



Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

PURE Regional Profile

FLANDERS, BELGIUM

Appendix 1

Region:

Flanders, Belgium

Principal PURE contact:

Jan Geens

Title:

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Name of main collaborating region:

Flanders Region

*Suggested members of your Regional Co-ordinating Group (RCG) (between 3 and 5 Persons):
Name, organisation and email:*

- 1. Ann Van den Cruyce, Work and Social Economy**
ann.vandecruyce@wse.vlaanderen.be
- 2. Paul Zeeuwts, Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders**
pz@iwt.be
- 3. Marijke Verdoodt, Welfare, Health and Culture**
Marijke.verdoodt@wvc.vlaanderen.be
- 4. Katrien Hoebeke, HR at Infrabel**
katrien.hoebeke@infrabel.be
- 5. Bert De Bakker, Hospital Management**
vlaamsegezondheidsraad@vlaanderen.be

Suggested Peer Reviewer from region:

'Identity' of Region (eg. governmental admin. region; special development zone; informal 'working reality' region, etc)

Flanders is a federated entity of the federal state of Belgium. It is the umbrella term for the Flemish Region (the northern half of Belgium) and the Flemish Community (the inhabitants of the Flemish Region and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Brussels). Both are governed by the Flemish Parliament and Flemish Government. Town and country planning, housing, road infrastructure, culture, education and tourism are exclusively regional competences.

Flanders has no natural resources; industry is exclusively focused on processing. In addition to chemicals, construction, food and drink are particularly important in this region. Many people are employed in the metal sector and car making. Market positions have been maintained in textiles, including carpet manufacturers and manufacturers of weaving machines.

It also has a large service sector. Agriculture accounts for only a small proportion of GDP. Culture and Tourism are very important.

REGIONAL PORTRAIT

(Please list key issues of interest and relevance to PURE)

(i) Approx. population and any key features: (e.g. new migrant numbers)

In 2008: Flanders has 6,161,600 inhabitants.

The population density is the highest in the EU: 452 inhabitants/sq km.

Immigrants and non-Belgian residents: 354,370 or 5,75% of the Flemish population.

Flanders' population is aging. See www.flanders.be

(ii) Other essential geographical features:

Flanders is mainly a flat plain, irrigated by rivers and canals (like the Leie, the Scheldt, the Brussels-Scheldt maritime canal, the Maas) and bordered by the North Sea in the west. More towards the southern edges, there are low hills and small valleys. The region has a temperate maritime climate. See www.meteo.be

(iii) Economy, industries and employment features:

Flanders is a key economic region within Europe. It owes this position to its central location in the middle of the Western European industrial area.

The economy is characterised by high productivity and products are mostly exported. Flemish exports account for about 80% of Belgium's GDP. GDP composition per sector (Belgium):

- agriculture 1.1%;
- industry 24.5%;
- services: 74.4% (2007 est.)

GDP per capita: € 30,000 (2006) for Flanders.

Flanders has been investing in high added-value, quality products and services, in numerous sectors, such as:

- Technology – automotive, mechatronics, IT
- Healthcare – pharmaceuticals, medical imaging, ...
- Durable and luxury products – diamonds, fashion, design, ...
- Service industries
- Biotechnology, environmental technology, and research in the life sciences
- Micro-electronics
- Chemical and metallurgical processing
- Petrochemical industries

An advantage for the economy is the relatively high level of education and multilingualism among the professional population.

Employment features:

- Labour force: 1,454,000 men and 1,156,000 women
- Activity degree: 65%
- Unemployment rate: 6.4 (2007 est.)

Websites: www.flanders.be & www.flanderstrade.com

Also: <http://www4.vlaanderen.be/dar/svr/Cijfers/Pages/Excel.aspx>

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE REGION

(i) *Economic issues:*

1. How to develop innovation and creativity.
2. The recent financial developments.

Key websites for more information:

1. <http://www.flanderstoday.eu/>
2. http://www4.vlaanderen.be/dar/svr/publicaties/Publicaties/conjunctuurnota/cn_oktober_2008.pdfetc

(ii) *Social issues including health:*

1. Ageing population and its influence on social security and economy.
2. Health issues related to environmental issues.

Key websites for more information:

1. <http://www.covive.be/index.php?pg=15>
2. <http://ideas.repec.org/a/mes/ijgenv/v8y2008i1p90-111.html>

(iii) *Environmental issues:*

1. The environment is exposed to intense pressure from human activities: urbanization, dense transportation network, industry, extensive animal breeding and crop cultivation.

Key websites for more information:

1. http://www.indexmundi.com/belgium/environment_current_issues.htm



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(iv) *Cultural issues:*

1. Promoting the Flemish culture.

Key websites for more information:

1.

(v) *Other issues or dimensions:*
(e.g. *political & administrative, civic and participation*)

1. Situated at the crossroads of three cultures: German, Roman and Anglo-Saxon: multilingualism is normal, every Fleming speaks at least one other language.

2. Art, dance, fashion, music, literature, etc.

Key websites for more information:

1. www.visitflanders.be

2. www.artsflanders.be



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UNIVERSITY AND OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs) PORTRAIT

(Please describe in a few words the HE system operating in the region, in terms of any important matters, the following):

(i) *Structure, legal and financial status of HE system*

Each Flemish Province has a University, except West-Flanders. The Higher Education Act provides for the establishment of associations between universities and university colleges. An association is an official entity regulating the cooperation of a university and one or more university colleges.

All Universities and University Colleges, recognized by the Government of Flanders, are state-financed and their programmes are accredited according to the Higher Education Act. Staff are paid by the Government and the students have to pay a minimal enrolment fee of approx. € 500, with possibilities of means-tested reductions.

(ii) *Main priorities for the HEIs in the region*

To implement the Bologna process and to a certain extent also the Lisbon strategy. Priorities are internal and external quality and obtaining the accreditation by NVAO – see: www.nvao.net

(iii) *Relevant recent changes and developments in policy and/or practice*

Implementing the Bachelor-Master structures. The HEI-system consists of professional bachelor's degrees and two-tier academic bachelor's and master's degrees.

University Colleges offering master programmes have to align themselves to the criteria of research in use at the Universities.

Introduction of flexible learning paths makes LLL possible and has widened the access.

(iv) *Ways of organising and managing within the HEIs*

The Higher Education Act provides for the establishment of Associations between Universities and University Colleges. An Association is an official entity regulating the cooperation of a university and one or more university colleges. The partners may transfer their powers regarding education, scientific research and social society services to this association.

See: www.vlir.be & www.vlhora.be

HEIs in REGION

1. KUL	Leuven	http://associatie.kuleuven.be/eng
2. Gent University	Gent	www.augent.be
3. Free University of Brussels	Brussel	www.vub.ac.be
4. Hasselt University	Hasselt	www.auhl.be
5. Antwerp University	Antwerpen	www.ua.ac.be



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Appendix 2

Regional Aspirations and Agenda

1. *What aspects of regional development and the role of higher education in particular do you wish to engage with, focus on and improve, through your involvement in PURE?*

(a) *From the point of view of the region and its priorities, objectives and ways of working?*

To remain competitive Flanders' industry and SMEs should engage in more creativity and innovation. To make this sustainable much more attention should be given by Flemish HEIs to entrepreneurial and internationally linked education engaging in more creativity and innovation to counteract the looming recession.

Flanders as a region has become more and more a real multicultural environment, especially the greater cities in the first place – Brussels, Gent, Antwerp, Mechelen - , but more and more the influx of migrants (people coming from East-Europe, the Balkan area, former Yugoslavia, Northern Africa, etc.) is also increasing in sub-regions and smaller cities. Primary and secondary education and HEIs are working on cultural diversity but still have a long way to go to alter the growing reactionary societal tendencies.

Focusing on inter-culturality

(b) *From the point of view of the higher education institutions and their priorities, objectives and ways of working?*

Flanders should organise his higher education in such a way that more citizens (young migrants, relatives of lower income families, aging people) should have access to higher education. Preparation to a right study-choice must be better organised also by focusing on the possibilities on the future labour market.

2. *In terms of the wider global, political, administrative, economic and environmental setting it was agreed at the PURE Glasgow working meeting (September 2008) that the following aspects (included in Briefing Paper No. 3) were of wide general significance for the PURE project as a whole:*

(a) *What role are strong national and/or regional policies in favour of third mission playing to overcome barriers for PURE work in regions?*

National and regional policies in favour of the third mission of HEIs in Flanders exist, but prevail to many short-term perspectives. In a global setting cooperation between the region and its centres of knowledge will have to set up long-term perspectives and sustainable development and actions e.g. concerning social and environmental problems.

(b) *Will strong national and regional policies in favour of sustainable development have an impact on PURE activity on environmental issues?*

HEIs for industrial engineers are working on renewable energy. The question remains what their impact is on SMEs and regional economy.

In some Flemish provinces eco tourism is worked out and the responsible provincial government and Flemish ministry work steadily on giving Flanders also in that respect an attractive image.

Transport in a dense populated area like Flanders asks for sustainable answers in the long term: research concerning the environmental impact nowadays and in the long term should increase, and also information and communication to the public in this respect should be studied at in our HEIs.

The fact that only 30% of the houses in Flanders are isolated enough is an indication that still much can be done: research, information, communication.

- (c) *Will strong policies on implementing LLL at national and/or regional levels have an impact on PURE activities? (LLL = life long learning?)?*

Yes they certainly have. Flemish Governmental LLL-policies are set up and worked out in regional centres that organise courses in different settings to raise new competences for unemployed and migrants. Also European programmes on LLL are implemented well for students and others.

- (d) *Will strong national and/or regional innovation and research policies have as impact on PURE activities?*

They certainly have. The ministry of education and the government have taken decisions to increase research at universities and to implement research in the university colleges. The way in which this will lead to innovation especially in SMEs remains still unfulfilled.

- (e) *Will strong and/or regional policy on administrative and governance issues have an impact on PURE activities?*

They certainly will have. At the moment the Flemish government has installed an ad hoc commission that has to make a report on further rationalisation of the higher educational sector. When these plans will be agreed the actually structures of universities and university colleges will change into professional colleges and academic universities.

This will probably have an impact on employment of bachelors and masters and on the contacts between HEIs and industry.

- (f) *How is the third mission seen and developed, and how central is it to the future especially of non-elite universities?*

Up till now unfortunately the third mission is not very well developed in Flemish universities and university-colleges. A much stronger and sustainable cooperation between HEIs and SMEs will make more regional innovation possible, but is actually not enough developed.

Everybody agrees that teaching staff and students must be made more mobile (national and international) and find inspiration for innovation and creativity in working together with SMEs as well in practical research as in doing work placements.

Some HEIs are organising cultural events, e.g. concerts, in cooperation with city or community and with enterprises that reach out to a broader public. But also in this respect there is a lack of sustainability.



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(g) *Is the globalisation of the economy changing regions' ecological, social and cultural policies? If so, how will it impact on PURE activities in the region and the university?*

Globalisation is affecting of course all policies. To upgrade environmental protection and to protect social welfare and economic growth, new competences and new technological development are needed. To cope with this transition leaders of HEIs understand more and more their responsibility and that of their institutions to start as quick as possible with new capacity building and with real and sustainable cooperation with region, cities and industry.

3. *At this stage, do you have a clear sense which subject(s) of special interest you would like to concentrate on in a PURE regions sub-group; for example – ecotourism, SME development, mega-events like the Olympics, cultural development and creative arts, etc?*

We would be interested in the following sub-group specialism(s):

- **SME development**
- **Integration of people out of migration**
- **Ecological sustainability**
- **Closer cooperation of universities and business**
- **HEIs and the aging society: research on healthcare for elderly people**
- **Reducing social exclusion and poverty**

4. *Are there any other points that you wish to mention at this stage?*

Not yet.