



## Belgium - Flemish Community (Flanders)

This report describes the structure of the national higher education system in Flanders (Belgium - Flemish Community)<sup>1</sup>, focusing on the institutional types as defined by national categories. It builds on the Eurydice Report on the national higher education system but complements it with quantitative information on the role of higher education institution (HEI) types in national systems, based on data derived from the European Tertiary Education Register (<http://www.eter-project.eu>) for the period 2011-2019.

### Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to Eurydice<sup>2</sup>, in Flanders, only institutions recognised by the Flemish government may award the degrees of Bachelor and Master. They consist of:

- officially registered institutions
- private registered institutions.

The officially registered institutions are institutions for higher education which were recognised by the authorities prior to 2004 and which can rely on government funding for their education and research activities. These institutions are listed in the Higher Education Register (<http://www.highereducation.be/home>).

It concerns the following institutions:

- university colleges (Hogeschool)
- research universities (Universiteit)
- institutions for post-initial education, scientific research and scientific services (not included in ETER):
- other officially registered institutions (not included in ETER)

One special institution is the Transnational University Limburg (tUL). This university was founded under a treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders and is therefore a bi-national institution. In Flanders, it is an officially registered institution.

The private registered institutions for higher education are all the private institutions which have successfully completed a registration process and have been officially registered by the Flemish Government. The programme(s) offered by these institutions must pass the programmes test of the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) before the institutions can register. Private registered institutions for higher education are currently not included in ETER.

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<sup>1</sup> Belgium is a federal state with communities and regions. Education is a community matter: the Flemish Community (Flanders) is responsible for the education and training policy on the Flemish territory including education in Dutch in Brussels.

<sup>2</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/types-higher-education-institutions-3\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/types-higher-education-institutions-3_en)

## Main institutional characteristics. Legal status and the right to award a PhD

Universities (*Universiteit*) are all public or government-dependent institutions and have the right to award PhDs. In total, about a quarter of all Flemish HEIs included in ETER are Universities and equivalent institutions. University Colleges (*Hogeschool*) account for almost three quarters of all Flemish HEIs in ETER. However, none of them awards PhDs.

Table 1 below provides a quantitative overview on the main institutional characteristics by HEI type. Universities (*Universiteit*) are all public or government-dependent institutions and have the right to award PhDs. In total, about a quarter of all Flemish HEIs included in ETER are Universities and equivalent institutions. University Colleges (*Hogeschool*) account for almost three quarters of all Flemish HEIs in ETER. However, none of them awards PhDs.

Table 1. Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2019

Category		N	Public	Private government-dependent	PhD awarding
University	Universiteit	6	3	3	6
University College	Hogeschool	16	6	10	0
Total		22	9	13	6

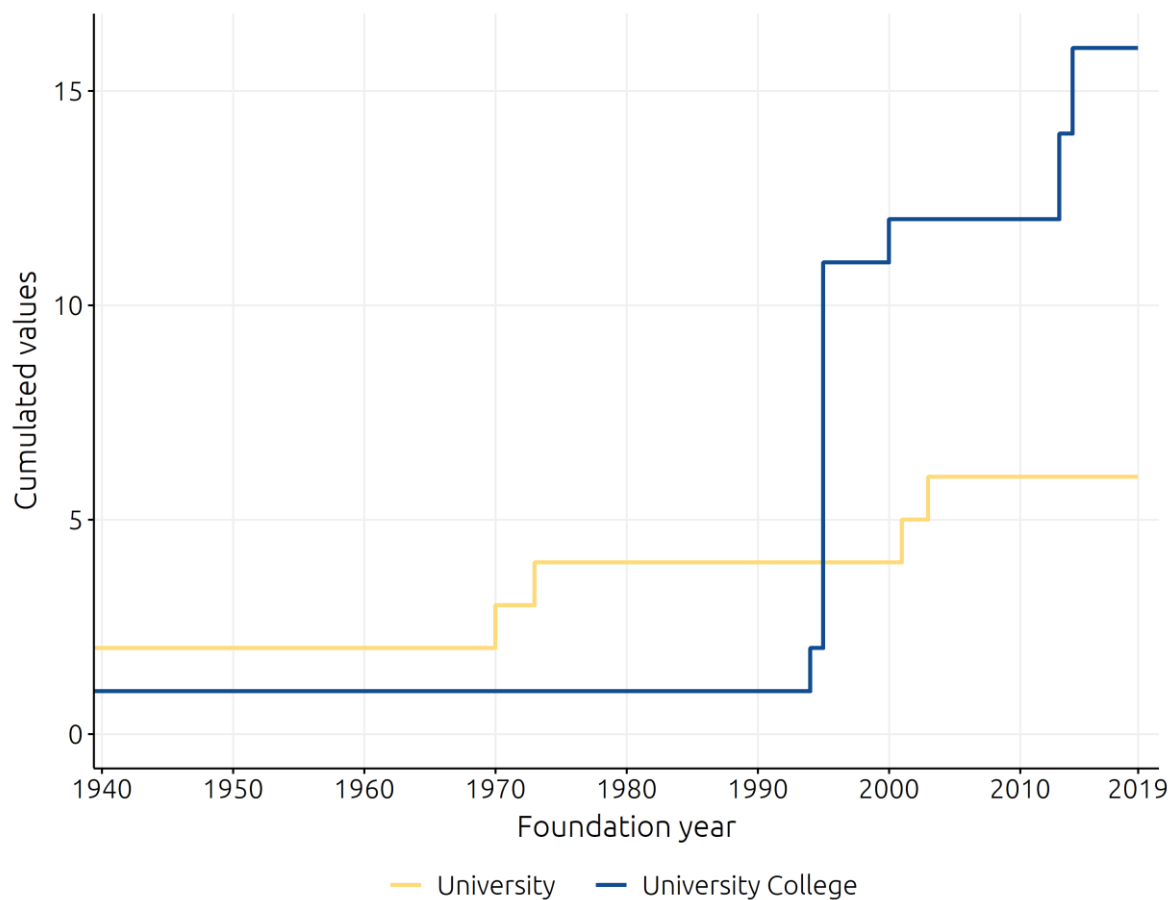
Note: Numbers reflect inclusion in ETER

## Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types

Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of Flanders's higher education and its evolution over time.

Figure 1 shows that, despite ancient historical roots, the expansion of the system in terms of the number of HEIs is relatively recent. While the KU Leuven, the oldest Flemish university, dates back to 1425, only six other HEIs were founded before the 20th century, including five Universities (*Universiteit*) and one University College/University of Applied Science (*Hogeschool*). The figure shows two distinct patterns of expansion for Universities and University Colleges with the latter one lagging behind the expansion periods of the Universities. First, while two Universities were founded in the 1970s, the first wave of expansion for University Colleges only occurred in the late 1990s, increasing the number by 11 institutions. The second period of expansion started the 2000s with the opening of two more Universities followed by the foundation of four University Colleges the early 2010s. Since 2014 the number of institutions has been stable.

Figure 1. Foundation year of HEIs by type

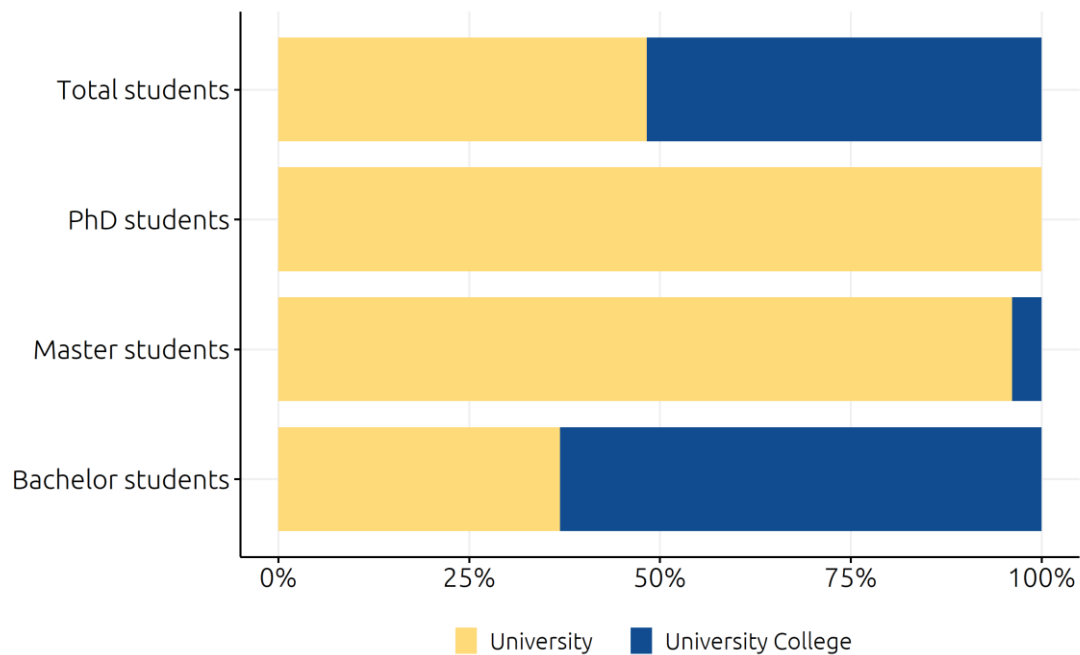


However, the figure above only displays organisations still independent at the end of the reporting period and does not account for mergers and other demographic events. The most recent foundation of a University in Flanders, the *Universiteit Antwerpen* in 2003, was for example the result of a merger between UFSIA (Universitaire Faculteiten Sint-Ignatius te Antwerpen), RUCA (Rijksuniversitair Centrum Antwerpen), and UIA (Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen) with the foundation of the ancestors dating back to the 1960s. Similar, the formal foundation of the latest Hogeschool, *Thomas More Mechelen-Antwerpen*, is also the result of a merger between two prior existing institutions with roots back until 1922.

### How are students distributed?

Figure 2 shows the number of students enrolled by level and type of HEI for the year 2019. While the total number of students is relatively balanced between Universities and University Colleges, there are systematic differences between educational levels. In fact, University Colleges account for 60% of all Bachelor students but only for 4% of all Master students. As University Colleges are non-PhD awarding, all PhD students are enrolled in Universities.

Figure 2. Students by level and type of HEI, 2019



Note: Total students include ISCED 5-7

## Academic personnel and financial resources

As illustrated in This difference is also reflected in the composition of revenues, where Universities receive a large proportion of revenues from (research-related) third-party funds. While state allocation remains important for all institutional types in Flanders, only for University Colleges this is the dominant funding source. For Universities, third-party funding is of similar importance compared to the state allocation. Student fees play a minor role in Flanders for both Universities and University Colleges.

Figure 3, in the year 2019, Universities account for more than 70% of financial revenues and academic personnel of the whole HEI system, i.e., substantially more than their share of students. This broadly corresponds to the fact that Universities also have an important research function.

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Figure 3. Resources, academic personnel and total students enrolled by type of HEI, 2019

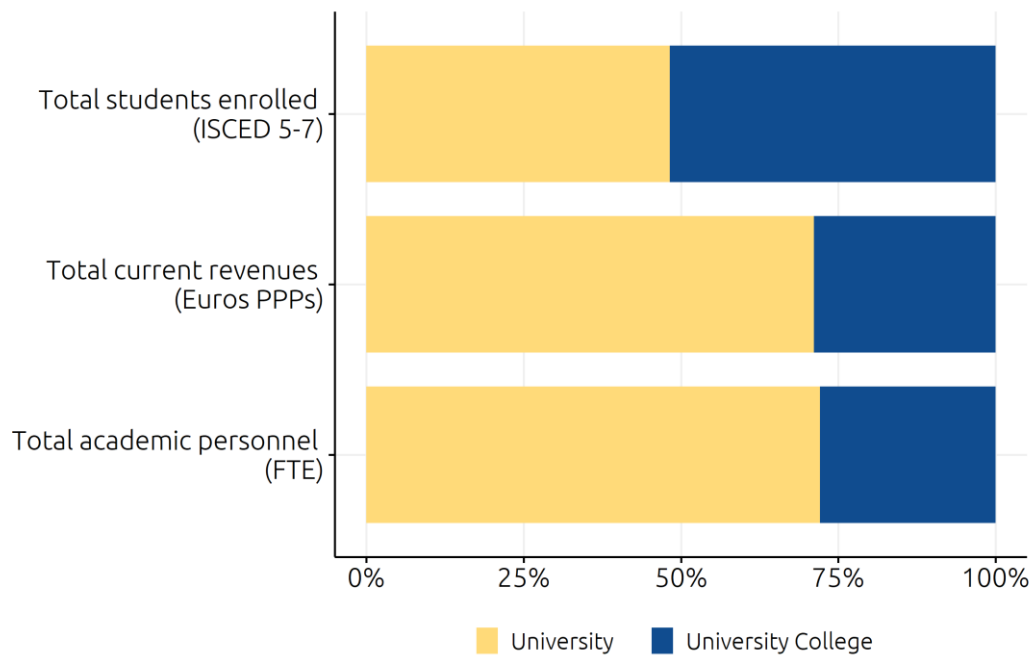
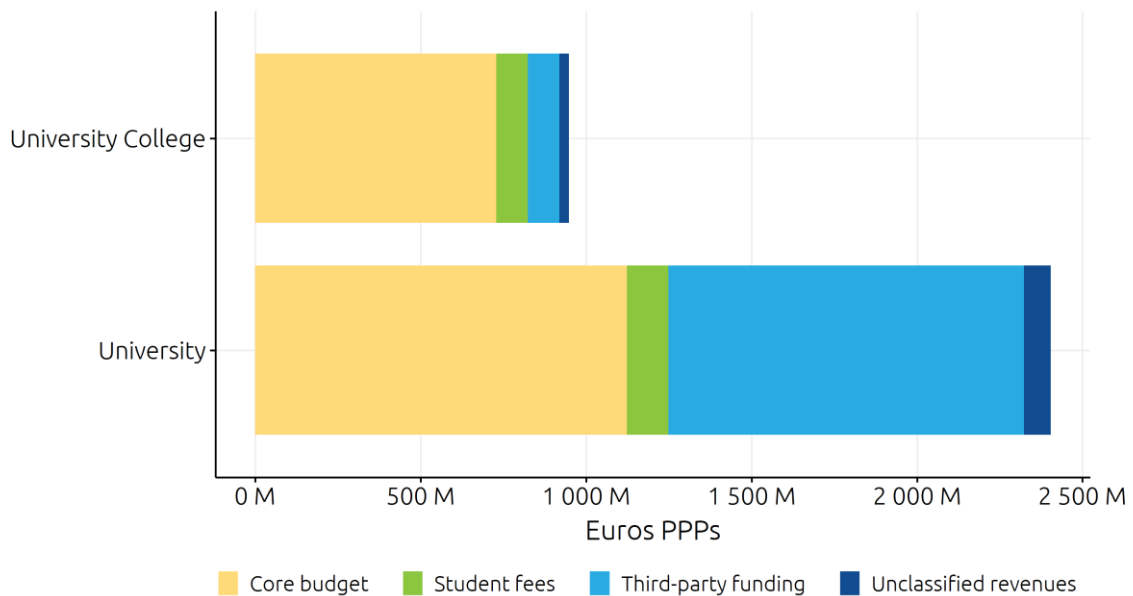


Figure 4. Composition of resources. Universities (Universiteit) and University Colleges (Hogeschool)

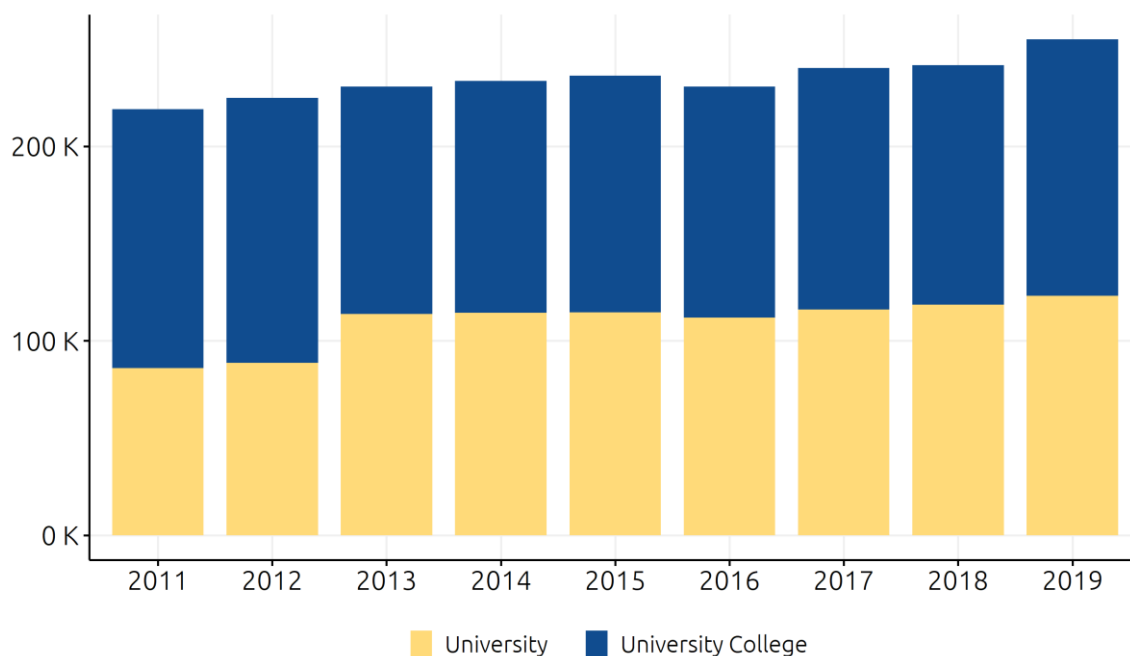


### Changing roles over time

When observed through the lens of the number of students, data show a relatively stable pattern with a slight increase in the number of students starting in 2016 and continuing until 2019 for both, Universities and

University Colleges. In terms of the number of students both Universities and University Colleges have played a similarly important role in the last ten years accounting for about half of the total students each.

Figure 5. Share of students enrolled by institutional type





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[www.eter-project.eu](http://www.eter-project.eu)



[eter@eter-project.eu](mailto:eter@eter-project.eu)



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