

DEWACONNECT

Alternance in Flanders



GOALS

By order of the Flemish government, a number of pilot projects will soon be starting up that aim to offer students from higher education and adult education the opportunity to enter into **dual (or workplace) learning**. Companies and organizations are also interested in this, as are numerous higher education institutions.

For colleges, universities and adult education, the practice- and business-oriented approach of dual learning is an opportunity **to make courses even more responsive to the changing labor market**. Dual learning also fits into the concept of lifelong learning and career transitions of working people.

Existing regulations already allow for the inclusion of all kinds of workplace learning in educational curricula. The autonomy of higher education institutions is great to establish agreements themselves and to do quality control.



HOW?

Flemish colleges and universities can participate in the **ESF project 'Alternance in Flanders'**. Co-creation of some dual learning paths, in a Flemish-French context, can lead to useful and generalizable models that stimulate cross-border student exchange. In other words, it does not always have to be 'Erasmus'....

A pilot project in the 2019-2020 academic year should implement the best practices from France in Flanders. This can be done, for example, by opening up some elective courses to cross-border modules with France and by introducing students to alternate learning during an internship in a company.

If interested, we are happy to sit down together to put together a customized course of action. We then include our joint experiences in policy recommendations to the Flemish government.



WHAT IS ALTERNANCE?

Dual learning in a company

Alternance is a way of **dual learning in colleges and universities**. The student combines classes with working in a company.

Depending on the studies followed, the student's training time is divided between attendance at school and in the company. Throughout the year, the student is more than 50 percent active for the company.

The assignments that the student carries out are diverse and depend on the field of study the student is pursuing. School, company and student enter into an agreement with each other that describes what is expected of the student.

The student is an employee of the company. Alternance learning can also continue during school vacations.

ESF - Partner for Innovative initiatives

ESF (European Social Fund) aims to give organizations the opportunity to set up projects around the creation of employment opportunities and quality careers.

The labor market is in full development and is characterized by numerous social challenges. ESF therefore also promotes and supports innovative insights to provide an appropriate response to these challenges.

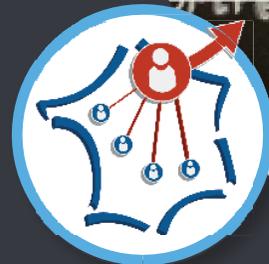
Who are we?

DEWACONNECT

DewaFlex is a Belgian company. In 2013 Pieter Dewaele established a division in Northern France. As a commercial agent for several (mainly Belgian) companies, DewaFlex not only built up knowledge about the French market.

The company quickly determined that using alternance students was a good way to achieve rapid and sustained growth in France. DewaFlex grew thanks to the use of alternance students.

The belief in and good experience with alternance learning led to the start of DewaConnect, which now supervises students who are active on the French market for various Belgian companies.



How does DewaConnect operate?

DewaConnect has an extensive database of students who are looking for an alternance challenge. At the request of companies, DewaConnect looks for the right student for the assignment the company wants to realize.



TUAWEST

In a rapidly changing world, the future lies in a knowledge-driven economy. As an external agency of the Province of West Flanders, TUA West connects, in a triple helix model, companies, knowledge institutions and governments.

Innovation through collaboration and knowledge sharing is key.

The Flemish government's ambition is to extend dual learning to higher education.

That is why TUA West participates in the Flemish 'learning network on dual learning in higher education and adult education'. Thinking about what can be understood by dual learning in higher education, how dual learning can come about, what path should be followed and under what conditions: these are questions to which TUA West seeks an answer.

From West Flanders, we also take inspiration from our French neighbors of the Eurometropolis.



“I was able to sign a permanent, open-ended contract immediately after my first work experience!”



Johannes

Flemish alternance student in France

'During my final year internship, I was told that if I wanted to aspire to a higher position within a company, I needed to develop my language skills.

I started looking at how I could do this in the most efficient way and ended up at DewaFlex. I enrolled at the University of Lille and worked within DewaFlex to develop DewaConnect.

At the end of my course, I had the opportunity to sign an open-ended contract.

The alternance program not only gave me the opportunity to get an additional degree, I also got to know a new language and culture, and on top of that, after my first work experience, I was able to sign a permanent contract for an indefinite period of time right away!



Adam

French alternance student

This pathway gives me the chance to develop personally and professionally. My employer gives me the opportunity to learn to work independently. Through my relationship with potential clients, I have also become more assertive and communicative.

Professionally, I learned more about the real estate sector, and I was able to use the skills I learned at school immediately in the work environment. I learned that the skills learned at school can be used immediately in the work field.

“Because of my relationship with potential clients, I have also become more assertive and communicative.”



Getting started

The beginning of the journey.

Before the alternance program can start, the student has to look for a school and a company that match his training.

Many French schools have an internal person in charge who makes contacts with companies that want to employ an alternance student. This contact person is also the permanent point of contact for the company and helps to draw up the contract and the job description.

In France, there are specialized websites where companies can post their job descriptions online. The student can respond to those offers.

ON YOUR OWN

If the student is unable to get a job at one of these companies, he/she must look for an internship.

This is done through specialized websites where the companies can post their job descriptions online. The student can those offers.



Signing the contract

Getting the necessary papers in place.

Once the student and the company have come to an agreement, they proceed to sign the employment contract. The student thus becomes an employee of the company and is paid a salary depending on his age and level of education.

French companies pay an annual contribution that pays for the training of alternance students.

DEFINING THE MISSION

The alternance assignment starts with writing out an assignment description. This ensures that students complete assignments that are aligned with what they are learning in school. The close alignment with the studies is an important feature.

For example, a law student may not perform purely administrative tasks for the firm.



Is the student entitled to vacation?

The alternance student is also entitled to vacation. For every thirty days worked, he receives 2.5 days of vacation. The student is required to take at least three full weeks of consecutive leave between May 1 and October 31.

Should the student take a vacation to study for their exams?

In addition, students are also entitled to five "jours de révisions" to prepare for their exams.



THE TUTEUR

The tutor must have a certificate as a maitre d'apprentissage. He must have a degree in line with the studies the student is taking or he must be able to prove that he can teach the student things through experience.

A tutor may never accompany more than two students. In the case of a contrat pro (higher education) there may be three.

Termination of contract

The employer has the right to unilaterally terminate the contract during the trial period (two months). After this period, there must be a mutual agreement to terminate the contract.

Follow-up

Customized support

Within the company, the student is assigned a 'tutor'. This tutor is the company employee who supervises the alternance student.

At the start of the mission, the tutor is given access to an online platform (MySup for example) that the school makes available. This should allow for a smoother consultation process.

The tutor evaluates the alternance student at regular intervals.

Together with the coordinator of the educational institution, the tutor is responsible for the follow-up and supervision of the student.

The person in charge at the school visits the company at least twice a year to discuss the assignment with the tutor and the student.

During this meeting, agenda items of the student are also discussed and how the student is committed to school is checked.

ASSESSMENT

The final step.

The coordinator, together with the student, validates the assessment forwarded by the tutor online.

Together with the student, the tutor sets learning goals for the upcoming period.

Diploma

The purpose of the alternance program is to train the student and give him sufficient qualifications so that he can obtain his diploma at the end of the academic year. For this purpose, the student must take exams.

In addition, the student presents his final work on the assignment he has completed within the company. The presentation is made to a jury, often with the tutor present. The student must sign an attendance list during the lectures so that he can prove his attendance.

Insufficient attendance may jeopardize the validation of his degree.



"7 out of 10 young people who have completed an alternance training course find a permanent job within the 7 months following their training. Often this is in the company where they completed their alternance program."



Opportunities within the Belgian education system

The intention is to start a pilot project next academic year in which the best practices from France are implemented within the Flemish university colleges. One way of doing this is to open up some elective courses for cross-border modules with France. During the internship project, students get acquainted with alternance learning.

The concrete interpretation of pilot projects is composed in consultation with the interested educational institutions. Possibilities include:

- Organizing a visit to companies working with alternance
- A French language course.
- Specific cross-border training at French business school.

If interested, we would be happy to sit down together to put together a tailor-made course.

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