

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Report to the Flemish Parliament

#### *Part-time art education. Supply alignment and accessibility*

*The 2018 part-time art education (PTAE) reform was intended to ensure better alignment of education supply to the needs, as well as a wider audience. Art schools can still take steps to improve their capturing of learning needs. Except in the field of dance, the spread of the supply has improved since the reform, but attending PTAE remains difficult in some of the municipalities. According to the art academies, the fact that the supply does not fully meet the demand is mainly due to a lack of resources for infrastructure, framework and operation. Underprivileged pupils do not enjoy the same PTAE participating opportunities as privileged pupils. Although recent years have brought some catching-up, the gap remains large. Special education pupils and pupils having received a (motivated) mainstream education report also participate relatively less in PTAE.*

#### **Introduction**

About 175,000 students in Flanders attend PTAE, three quarters of whom are children and youngsters. The 167 art academies offer training in four fields: visual and audio-visual arts, dance, music and wordcraft-drama. The Level Decree has reformed PTAE as from 1 September 2018. New goals have been set and the range of courses on offer has been updated. The Court of Audit examined whether supply is sufficiently geared to learning needs and whether academies are sufficiently accessible for the underprivileged and students with special educational needs.

#### **Matching supply to needs**

The Court of Audit found that academies do capture learning needs, albeit mainly in an informal way. New locations are usually established without a thorough needs assessment. Except for the field of dance, supply spread has improved in recent years. Yet 12% of all municipalities still do not supply PTAE at all. 27%, including almost all central municipalities, supply all PTAE fields. A number of municipalities only supply first and second degree PTAE, especially in the field of visual and audio-visual arts. The new courses the Level Decree provides for to better meet the needs, sometimes induce but a limited supply and few students. Supply or demand also appear to be insufficient for various shortened or prolonged educational paths. Art academies stated that a lack of (appropriate) infrastructure and a shortage of framework, as well as too few operational resources make meeting up to needs difficult. Some municipalities provide extra infrastructure, framework and operational resources.

#### **Accessibility for the underprivileged**

Flemish Government does not provide structural resources for art academies to pursue an equal opportunities policy, but it does provide a reduced registration fee and a compulsory

and fair contribution scheme. Art academies ask their pupils divergent fees (fixed contributions) for copies, consumable materials, etc. Across all age categories, annual fees amount to 11 euros on average for residents and 14 euros for non-residents. However, some academies charge much higher fees. More than half of the municipalities provide financial assistance for people on a modest budget. Besides this fee, pupils have additional expenses. They are highest in the field of music due to the cost of music instruments. All but one academies examined offer rental possibilities, although not always sufficiently.

Underprivileged pupils under the age of 18 still participate much less in PTAE than privileged students (10.7% and 20.4% respectively). Among young PTAE participants between the ages of 14 and 17 hardly any special education pupils are to be found. More than receiving school allowances or home language, the mother's education level determines pupil's PTAE participation opportunities. Relatively speaking, the field of dance reaches the most underprivileged youngsters. The share of PTAE pupils with reduced registration fees older than 24 years has increased to 12.4% in recent years. In this age segment, the fields of word art-drama and visual and audio-visual arts are the most inclusive domains.

### Accessibility for students with special educational needs

The Level Decree guarantees pupils with special educational needs the right to reasonable accommodation or to an adapted curriculum, without, however, providing additional support. Half of the art academies surveyed allocate teaching times specifically to care work. A fifth of them set up separate classes for pupils with an adapted curriculum. Academies say not all teachers may be sufficiently competent to teach students with special educational needs due to the lack of proper training and support provided by learning guidance centres. Pupils not having been given a (motivated) mainstream education report participate proportionally more in the PTAE than pupils having received such a report (15.3% and 11.4% respectively). Pupils having received such a report who attend special education, attend even less in PTAE (4.1%). However, inclusiveness has improved in recent years for special education pupils. Visual and audio-visual arts is the most inclusive field. In absolute numbers, PTAE counts mostly pupils with autism (type 9).

### Response of the minister

The Flemish minister of Education stated that art academies have not yet taken the necessary initiatives to implement the fairly recent Level Decree, possibly due to the corona pandemic. He also promised policy evaluation of the decree will include various audit findings.

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### Information for the press

The Court of Audit exerts an external control on the financial operations of the Federal State, the Communities, the Regions and the provinces. It contributes to improving public governance by transmitting to the parliamentary assemblies, to the managers and to the audited services any useful and reliable information resulting from a contradictory examination. As a collateral body of the Parliament, the Court performs its missions independently of the authorities it controls.

The audit report *Part-time art education. Supply alignment and accessibility* has been sent to the Flemish Parliament. The full version and this press release can be found on the Court's website: [www.courtofaudit.be](http://www.courtofaudit.be).