

2. Belgium

Project vs organisational level (institutional) funding

According to the data collection in the PREF study Belgium's public allocations for publicly performed research is allocated for 45 % and 55 % in the form of organisational level (institutional) funding and project funding respectively. Its share of project funding is thus comparatively high.

In 2003, Flanders pre-established 'pre-allocation keys' which are recalculated every year and published in the Belgian State's official legislative documents (Moniteur Belge – Belgisch Staatsblad). The Department of Education and Training provides organisational level block funding for universities and the Department of Economics, Science and Innovation (EWI) provides performance based funding through the Special Research Funds (Bijzondere Onderzoeksfondsen: BOF) and the Industrial Research Funds (Industrieel Onderzoeksfonds – IOF). Project funding is allocated by the FWO. Finally there is the so-called 'Hercules-key' through which funding is allocated to support research infrastructures at universities and PRO's (Duchene, 2015)²⁵.

In Wallonia, the two main sources of university institutional funding are the Special Research Fund (Fonds Spécial pour la Recherche, FSR) and the Concerted Research Actions (Actions de Recherche Concertées, ARC). As is the case for Flanders, allocation keys are used, but they are generally less tied to competitive output parameters (Decree 30.01.2014) (Kerchelmans & Zacharewicz, forthcoming).²⁶

Modality of the assessment

BOF funding is formula based according to the so-called "BOF-Key". The system was last adapted in 2013. The bibliometric analysis on which the BOF key is based is performed by the inter-university centre ECOOM. The data on degrees is collected in a central database on Higher Education in Flanders²⁷.

Since 2012 (Decision Flemish Government dd. 21.12.2012), the BOF allocation formula takes into account five key indicators: master degrees, defended doctorates, gender diversity, publications and citations (Spruyt & Engels, 2013).

²⁵ Note that research funding through the Hercules scheme will be administered by the FWO from 2016 onwards

²⁶ See http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/40180_000.pdf (last consulted 10/2015).

²⁷ <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14492#24>

Table A1. Parameters included in the calculation of BOF allocation formula²⁸

Year t	2013	2014	2015	From 2016
Structural part				
Weight Master and Bachelor Degrees	25,00 %	25,00 %	24,00 %	23,00 %
Weight PhDs awarded	35,00 %	35,00 %	35,00 %	35,00 %
Diversity parameter (gender distribution)	3,00 %	2,00 %	2,00 %	2,00 %
Sum	63,00 %	62,00 %	61,00 %	60,00 %
Bibliometric part				
Weight publications in WoS	15,36 %	15,77 %	16,19 %	16,60 %
Weight SSH publications in VVAB	6,28 %	6,46 %	6,62 %	6,80 %
Weight citations	15,36 %	15,77 %	16,19 %	16,60 %
Sum	37,00 %	38,00 %	39,00 %	40,00 %

Publications which are indexed in the WoS are grouped into categories based among others on whether or not an impact factor was assigned to them. The journals are assigned for different disciplines to 20 equal sized categories on the basis of their average impact factor in a ten year period. Publications are then weighted on the basis of the category in which the journal in which they are published is placed in the manner indicated in table A2:

Table A2.

20 equal sized categories of journals based on their impact factor	1	2	3	4	5-14	15-16	17	18	19	20
Weight	10	6	3	2	1	0,5	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1

Source: Ministry of Education Flanders (2015)

In addition to publication data, citation data is also considered. For each broad discipline, citation data to the publications made by an organisation is analysed for a ten year time frame.

To account for the underrepresentation of SSH journals in the WoS, a new database was created with relevant SSH journals: the Flemish Academic Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities (VVAB). Publications in this database are considered since 2010 and their relative weight has increased since 2012.

When bibliometric assessment was first introduced in the allocation of the BOF key, 10% of the funding was based upon it (DeBackere & Glanzel, 2004). This was increased to 36% in 2008 (Hicks, 2012; DeBackere and Veugelers, 2015). Between 2013 and 2016, the bibliometric share increased from 37% to 40%. Quantitative measures of research output and scientific impact therefore determine a considerable share of the variable organisational funding provided to Flemish universities (DeBackere and Veugelers, 2015. Spruyt & Engels, 2013).

²⁸ Source: <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=14492#24>

In Wallonia, the FSR provides funding on the basis of the number of awarded degrees i.e. not a research parameter. For the ARCs, 80% is allocated based on awarded degrees while the remaining 20% is allocated based on the university share in terms of the following (equally-weighted) criteria:

1. European FP funding;
2. Post-doctoral researchers;
3. Academic staff who obtained their PhD from another university;
4. Publications;
5. Citations.