

BELGIUM [2] - 2012

FORMAT FOR COMPETENCE-BASED FORMULATION OF FINAL OBJECTIVES¹

A. BASIC INFORMATION

Country:	Belgium – Flanders
Title of initiative:	[NL] <i>Een format voor het competentiegericht formuleren van einddoelen</i> [EN] Format for competence-based formulation of final objectives
Coordinator/ Organization:	Flemish Ministry of Education and Training
Key competences addressed:	[NL] <i>Communicatie in de moedertaal</i> [EN] Communication in the mother tongue (minimal); [NL] <i>Communicatie in vreemde talen</i> [EN] Communication in foreign languages (minimal); [NL] <i>Wiskundige competentie en basiscompetenties op het gebied van exacte wetenschappen en technologie</i> [EN] Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology (only technology competences); [NL] <i>Digitale competentie</i> [EN] Digital competences; [NL] <i>Leercompetentie</i> [EN] Learning to learn; [NL] <i>Sociale en burgerschapscompetentie</i> [EN] Social and civic competences; [NL] <i>Ontwikkeling van initiatief en ondernemerszin</i> [EN] Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; [NL] <i>Cultureel bewustzijn en culturele expressie</i> [EN] Cultural awareness and expression;
Type of initiative and channels used for implementation (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)	The format will be used to update existing final objectives and to develop new final objectives.
Partners:	
Scope: (student/teacher/school level; local/regional/national)	Community level (education in Belgium is governed by the communities: the Flemish, French and German speaking communities each have their own education system, which is implemented in each school). The format will be used for developing competence-based final objectives which will be implemented in each school.

¹ The format can be found in Annex.

Learning context: (formal or non-formal)	Formal
School education level/s: (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)	Preschool education, primary education, secondary education (lower and upper), adult education and part-time education in the arts.
Target groups:	Developers of final objectives: mainly from the Flemish Ministry of Education and experts in the field of education (teachers and principals, coordinators, advisors on pedagogy, teacher trainers and academic personnel).
Time frame: (start and end date)	The format for the competence-based formulation of final objectives was submitted for approval to the Minister of Education and Training on 13 September 2012 (see below: 'How the initiative/reform is being implemented).
Relevant links:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· For further information about education in Flanders : http://www.vlaanderen.be/en/publications/detail/education-in-flanders-a-broad-view-of-the-flemish-educational-landscape2008· Flemish Educational Council (VLOR):http://www.vlor.be/· Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV): www.akov.be

B. SUMMARY

In Flanders, the Flemish government determines the final objectives to be achieved according to subject. Educational suppliers can concretise the final objectives in their curriculum, provided the final objectives are included in a recognisable way.

The evolution towards competence-based education, changes in the Flemish Qualification Structure and the need for more coherent and systematic final objectives led to the development of the “format for competence-based formulation of final objectives”, which can be used for formulating final objectives in preschool education, primary and secondary education (general as well as special education), adult education (including Dutch for immigrants and foreign languages) and part-time education in the arts.

The formula is currently in the initial development phase and has not yet been implemented but it is intended to be a permanent work-in-progress. Every time the final objectives are revised/developed, the format will be evaluated and can be adapted if necessary.

Firstly, the format has to be approved by the Minister of Education and Training following which the Flemish Educational Council will give its advice. Once the format has been approved, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV) will use it the format to revise/develop the final objectives according to a ‘final objective calendar’

C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

In Flanders, the Flemish government determines final objectives according to subject. Educational suppliers can concretise the final objectives in their own curriculum by means of teaching methods, evaluation methods and educational philosophy. They can also add their own objectives but the curriculum must include the final objectives in a recognisable way.

There were three main reasons behind the decision to introduce this initiative to enable a competence-based formulation of these final objectives:

1) Evolution towards competence-based education:

- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (Official Journal of the European Union, 394, 10-18);
- Publication by the Flemish Educational Council: 'Competence-oriented education. An orientation.' (Vlaamse Onderwijsraad. (2008). Competentie-ontwikkelend onderwijs; een verkenning. Brussel: Garant);
- Guidelines of the Flemish minister of education on the reform of secondary education (Smet, P. (2010). Mensen doen schitteren – Eerste oriëntatienota Hervorming Secundair Onderwijs. Brussel: Vlaams Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, 15-16.);
- Competence-based education has been part of the in-service training initiative of the Flemish Government for the school years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013;
- Learning outcomes in higher education.

2) Introduction of the Flemish Qualification Structure

- Article 5: "The qualifications framework distinguishes between eight levels, ranging from level 1 to level 8. Each level within the framework is described by means of a level descriptor. A level descriptor offers a generic description of the characteristics of the competences typical for qualifications at that level, and consists of five descriptor elements: knowledge, skills, context, autonomy, and responsibility. These elements determine the level of the qualification. The level descriptors are used to describe and rank both educational and professional qualifications."
- Article 2.17: "Educational qualifications are aligned to sets of competences that are necessary to function and participate in society, with which further studies in secondary or higher education can be undertaken or with which professional activities can be performed."
- In secondary and adult education the Flemish Qualification Structure has already been implemented into legislation. In preschool education, primary education and part-time education in the arts it will be implemented shortly.

3) Need for more coherent and systematic final objectives

- The Flemish Educational Council (VLOR) emphasizes the need for more coherence between the final objectives at different educational levels, subjects, etc. In the VLOR all education stakeholders consult one another on education and training policy and, on the basis of those consultations, the VLOR gives advice to the Flemish Minister of Education and Training and to the Flemish Parliament.

Objectives:

The format aims:

- to allow final objectives to be formulated in a competence-based way;
- to operationalize the use of descriptor elements from the Flemish Qualification Structure (knowledge, skills, context, autonomy, responsibility) in the formulation of final objectives;
- to develop a more consistent and systematic description of final objectives so that the curriculum is more uniform, thus increasing the readability and usability for all stakeholders;
- to respect the identity of the different levels of education, subjects, etc.

Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

The implementation of the format has implications in several areas:

- The format will be used in the development of new final objectives and the updating of existing final objectives;
- Initial and in-service teacher education: extra attention should be given to competence-based learning in teacher training and professional development (e.g. competence-based evaluation);
- Assessment: the procedures related to regular assessment at macro-level may be adapted to assessment that is more competence based. In the future, it will not only be the 'final objectives' that are assessed, but also competences. The government may have to examine how quality-control on a system level can be consistent with the implementation of competence-based curricula;
- School autonomy: curriculum developers have to include the competences in a recognisable way in their curriculum. There remains a possibility for final objectives to be added.
- Users (publishers and developers of teaching materials, teacher trainers, teachers, the general public) will have a clear overview of the competences that pupils and students are expected to develop. Moreover, they will have a clear view of the relationship between each final objective and its associated competence.

Overall approach (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

Overarching strategy (see above)

Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:

All key competences will be developed within different subjects in the curriculum (cross-curricular final objectives are highlighted in bold):

Key competence	Subject (Level: Pre=Preschool, 1=Primary, 2=Secondary)
1 Communication in the mother tongue	Dutch (Pre, 1, 2)
2 Communication in foreign languages	French (1, 2), English (2), etc.
3 Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology	Introduction to mathematics (Pre), environmental studies (Pre, 1), mathematics (1, 2), sciences (2), technology (2), etc.
4 Digital competence	ICT (1, 2), etc.
5 Learning to learn	Learning to learn (1, 2), etc.
6 Social and civic competences	Environmental studies (Pre, 1), social skills (1), history (2) physical health and safety (2), mental health (2), socio-relational development (2), environmental and sustainable development (2), political-legal society (2), etc.
7 Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship	Socio-economic society (2), etc.
8 Cultural awareness and expression	Music education (Pre, 1) art education (2), socio-cultural society (2), etc.

Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:

Specific subjects as well as a cross-curricular approach (see above)

How the initiative/reform is being implemented (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

- Firstly, the format has to be approved by the Minister of Education and Training, following which the Flemish Educational Council will give its advice.
- At the same time the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (AKOV) will be working on a 'final objective calendar', which will contain all curricular and cross-curricular subjects within preschool education, primary and secondary education (ordinary and special), adult education (including general education, Dutch for immigrants and foreign languages) and part-time education in the arts, showing the date by which the final objectives for these subjects will be revised.
- Once the format has been approved, AKOV will use it to revise/develop the final objectives according to the 'final objective calendar'.
- Educational suppliers will not be obliged to use the format for the development of the curriculum.

Present stage/phase of implementation:

First development stage, not yet implemented (see below).

Pedagogical issues (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

No information provided.

What works well (to identify enablers):

The current final objectives were not developed using a competence-based approach and lack coherence and consistency. Furthermore they do not include descriptor elements of the Flemish Qualification Structure (knowledge, skills, context, autonomy, and responsibility). The introduction of this format will change this.

Challenges and how these are being addressed (to identify obstacles and solutions):

Some educational suppliers are critical of the so-called 'economic perspective' being transferred to education:

- some are critical of the Flemish Qualification Structure and more specifically of the educational qualifications. In particular they are hesitant about using descriptor elements for the final objectives of preschool and primary education.
- some educational suppliers are averse to the use of competences in education.

How these challenges are being addressed:

- AKOV has written a paper that clarifies the format and explains the motivation, purposes, definitions and operationalization of 'final objectives', 'competences', 'descriptor elements', 'reading guide' as well as the expected impact.

Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used (e.g. internal/external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

The format will be a permanent work-in-progress. Every time the final objectives are revised/developed, the format will be evaluated and can be adapted if necessary.

Impact (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

No information provided.

Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:

- When the Flemish Educational Council has given its advice, all educational suppliers can consult this online (<http://www.vlor.be/>).
- The format and the corresponding guidelines will be distributed to all members of the 'development committees of final objectives'.
- The format will be put on the highly consulted AKOV website (www.akov.be).

Next steps/follow-up:

Firstly, the format has to be approved by the Minister of Education and Training, following which the Flemish Educational Council will give its advice.

Once the format has been approved, AKOV will use it while revising/developing final objectives, according to the 'final objective calendar'.

Additional information:

The relationship between competences and final objectives:

- A competence consists of several final objectives. A competence is always read in conjunction with these final objectives.
- A final objective contains knowledge, skills and/or attitudes.
- A competence is the ability to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes when performing social activities, and to integrate these into one's actions

(Flemish Parliament, Article 2.6 of the Decree of 30 April 2009 on the Flemish Qualification Structure)

The KEYCONET project has been funded with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Responsibility for this publication lies solely with the author, and the Commission is not responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Annex - The format

Educational level, stage, grade ...

classification principle ...

COMPETENCE: ...					
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:					
final target 001	final target 002	final target 003	final target 004	final target 005	final target 006
final target 007					
final target 008		final target 009		final target 010	
final target 011			final target 012		
final target 013	final target 014	final target 015	final target 016		
final target 017					
CONTEXT, AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY:					
...					

classification principle ...

COMPETENCE: ...					
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:					
final target 018			final target 019		
final target 020	final target 021	final target 022	final target 023	final target 024	final target 025
final target 026					
CONTEXT, AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY:					
...					

classification principle ...

COMPETENCE: ...	
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:	
... (final targets)	
(ev.) CONTEXT, AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY:	
...	

classification principle n

COMPETENCE n: ...		
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:		
final target n-7		
final target n-6		final target n-5
final target n-4	final target n-3	final target n-2
final target n-1		final target n
CONTEXT, AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY:		
...		

CONTEXT, AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY:

...