



BELGIUM – FRENCH COMMUNITY  
(WALLONIA-BRUSSELS  
FEDERATION)

Country Report on HEI types

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## Belgium - French Community

This report describes the structure of the national higher education system in Wallonia-Brussels Federation, (Belgium - French 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 2017-2020.

### Types of Higher Education Institutions

Wallonia-Brussels Federation has listed by degree the higher education institutions authorized to organize recognized training, to grant academic titles and degrees sanctioning higher education and to issue the corresponding diplomas and certificates<sup>2</sup>:

- 6 Universities (“Universités”)
- 19 University colleges (“Hautes-Ecoles”)
- 16 Schools of arts (“Ecoles Supérieures des Arts”)
- 86 Adult higher education institutions (“Etablissements d’enseignement supérieur de promotion sociale”)

The Universities of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation provide high-level training, with a close link between fundamental or applied scientific research and the subjects taught. The University colleges, each mobilized around its own pedagogical, social and cultural project, provide higher education with a specific professional aim. This is characterized by the strong link between the curriculum and the skills to be acquired in order to practice a profession. The University colleges fulfil their mission of applied research linked to their teaching in close relationship with the professional world and academic institutions. The Schools of arts open the doors to the world of arts and entertainment. They accompany students throughout their research, offering them an environment conducive to the development of their unique projects. They train not only artists, but also educators and social actors adapted to the realities of the field and of today's society.

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<sup>1</sup><https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/belgium-french-community/types-higher-education-institutions>

<sup>2</sup> The list of recognized higher education institutions is available

- at <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=28070&navi=4519>;

- on the [www.mesetudes.be](http://www.mesetudes.be) website;

- on the website of the Academy of Research and Higher Education (ARES) [www.ares-ac.be](http://www.ares-ac.be);

- on the website of the Adult Higher Education <https://promsoc.cfwb.be/>

- on the website <https://www.studyinbelgium.be/fr>

With a strong local base, the adult higher education institutions are aimed at people with diverse professional and personal training paths who wish to acquire, develop or update their skills or simply give a new direction to their career.

Higher education is organized on a binary model and includes: professionally-oriented higher education (enseignement supérieur de type court), comprising between 180 and 240 ECTS, take place in a single cycle and combine, from a pedagogical point of view, theory and practice, including internships in a professional environment or in a laboratory; they thus meet precise professional objectives. They are organized in the University colleges, in the Arts schools and Adult higher education institutions. These studies lead to diplomas corresponding to levels 5 (associate degree in adult higher education institutions) to 6 (professionalising bachelor) of the French-speaking framework of qualifications. Specialization studies might complete the bachelor's degree (advanced bachelor's degree).

Academic-oriented higher education (enseignement supérieur de type long) leads to a transition bachelor's degree after a 1st cycle of 180 credits, which gives access to a 2nd cycle leading to a master's degree, comprising 60 credits or, if it has a specific purpose, 120 credits (some exceptions exist: postgraduate studies in medicine and veterinary medicine comprise 180 credits and lead to the degree of doctor or veterinary surgeon; furthermore, some master's degrees have 60 credits and give direct access to employment). These studies are based on fundamental concepts, experiments and illustrations and provide, in two cycles, both general and in-depth training. They are organized in Universities, University colleges, Arts colleges and in Adult higher education institutions. These studies lead to a final certification of level 7 (master). Specialization studies leading to advanced master's degrees are also organized. In addition, doctoral studies and preparatory work for the doctorate are carried out in research teams, at the University (or in close collaboration with and under the direction of the University) and can lead to a level 8 certification (doctoral degree) awarded exclusively by a University.

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

Table 1 below provides a quantitative overview of the main institutional characteristics across the four types of HEIs. Doctoral studies and preparatory work for the doctorate are carried out in research teams, at the University (or in close collaboration with and under the direction of the University) and can lead to doctoral degree which are awarded exclusively by the six recognized Universities.

The adult higher education institutions are by far the largest group in terms of the total number of institutions (around two third of the total institutions). There are 16 Arts colleges, six of them are organised as private government dependent higher education institutions (funded but not run by public authorities). Four of the six Universities are private legal entities, though government dependent.

Table 1. Institutional type and legal status by HEI type, 2020

Category		N	Public	Private government-dependent	PhD awarding
Adult higher education	Enseignement de promotion sociale	86	56	30	0
Arts college	Ecole supérieure des arts	16	10	6	0
University	Université	6	2	4	6
University college	Hautes Ecoles	19	11	8	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>127</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>6</b>

Note: Only limited data on Adult higher education institutions included in ETER

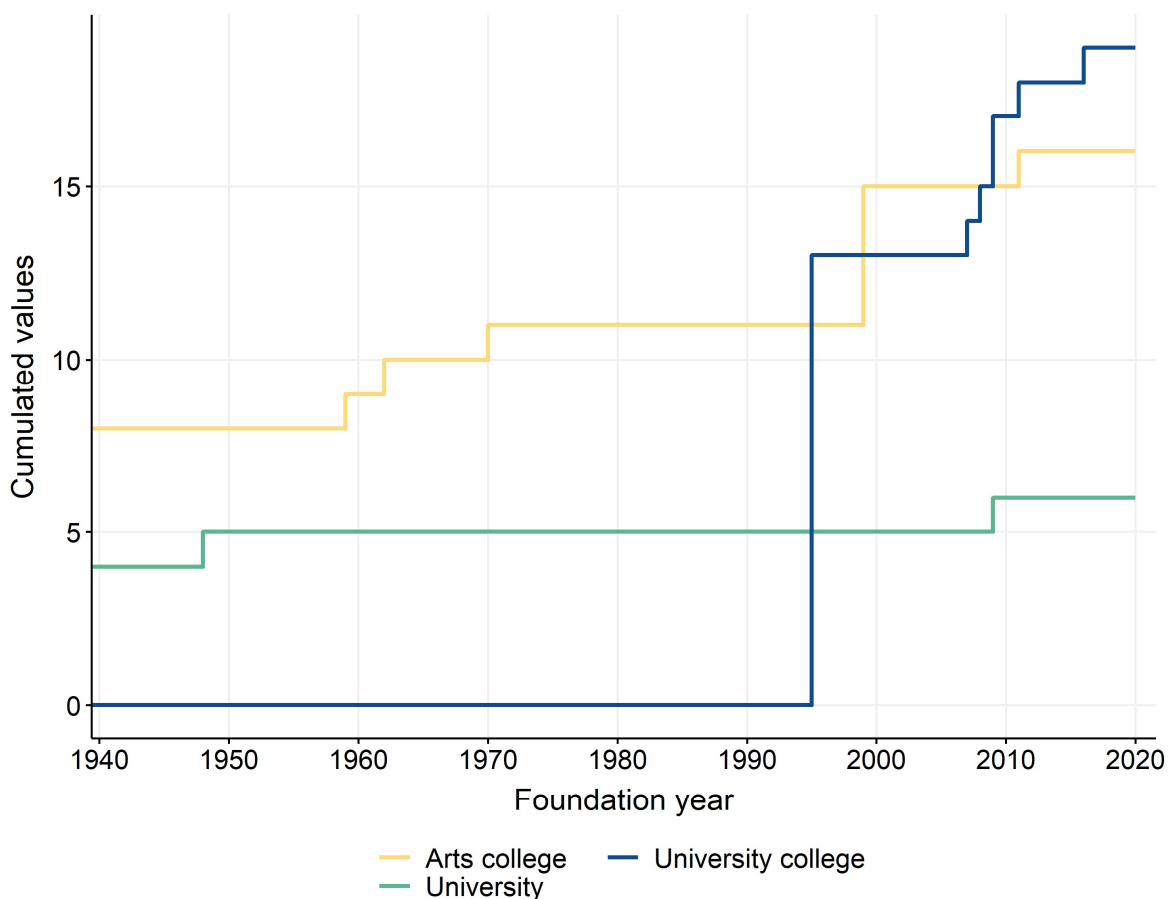
## Institutional history. Older and younger institutional types

Data on the HEI foundation year provide information on the history of the Belgian higher education and its evolution over time. The HE system shows deep historical roots, with the Université de Louvain being the oldest Belgian University already established in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (which split into two universities in 1970: KU Leuven and Université catholique de Louvain - UCLouvain). Figure 1 overleaf shows that all but one University (the Université de Mons, the result of a merger of the University of Mons-Hainaut and Polytechnic Faculty of Mons in 2009 with much older historical roots) have been founded before 1950.

Today's University colleges, in contrast, are much younger, with the first just appearing in the 1990s (indicating a substantial change in the HE system), and gradual additions until 2019. However, these new institutions are mostly the result of mergers of older institutions and not completely new foundations. Arts colleges show a somewhat similar pattern to Universities; a substantial number of institutions has historical roots, established before 1940. The number of Arts colleges just increased after 1960, roughly doubling the number of

institutions until 2010. Foundation years for adult higher education institutions are missing in the ETER data collection.

Figure 1. Foundation year of HEIs by type



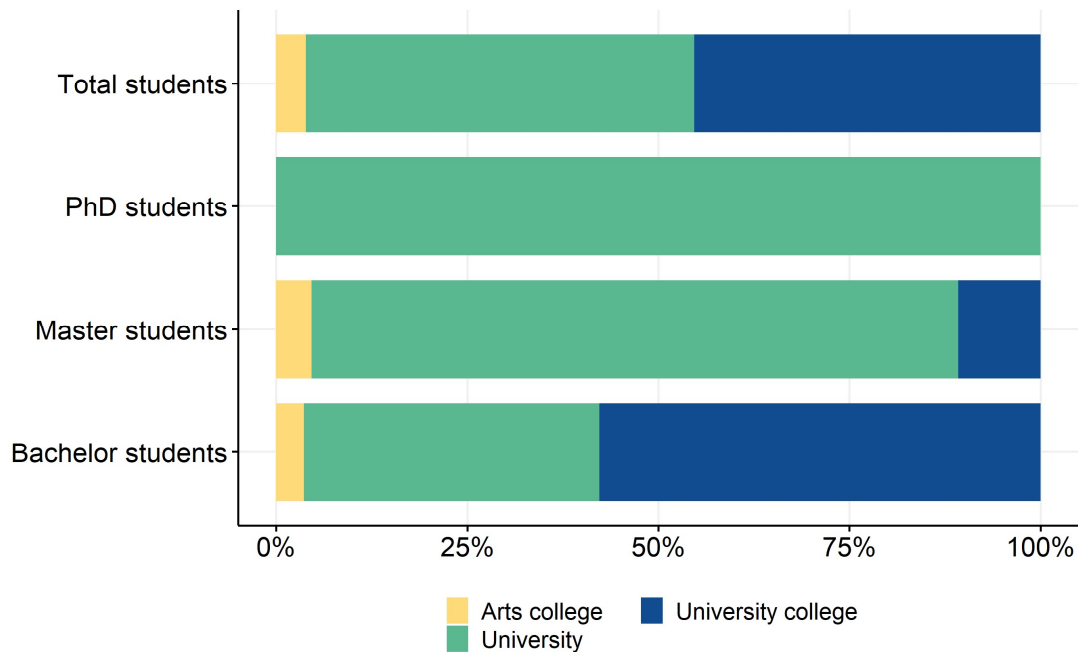
Note: Adult higher education Institutions missing. Only displays organisations that were independent in 2020 and does not account for previous mergers and other demographic events.

## Students

Figure 2 provides an overview on the numbers of students enrolled, disaggregated by ISCED level across the four institution types. Some interesting patterns are observable, though some numbers have to be interpreted with caution as data for adult higher education institutions are missing. As already observed in Table 1, it can be seen PhD students are limited to Universities, being the only PhD awarding institution type in the Wallonia-Brussels higher education system. In general, while there are just six Universities in the system, which is a share of just 5% of all institutions, the share of total students enrolled in Universities is the highest (more than 50% when not taking into account the Adult higher education institutions that are missing in this analysis). Accordingly, the six universities are extremely large institutions in terms of the number of students they enrol. This observation also holds when looking at Master level students. At Bachelor level, University colleges show

the highest amount. Arts colleges account for more than 10% of all institutions, but only for less than 5% in terms of the share of total students enrolled.

Figure 2. Students by level and type of HEI, 2020

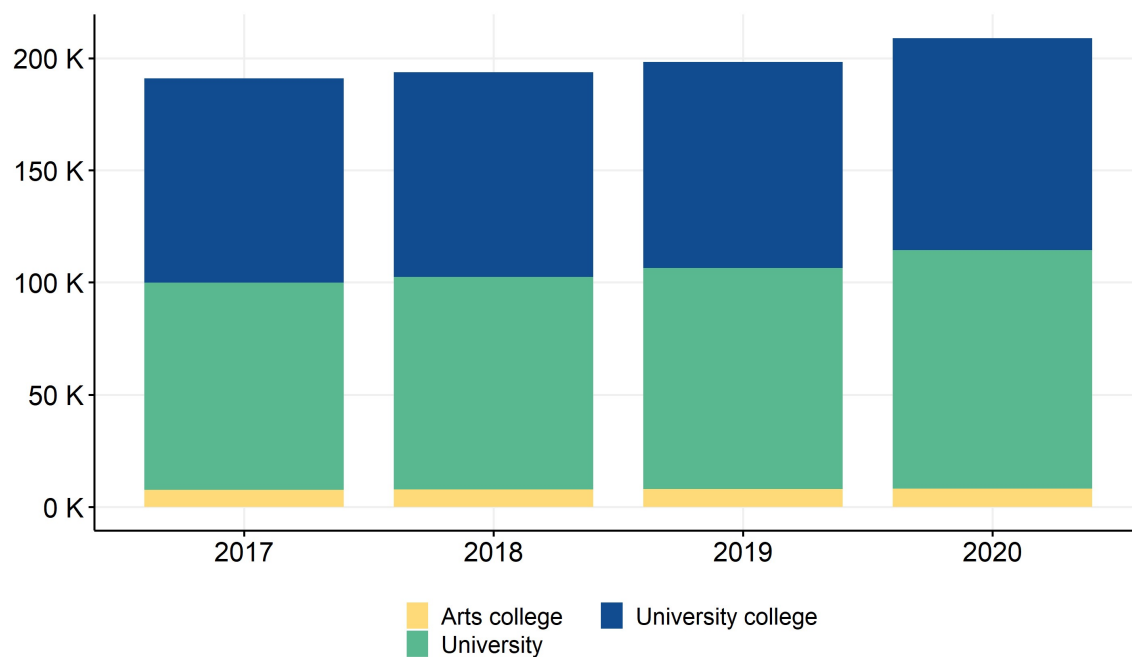


Note: Total students includes ISCED 6-7; Adult higher education Institutions missing

### Changing roles over time

Figure 3 illustrates changes over time in terms of the share of students enrolled by institutional type. Data are only available from 2017 to 2020 and show an increase in terms of the total number of students enrolled. The composition across the different institutional types stays largely equal in this period, with more than 50% of all students being enrolled in Universities.

Figure 3. Students enrolled by type of HEI, 2017-2020



Note: Adult higher education Institutions missing



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