

Development of the Social Dimension

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Stocktaking and Future Perspectives of Student Services/Student Affairs in the European Higher Education Area

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STUDENT SERVICES IN BELGIUM

The case of Flanders

By Marijke Seresia

Treasurer of ECStA – President of SOVOHA

BELGIUM

The Kingdom of [Belgium](#) (+/-11 mio inhabitants) has a federal state structure and education belongs to the exclusive competences of the 3 Communities:

- [Flemish Community](#) (Dutch-speaking, +/-58% of the population),
- [French Community](#) (French speaking, +/-41% of the population),
- [German Community](#) (German speaking, +/-1% of the population)

Higher education is offered at universities :“Universiteit”; “Université” or at university colleges: “Hogescholen”; “Hautes Ecoles”; “Hochschule”. There are about 350.000 students in higher education.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Before 1960: limited initiatives
- Law of 1960: start of the student services in the universities/no student services in university colleges (only limited initiatives), important budgets
- Mid nineties: emergence of student services in university colleges (regulated by Decree: Flanders: 1995; Wallonia: 1997), small budgets (€50- €75/student)
- Now: tendency towards equality

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDENT SERVICES

Higher education is offered at:

Type	University colleges		Universities	
Name	Hogescholen (NI)	Hautes Ecoles (Fr)	Universiteiten (NI)	Universités (Fr)
Umbrella:	VLHORA	CGHE	VLIR	CIUF

There is no national organisation for student services in Belgium. However, in each of the 4 umbrella-organisations is an official student services working group.

Student services are organised by the institutions of higher education, with exception of the “Hogescholen”, where these services are provided by autonomous non-profit associations (will change in 2013)

ORGANISATION: FINANCING

1. Public funding

	Hogescholen	Hautes Ecoles	Universiteiten	Universités
€/student	296*	100\$	278**	220**
% of total	75-100%	100%	30-50%	30-50%

* 2011

\$2010

**average 2011

2. Other financial means

Hogescholen/Hautes ecoles: limited own revenues

Universiteiten/Universités: other means sometimes up to 3x more than public funding. Important own revenues from catering, housing, university itself (inscription fees etc...)

ORGANISATION: GOVERNANCE

Institution	Name of council	% students	Full decision capacity
Hogescholen	Board of dir.	50	Yes
Hautes ecoles	Social council	50	Advisory\$
Universiteiten	Social council*	30-50	Advisory\$
Universités	Social council*	50	Advisory\$

*sometimes also called: council for student affairs

\$ final responsibility lies in the hands of management/board of the university; nevertheless in most cases, the advices given by the councils are followed by the university management

SERVICES OFFERED I

- Everywhere: counselling(support for grants & scholarships) financial aid (grants and/or loans)and social support. In the “Hogeschole” and especially in the “Hautes Ecoles”, this is the most important service, where 50-60% of the budget is allocated to this item.
- Universities and university colleges are offering databases(on a regional scale) with student rooms and student jobs.
- All universities, but only a very small number of university colleges do offer real housing facilities on campus
- Universities and a lot of university colleges are offering catering services for students (€ 3- 4/meal).

SERVICES OFFERED II

- Psychological aid is offered in a lot of places, often in the form of a network (e.g. Psynet in Antwerp)
- In a lot of places cultural and other (sports) benefits are given to the students (e.g. cheques with discounts for museums, concerts etc...), or cultural/sports activities organised by students are supported
- Only universities can offer a fully developed sports infrastructure. In some cases, students of university colleges can also take profit from these facilities (contracts of cooperation)
- Only at universities: child care, medical care
- At the Hautes Ecoles 10% of the budget must be allocated to the student council.

BELGIUM: TRENDS

- Trend 1: more integration and lesser but bigger schools.
 - Since the nineties the number of university colleges dropped from more than 100 at each side of the language border to 22 (Flanders) and 21 (French Community) and this process is still going on.
 - more efficient, also better for the students ?
 - impact for the student services: some of them will have to merge too.
 - Bologna reforms: master programs of colleges → universities
 - impact for our student services: part of resources → stud.serv. universities

- Trend 2: towards an equality in the financing of all student services.

BELGIUM: TRENDS

- Trend 3: more students (Belgium 2005: 300.000; now: 350.000 students),
 - policy: more people with a degree in higher education
 - impact on student services/schools: develop policies for different target groups (immigrants, students coming from less fortunate families, etc...)
 - bigger need for financial and psychological support, learning support...
...and more staff.
- Trend 4: more cooperation between student services
 - bottom-up approach/better to organise services on a larger scale
 - examples: working groups, databases(jobs, housing), websites, agreements with universities (catering, sports,...)
 - on a federal level, there is not yet a structural cooperation between the Belgian Communities

FLANDERS: SPECIFIC TRENDS

- New Decree for student services in preparation (2013). Big change for the student services of the university colleges:
 - new system of financing, not based on the number of students anymore, but on the total amount of “credits” (ECTS system) of the university college or university;
 - equal financing for universities and university colleges: € 4,71/credit (result will be more or less the same as before)
 - Flemish university colleges: abolition of the non-profit associations; integration of student services within the institutions. Staff and resources will be transferred to the colleges; board will be replaced by a council and final decisions will be taken by the management of the college. Especially this is a real challenge: will the necessary autonomy be guaranteed ?
- Increased cooperation: national and regional initiatives: growing number of projects: one database for student jobs; one website with social/financial information, psynet, etc...

FLANDERS: 3 EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION

- Network for psychological aid (Antwerp)
- www.psynet.be

Psynet



- Website with juridical, social and financial information for all students of the Flemish Community
- www.centenvoorstudenten.be

Centen voor Studenten



- Website/database with student jobs in Flanders and Brussels for all students of the Flemish Community
- www.vdab.be/jos

JOS



EXAMPLE 1: PSYNET

- Psynet is an Antwerp-based network for psychological aid for the 33.000 students in Antwerp. It is financed (cost: € 1,50/student) by all student services of Antwerp.
- Psynet offers a multi-level network for students with psychological needs(going from light, e.g.performance anxiety to rather heavy indications).
- It consists of close cooperation of therapists within the student services, student doctors, drug prevention workers, mental health centra, external therapists and the urgent psychiatric units of the Antwerp hospitals.

The benefits of this system are:

- fast interventions
- cost effective
- availability of specialists
- every problem is solved on the most adequate level.

EXAMPLE 2: CENTEN VOOR STUDENTEN

- Very detailed website+brochure made by employees from all student services and open to all students of the Flemish community.
- Students can learn here everything about how to finance their studies, their rights and obligations, social and financial aspects, taxes, how to work as a jobstudent etc...

Benefits:

- work is done only once for all student services
- work is done by specialists of the sector
- reliable and easy-to-access information
- cost effective

EXAMPLE 3: JOS

JOS(student job system) is a website and database with student jobs for all students of the Flemish community.

- It consists of a cooperation between most student services of Flanders and the VDAB, (public employment service of Flanders)
- programmed and maintained by the VDAB
- job information is entered by employees of student services and by companies/institutions.
- Since it is a webbased application, students can find jobs at any moment and at any place.

Benefits:

- one system for all
- work is divided between everybody
- a lot of more jobs to offer
- very cost effective (13 cents/student)
- even student services without specialised employees can offer a job service

USEFUL LINKS

Ministeries of education:

Flemish community: www.ond.vlaanderen.be

French community: www.enseignement.be

German community: www.dglive.be

Umbrella organisations:

CGHE (Conseil Général des Hautes Ecoles): www.cghe.cfwb.be

CIUF (Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté Française: www.ciuf.be

VLIR (Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad): www.vlir.be

VLHORA (Vlaamse Hogescholen Raad): www.vlhora.be