. 4 yrs (FT) first degree (1)	none	
Educational support service	Educationalist	min. 4 yrs (FT) first degree (1) or 3 yrs " <i>haute école</i> " (social worker)	none	id
	Teacher, assistant	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) (1)	training provided by the Educational service	training provided by the Educational service
Faculty tutorial system	Assistant educationalist	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) (1)	training provided by the Educational service	training provided by the Educational service
	Disabled students support system	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) or 3 yrs social worker	none	optional seminars, colloquia, lectures, summer courses
Careers service	Director	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT)	none	id.
	Careers advisor	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) or 3 yrs <i>haute école</i>	none	id.
Faculty careers support system	Careers advisor	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) (1) or 3 yrs <i>haute école</i>	none	none



## HAUTES ECOLES

Guidance system	Study advisor	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) or 3 yrs <i>haute école</i>	none	none
	Educationalist	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT)	none	none
	Social worker	3 yrs <i>haute école</i>	none	none
Departmental tutorial support system	Teacher, assistant	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT)	none	none
Careers service	Careers advisor	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) or 3 yrs <i>haute école</i>	none	none
Departmental careers support system	Careers advisor	min. 4 yrs first degree (FT) or 3 yrs <i>haute école</i>	none	none

(1) Many staff members hold or are preparing a PhD degree

#### **4.b. Commentary**

Leaving aside educational and vocational as well as personal counsellors (who in most cases hold a degree in psychology or in educational psychology), the various roles are occupied by persons with a wide range of basic training, in terms both of subject (science, engineering, history, economy, sociology) and type of education (3 or 4 years of non-university higher education, or university degree).

Since uniform standards have not been established in this area for all the universities or *hautes écoles*, the present professional landscape is determined both by the size of institutions (number of students), the historical origin of the various services, the position they occupy within the institution, the options taken by these institutions and the personality of the individuals themselves.

#### **Initial training**

Guidance professionals essentially receive their training through experience.

Usually they are supervised by experienced colleagues during the initial period of their professional career.

- With regard to educational and vocational guidance, the initial motivation generally involves an interest in educational activities and in providing assistance to young people. That is why teacher training specifically meant for university students wishing to take up a teaching career in secondary schools (*agrégation de l'enseignement secondaire*) is sometimes considered to be a useful preparation.

In addition to the qualities required in an educational role, advisors and counsellors must be able to understand the preoccupations of all those who consult the service. This capacity is based on a good knowledge of the various generations of young people, on maintaining regular contact with them in a variety of contexts.

- With regard to educational and vocational counselling, some services seek to recruit psychologists with a training in clinical psychology.

A specialist diploma in psychotherapy has accordingly been organised by universities since 1996 (*diplôme d'études spécialisées en psychothérapie*). This is a full-time three-year programme which includes a theoretical part in the form of lectures and seminars and a supervised practical training period. This programme is not at present generally required as part of initial training.

- Some universities organise short preparatory sessions for new educational assistants and lecturers to prepare them for their new role.



- In the *hautes écoles*, apart from the teachers, the staff members mainly involved in guidance are the social worker and the person responsible for practical training and employment. The social worker is a key player in all matters relating to relations with students and student support. Often this person is a qualified social worker, having spent three years in higher education providing a broad training, and therefore able to tackle matters relating to information, education, psychological support, employment, physical and mental health, etc. The person responsible for practical training and employment acquires his/her professional competence by supervising the training periods and through frequent contact with employers.

## **Continuing education**

With regard to educational and vocational guidance, many short training sessions exist (sessions lasting 2 or 3 days or a few evenings) on a variety of subjects such as: setting up and conducting group activities, demand analysis, listening skills, the use and interpretation of tests, etc.

Such training rarely forms part of academic programmes but is usually set up by professional associations or non-profit-making organisations.

Some continuing education sessions for teachers and assistant teachers are organised by the educational services of universities or by certain teaching experts.

With regard to placement support, careers advisors may receive training as a Eures advisor. The French association for the employment of executives in Paris, APEC (*Association pour l'emploi des cadres*), regularly offers training sessions related to subjects such as «*la démarche de recherche d'emploi*», «*le marché de l'emploi des jeunes diplômés*», «*former de futurs cadres*», in which some careers advisors have participated.

Universities, some non-profit-making organisations and the FOREM offer training in the use of new technologies, e.g. databank management, searching for information on the Internet, etc.

## **4.c. Detailed profiles**

### **4.c.1. Information advisor**

There is no specific initial training for this role. As previously explained, information advisor posts are filled by university graduates with degrees in a variety of subjects, or social workers.

### **4.c.2. Guidance counsellor**

The degree in psychology now takes 5 years to complete (4 years previously). Initial training for psychologists is organised by professional associations or a non-profit-making organisations. Continuing education is mainly based on reading, research and participation in conferences.

#### 4.c.3. Careers director

The situation here is roughly the same. The participation of careers advisors in professional seminars, lectures or conferences related to their practical experience provide them with the chance to improve their work performance.

Other associations such as AGCAS or the CRAC (U.K.), the Bernard Gregory Association, organise seminars for careers advisors.

In conclusion, it can be said that an estimated two years' experience is required for information advisors, educational and vocational counsellors and careers advisors to acquire specific professional competence.

Frequent contacts with other persons responsible for guidance enable them to apply their experience in day-to-day work. Short training sessions allow advisors to improve the quality of their work through greater familiarity with the information or appropriate techniques: this involves participating in conferences organised by the profession at national or international level, and in specialist seminars to promote familiarity with certain techniques.

The FEDORA summer seminar represents one of the main specific training opportunities for counsellors and advisors.



## 5. Conclusions

There is great demand for educational and vocational guidance before, during and after higher education. Such support, next to learning, is the best way of preventing failure and the best preparation to manage difficult situations and complex choices. They make a real contribution in helping young people to blossom, to become independent and to find their place in society, the main objective of any educational undertaking.

As this report shows, each university and each *haute école* wishes to participate in some way in certain guidance activities by setting out services or systems which will be developed as a function of its political options.

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, the services linked to the various types of guidance are provided by professionals, who are often recognized as specialists (third level). However, guidance is a matter that concerns everyone, and the professionals cannot cope with the demand on their own. This explains why the role of teachers and assistants as first-level participants is of capital importance.

In view of the large number of students they cater for, complete universities (UCL, ULB, ULG) are able to offer a wide range of effective specialist services in the various areas of guidance; the same is not true for smaller universities (nor for the *hautes écoles*). This has not prevented some of them from developing recognized competences in some areas of guidance.

In Belgium, educational and vocational guidances are closely linked. This is shown by the following two examples:

- since higher education is a time of preparation for a career, pupils are encouraged to adopt a joint approach towards their choice of higher education and their plans for a future career;
- career guidance activities are particularly effective when they take place during the course of study and thus enable students to progressively prepare a future career.

Each university also stresses different aspects of educational and vocational guidance.

As regards career guidance, for many years this was an area avoided by most universities. The careers services that did exist were the result of initiatives taken by Faculty or alumni associations. The situation has changed over the last ten years; some universities now offer their students high quality career support services. It should, however, be stressed that the number of staff employed in this capacity falls far short of the needs of students and recent graduates. In order to respond to the demand for guidance, group activities would need to be more strongly developed.

However, existing staff levels are insufficient to meet the demand; and the staff need more training possibilities.



The guidance system is more oriented to educational guidance : all the universities and many of the *hautes écoles* have been investing in learner support for some years on account of the high failure rate, particularly during the first year in higher education. Failure has led to much thought and has in particular encouraged universities to consider the way in which the first year is organised.

This report highlights the guidance services provided throughout the French-speaking Community of Belgium. A further step would be to undertake a systematic analysis of student demand and the means brought into play in responding to this demand, instead of analysing supply in terms of what actually exists.

The following three criteria should be taken into consideration in analysing guidance activities as a whole, in order to compare such activities and to reach conclusions with regard to innovative actions.

**First criterion :** the timing of student requests. Clients requests usually coincide with various periods of transition :

- transition between secondary school and higher education;
- transition during higher education;
- transition on completion of higher education.

**Second criterion :** the subject of student requests (reference may be made to the holistic guidance model developed by R. Van Esbroeck).

Demand mainly falls into one of the following categories :

- educational and vocational guidance (educational and vocational advice and counselling, career guidance)
- learner support (method of study, time management, supervision in various disciplines and in practical work)
- personal guidance.

**Third criterion :** the type of support provided by the institution

- group activities (animation, development sessions);
- individual meetings.

The sum of all the activities mentioned in this report could constitute the three major main lines in a new guidance paradigm (activities directed at guidance professionals would also need to be added).

This approach would enable each institution to take stock of its strengths and weaknesses or shortcomings, and to define new lines of action, based on the guidance policy it seeks to pursue. Since conclusions often form the basis for further action, the implementation of this analysis will be tackled during the coming year.



Lastly, mention must be made of some of the characteristics of guidance in the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

### 1. Diversity in student population

Developments among the client population include :

- a greater diversity in the educational history of students (owing to the variety of pathways possible in secondary school);
- greater variety in students' social background;
- more widespread affective vulnerability, probably due to difficult family backgrounds;
- socio-economic difficulties due to the current economic situation;
- greater diversity in the origin of foreign students coming from developed or developing countries, and more students with economic and political problems due to the instability of their home country.

The new diversity in student population produces a certain instability, which becomes more apparent during pivotal events in life, such as entry into higher education.

### 2. Generalist role

Because of this, it is increasingly important to have an overall view of individuals. Whatever the degree of specialisation, the "generalist" role of the guidance worker is necessary. Requests from clients usually require an overall approach in order to identify the various aspects of the request.

This is one of the reasons why partially shared continuing education for all those involved in guidance would encourage this new type of approach : learning and sharing experience with national and foreign colleagues.

### 3. Trainer

Some guidance workers tend to carry out a new role, that of training provision. They are recognised as experts in their field and as such they work with other professionals to offer their experience and their methodology during meetings or training sessions.

### 4. About new technologies

Mastering, using and developing tools based on new technologies represents one of the main areas where counsellors and advisors are expected to develop new skills and to provide new services to students. This point needs some further developments.

The various aspects of student counselling are, like many other areas, affected by the rapid development and multiplicity of new technologies that exist in our society:

- the development of computer tools such as data bases and expert systems,

- the development of office tools such as computer-aided presentations,
- the development of communications tools such as messaging and Web navigation, telephone services and vocal servers,
- the development of new media and multimedia.

This multitude of ways and means requires new competencies or at the very least that counsellors update their skills to make adequate use of this new technology as it applies to their role and a well-informed student population.

Special mention should be made of the ability to :

- inventorise these new sources of information : databases, relevant Internet links, new media using multimedia, software to assist in decision-making;
- become sufficiently familiar with these new technologies for daily use with the public;
- choose suitable media and technological tools according to what the objectives are : information, documentation, publishing, counselling, assistance in decision-making.
- learn to develop, set up and offer new services to students with the help of these new tools : setting up databases, on-line services;
- exchange skills and experience on this subject at a European level.

A lot is at stake because the way we work will change through the use of these new technologies; advantage should be taken of the new opportunities they offer to organise counselling work and services for students, but at the same time their quality and relevance in relation to our objectives must be assessed.

There are many databases that furnish information on education and occupations. It is necessary to ask oneself whether the sources are relevant and to evaluate the relative value of some of the international databases. The objective is to present students with information that is well structured, instructive and objective.

Although many of the tests used in educational and vocational guidance and support in the decision-making process follow standards and specific rules governing their use, much of the relevant software available is not subject to the same standards. It is necessary to distinguish professional products from those meant for the general public. While the objective is to help young people to perceive their interests and motivations more clearly, it must also make them aware of the system of values that condition their decisions. Software to assist in decision-making can be a vehicle for value systems without always explicitly making this evident.

With regard to placement support, the question is how young people can use these technologies to make their search for a job more efficient and discerning. On-line services that confront supply and demand often increase the passivity of young job seekers whereas the objective of counsellors in placement systems is to stress individual responsibility.



Educationalists and teachers have at their disposal a variety of presentation and assessment resources, multimedia and interactive information, and distance learning techniques. It is not simply a matter of using such tools, but of using them to pursue explicit educational objectives, while taking into consideration the position and the role of learners in these new educational contexts.

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## **Annexe : Addresses**

### CIUF

The Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française de Belgique brings together the nine universities and faculties in the French-speaking Community of Belgium :

"<http://www.ciuf.be/>"

### The universities

- Faculté Polytechnique de Mons (FPMs) "<http://www.fpms.ac.be/>"

- Faculté Universitaire des Sciences Agronomiques de Gembloux (FUSAGx)

"<http://www.fsagx.ac.be/>"

- Facultés universitaires catholiques de Mons (FUCAM) "<http://www.fucam.ac.be/>"

- Facultés universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix (FUNDP)

"<http://www.fundp.ac.be/fundp.html>"

- Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis (FUSL) "<http://www.fusl.ac.be/Home.html>"

- Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) "<http://www.ucl.ac.be/intro.html>"

- Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) "<http://www.ulb.ac.be>"

- Université de Liège (Ulg) "<http://www.ulg.ac.be/>"

- Université de Mons-Hainaut (UMH) "<http://www.umh.ac.be/>"

- Institut de pédagogie universitaire et des multimédias (IPM) "<http://www.ipm.ucl.ac.be/>"



*1. Synthesis reports produced for the New Skills Project*

Watts, A.G., & Van Esbroeck, R. (1998). *New Skills for New Futures: Higher Education Guidance and Counselling in the European Union*. Brussels: VUBPress

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*2. Country reports produced for the New Skills Project*

A Schilling, M. & Moisl, A. (1998). *New Skills for New Futures: Higher Education Guidance and Counselling in Austria*. Louvain-la-Neuve: FEDORA.

B(Fl) Van Esbroeck, R. (1998). *New Skills for New Futures: Higher Education Guidance and Counselling in Flanders (Belgium)*. Louvain-la-Neuve: FEDORA.

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GR Marouda-Chatjoulis, A. (1998). *New Skills for New Futures: Higher Education Guidance and Counselling in Greece*. Louvain-la-Neuve: FEDORA.

IRL Aungier, C. (1998). *New Skills for New Futures: Higher Education Guidance and Counselling in Ireland*. Louvain-la-Neuve: FEDORA.

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