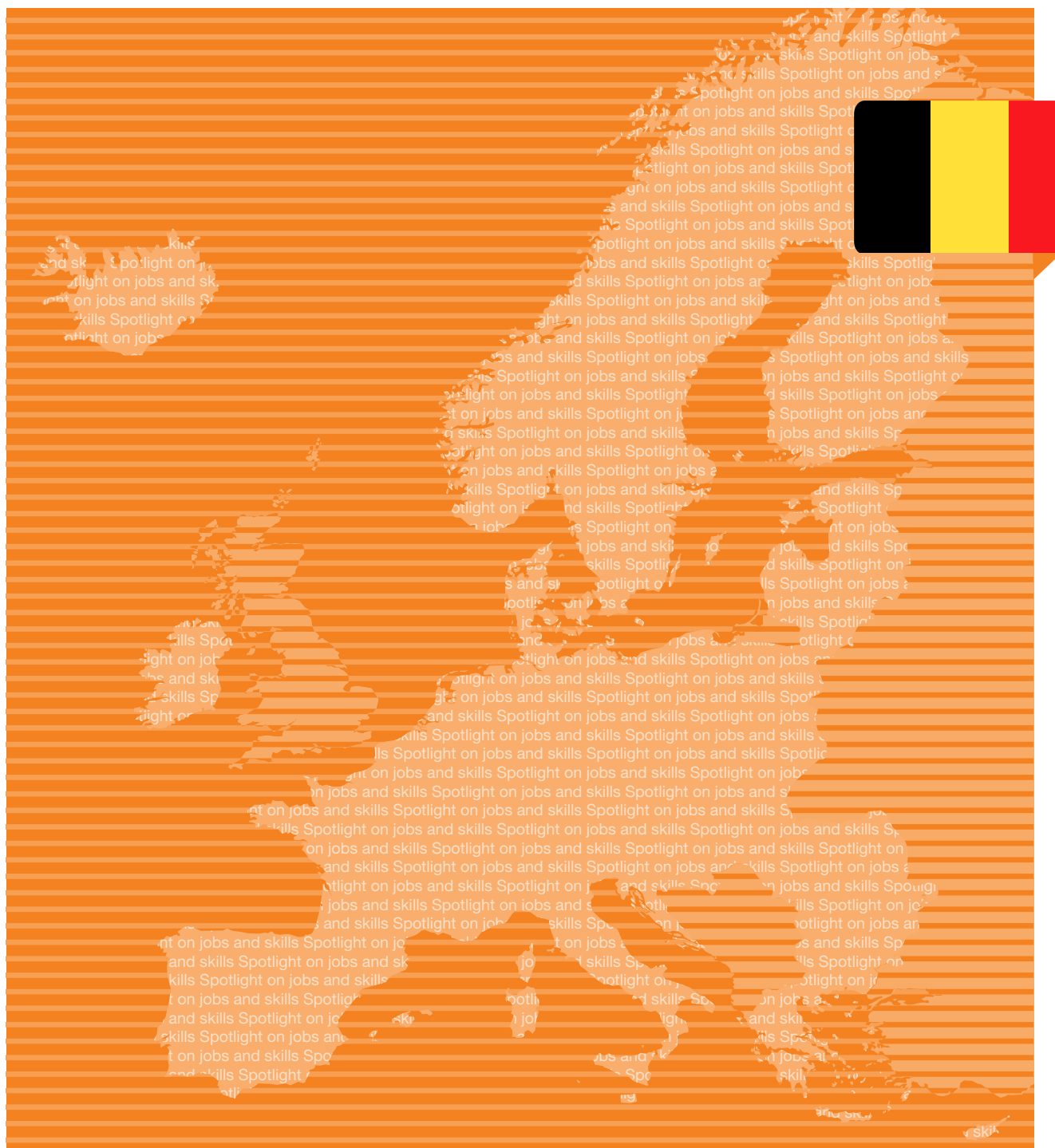




SPOTLIGHT ON JOBS AND SKILLS BELGIUM

2026

Introduction

Drawing on its rich country-level skills intelligence, Cedefop develops its Spotlights on jobs and skills for EU-27 Member States, Iceland and Norway. The Spotlights provide insights into the current labour market landscape, future trends, and skills anticipation in each country. The analysis is based on Cedefop's skills intelligence online tool, its skills forecast, the European Skills Index (ESI), online job advertisements, sectoral and occupational skills intelligence, and country-specific skills anticipation reports.

Recent employment developments

Since 2020, Belgium's unemployment rate (around 6 %) has consistently remained below the EU average. Youth unemployment (aged 15-24) rose from 15 % in 2020 to 16 % in 2023. Unemployment among those aged 25-49 stayed at around 5 %, and the rate for older workers aged 50-64 was around 4 %. In 2023 there was a small gender gap, with unemployment at 5 % for women and 6 % for men.

Employment growth between 2015 and 2019 was slightly above the EU average (+2 % annually compared with +1 % for the EU). Between 2019 and 2020, employment in Belgium remained stable, while it fell by -1 % in the EU. The period 2020-2023 showed a stronger employment recovery (+2 % growth annually, compared with +1 % in the EU).

In 2023, the employed population was spread across a broad range of sectors ⁽¹⁾. Health and social care (15 % compared with 11 % in the EU-27), wholesale and retail trade (12 % versus 14 %), and manufacturing (12 % versus 16 %) had the highest employment shares. By contrast, employment shares were lowest in energy supply and in water and waste treatment, which each accounted for less than 1 % of employment ([Figure 1](#)).

In 2023, professionals, who are mostly highly qualified, represent the largest occupational group,

accounting for 26 % of employment (22 % in the EU-27). Most professionals were employed in non-marketed services (54 % of professionals), business services (34 %), and manufacturing (6 %). In these sectors, they are mainly employed in activities related to education (28 %), health and social care (19 %), professional services (14 %), and ICT services (9 %).

Belgium's employed population is predominantly high- or medium-qualified. In 2023, almost half of workers held a high-level qualification (49 % compared with 38 % in the EU-27), 38 % had a medium-level qualification (46 % in the EU-27), and around 13 % had no or a low qualification (16 % in the EU-27). Men accounted for 53 % of the employed population in 2023 (54 % in the EU-27). Almost two thirds (61 %) of those employed were between 25 and 49 years old (57 % in the EU-27). Workers aged 50-64 accounted for 30 % of employment (32 % in the EU-27), while those aged 15-24 made up 7 % (8 % in the EU-27). The share of workers aged 65 or over remained low (2 % compared with 3 % in the EU-27).

In 2023, the share of young people (aged 15-24) neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) was 7 %, below the EU average of 9 %. The NEET rate among young women was 6 %, lower than the 8 % NEET rate among young men. This contrasts with the average EU NEET rates, which were similar for both genders (9 %).

Recent skills and learning developments

Analysis of [Cedefop's online job advertisements](#) (OJAs) shows that in 2023 most job advertisements collected from Belgium were for professionals (22 % compared with 23 % in the EU-27), associate professionals (17 % versus 19 %), trades workers (12 % of vacancies versus 10 %), and clerks (11 % versus 10 %). Among job advertisements for professionals, demand was highest for office professionals (30 % compared with 26 % in the EU-27), followed by ICT professionals (25 % versus 27 %) and researchers and engineers (24 %, equal

⁽¹⁾ To learn more about the classification of sectors, occupations, and qualification levels discussed in this report, see Annex 2 of [Cedefop's skills forecast methodological framework](#) (April 2023).

to the EU-27 average). The demand for office professionals was almost evenly split between administration professionals (35 % of OJAs for office professionals, the same as in the EU-27), sales, marketing and public relations professionals (35 % versus 38 %) and finance professionals (30 % versus 27 %). The sectors with most online job advertisements were business services (48 % of OJAs versus 51 %), particularly administrative and business services (both 19 %, compared with 23 % and 15 % respectively in the EU-27), manufacturing (19 % versus 15 %), and distribution and transport (14 %, the same as in the EU-27).

According to [Cedefop's European Skills Index](#) (ESI), Belgium ranked 21st out of 31 countries in 2024, maintaining the same position as in 2017. The best-performing ESI pillar is skills development (ranked 18th). Performance is driven by indicators such as reading, maths and science scores among 15-year-olds (ranked 11th), and the share of VET students (ranked 12th) ([Figure 2](#)). By contrast, performance in the ESI skills activation pillar is weak, mainly because of low scores for the activity rate of those aged 25-54 (ranked 25th) and that of young adults aged 20-24 (ranked 25th). Between 2017 and 2024, the most notable improvements were the reduction of long-term unemployment (from 4 % to 2 %) and early leaving from education and training (from 6 % to 4 %). Conversely, the most significant ESI performance declines were recorded in reading, maths and science scores of 15-year-olds (the score fell from 502.5 to 486.3) and in low-wage employment of people with a qualification at ISCED 5-8 (from 5 % to 8 %).

In 2023, 28 % of the population had above basic digital skills, slightly higher than the EU average of 27 %. This share was higher among the employed population and among those aged 25-34 (35 % and 43 % respectively, compared with 33 % and 39 % in the EU).

In the same year, 15 % of the employed population in Belgium took part in learning during the four weeks before the survey (14 % in the EU-27). Participation was higher among women (17 % compared with 16 % in the EU-27) than among men (14 % versus 12 %). Learning declines with age: 17 % of those aged 25-49 participated in learning (16 % in the EU-27), while 12 % of those aged 50-64 did so (11 % in the EU-27).

Future employment trends

Looking ahead, employment in the country is expected to grow by 1 % annually between 2022 and 2035, surpassing the modest average EU employment growth over the same period.

[Cedefop's skills forecast](#) projections show that employment between 2022 and 2035 in Belgium is projected to grow most strongly in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (+50 %), human health and social work activities (+19 %), and administrative and support service activities (+18 %). Notable growth is also projected in real estate, professional, scientific and technical activities (+16 %), information and communication (+15 %), and construction (+12 %). By contrast, employment is projected to fall in agriculture, forestry and fishing (-16 %), in financial and insurance activities (-12 %), and in education (-1 %).

Employment is projected to grow for most occupational groups until 2035. Employment for professionals, who are expected to remain the largest group, is projected to increase by +21 %, followed by legislators, senior officials and managers (+14 %), and elementary occupations (+10 %). Professional employment will grow fast for ICT professionals (+39 %), legal, social and cultural professionals (+38 %). Employment for business and administration professionals (+21 %) and health professionals (+20 %) will also expand. The expected employment growth for health professionals and personal care workers (+16 %) reflects the demographic transition and the ageing population in Belgium. Employment for clerks (-15 %) and skilled agricultural and fishery workers (-1 %) is expected to decline.

The labour force is expected to become increasingly highly qualified, as the number of workers with this qualification level is projected to grow by +2 % annually, a rate that matches the EU average. Employment for medium-qualified workers is expected to grow by +1 %, above the EU average. Employment for low-qualified workers and those without a qualification is projected to decline by -8 % annually, a much steeper drop than the EU average decrease of -3 %. Female labour market participation is forecast to grow by +1 %, slightly faster than male participation, in line with EU average trends. Because of population ageing, labour

force growth will be strongest (+13 %, more than double the EU average of 6 %) The annual labour force growth rate is also positive (around +1 %) for youth aged 25-29 and for all age cohorts between 40 and 64 years.

Future skills and learning trends

Between 2022 and 2035, Belgium's labour market is projected to experience continued its structural upgrading in skills demand. By 2035, employment in high-skilled non-manual occupations is expected to account for just over half of total employment, increasing by +15 % and making up 57 % of all job openings. Skilled non-manual occupations will represent nearly one quarter of employment, though their labour market share is projected to decline slightly. Employment in skilled manual occupations is expected to account for 16 % of employment in 2035. The share of elementary occupations in employment will be around 10 %, with employment increasing by +10 %.

Employment in [high-tech occupations](#) is projected to grow by +7 % between 2030 and 2035, in line with the EU average trend. The shift towards a more circular economy and the EU's overall approach to energy autonomy will likely contribute to notable growth in high-tech occupations in energy supply services (+44 %). The increasing demand for high-tech occupations in the health and social care sector (+13 %) reflects the ongoing digitalisation in the sector. At the other end of the spectrum, employment in high-tech roles is projected to decline in agriculture, forestry and fishing (-3 %).

Employment in the broader [high-tech economy](#) in Belgium is expected to grow slightly more slowly than in the EU (almost +4 % versus +5 %) between 2030 and 2035. Growth will be driven by knowledge-intensive services (+5 % compared with +9 % in the EU-27), while the modest employment growth of +2 % in high-technology manufacturing is close to the EU average.

Expected skill shortages

[Cedefop's Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#) shows the employers in Belgium will likely face the largest shortages in elementary occupations. These include cleaners and helpers, agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers, and refuse workers and other elementary workers. Staff shortages in elementary occupations will be driven by imbalances between supply and demand. Shortages are also expected in medium-skilled, manual occupations such as assemblers and building and related trade workers.

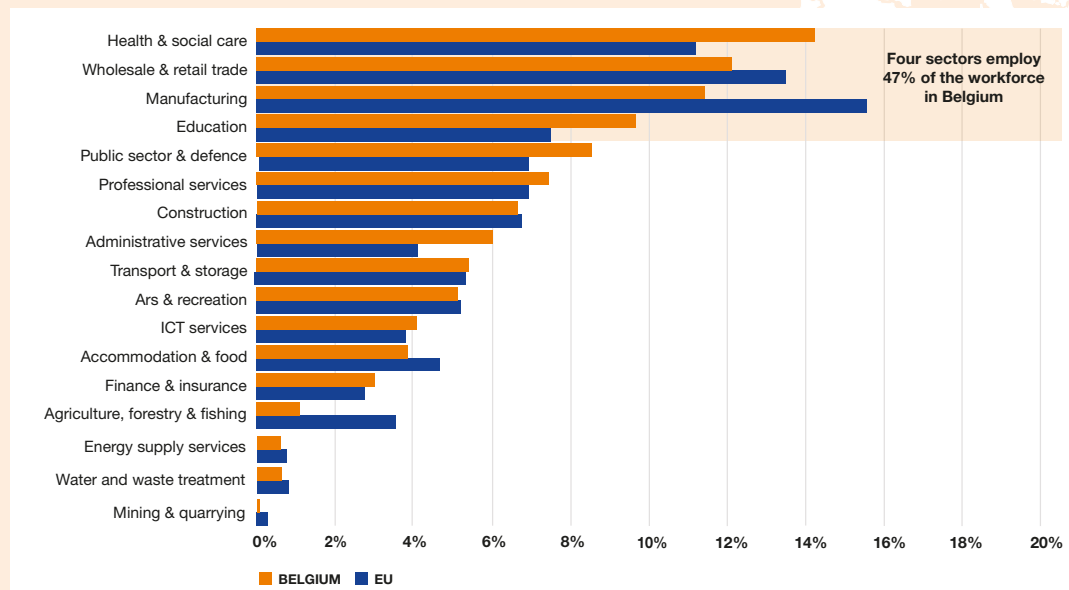
Several high-skilled occupations are projected to experience relatively high labour market pressures according to some dimensions of the index. This is particularly the case for chief executives, senior officials and legislators, legal, social and cultural professionals and associate professionals, as well as health professionals, where projected employment growth may lead to emerging demand and supply imbalances.



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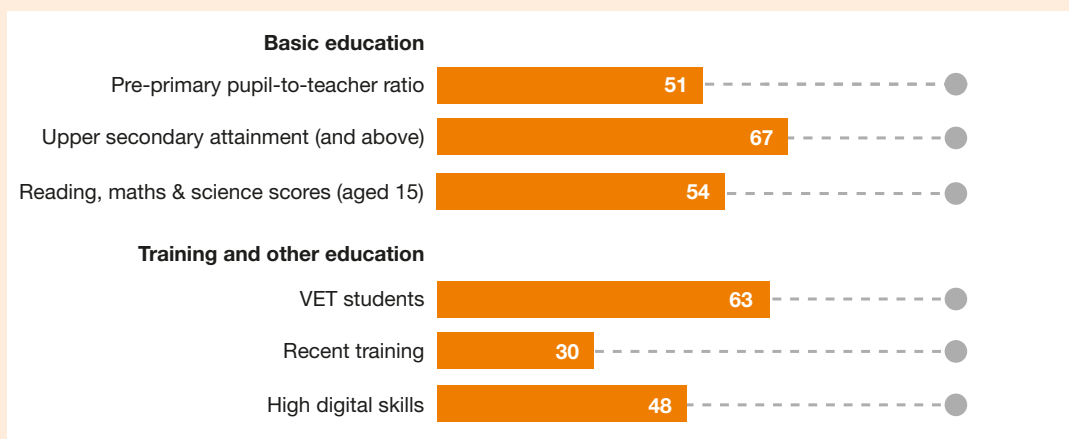
Jobs and skills in figures

Distribution of employment across sectors in Belgium and the EU, 2023 (%)



Source: [Cedefop Skills Intelligence tool](#).

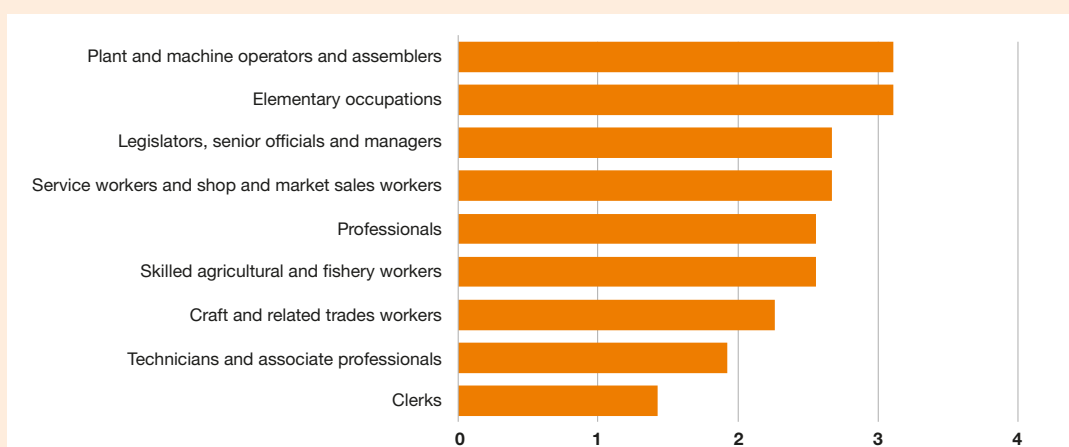
ESI skills activation pillar in Belgium, 2024



NB: The ESI measures countries' 'distance to the ideal' performance, i.e. the highest achieved by any country over a period of seven years. The ideal performance is scaled to 100, with national scores computed and compared to that. Example: a score of 65 suggests that the country has reached 65 % of the ideal performance, with 35 % (100-65) room for improvement.

Source: [Cedefop ESI](#).

Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index, 2022-35, Belgium



NB: The Labour and Skills Shortage Index is the simple average of the quartiles in each of the three pillars: (1) employment growth; (2) replacement demand; (3) supply/demand imbalance (IFOD). A score of 4 indicates a higher level of shortage, and 1 no shortage. The outcome of the pillars is based on the relative evaluation in quartiles of the occupation (here for all EU-27).

Source: [Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#).



Further information

- Cedefop. (2023). [Skills forecast methodological framework](#).
- Cedefop. (2023). [Skills anticipation in Belgium](#). Data insights series.
- Cedefop. (2024). [Evolution of European skills systems: performance 2015 to 2022](#). Publications Office of the European Union.
- Cedefop. (2025). [Skills forecast report: Belgium](#).
- Cedefop. (2025). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024 – Belgium \(Flanders\)](#). National VET policy developments 2023-24.
- Cedefop. (2025). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024 – Belgium \(French speaking part\)](#). National VET policy developments 2023-24.
- Karno, A. (2024). [Implementing European priorities in VET: making national VET agile, flexible, innovative, attractive, inclusive and quality-assured: Belgium](#). Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives.
- StatBel. (2025). [Statistic Office of Belgium: employment and training](#).

Data and information on the regions of Belgium

Brussels

- [Actiris \(Brussels' Region PES\) and its statistics department](#) provide labour market data and analyses, e.g. [analysis of the 2024 Brussels labour market](#).
- [Bruxelles Formation](#), the public vocational training service for Brussels, also has a statistics department that produces [analyses on skills and the labour market](#).
- The Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis ([perspective.brussels](#)) collects, produces and disseminates [statistics on the Brussels Region](#).

Flanders

- VDAB publishes several key labour market reports, including [Knelpuntberoepelijst](#). [Shortage occupation list]; [Vacaturebericht december 2025](#). [VDAB vacancy report]; [VDAB vacatures](#) [Job vacancies in Flanders].
- [Steunpunt Werk](#) labour market analyses and forecasts, including [Beroepenprojecties](#) [occupational projections] and [Sectorprojecties](#) [sector forecasts].



French Community

- The Observatory of Qualifications, Trades and Technologies (OQMT) has developed the [Cadastre de l'enseignement qualifiant \(Qualifications Register\)](#) which provides objective data on the technical and vocational education system.

German-speaking Community

- [Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft \(PES\)](#) publishes information and data on the labour market situation in the German-speaking Community.

Wallonia

- Walloon Institute for Evaluation, Forecasting and Statistics ([Institut wallon de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la statistique](#)) provide forecasts on the labour market in Wallonia.
- Le Forem (Walloon's Region PES) publishes [information on labour market trends](#) and the [skill shortages in Wallonia](#).

[Cedefop Skills intelligence tool](#)

[Cedefop Skills forecast](#)

[Cedefop Skills OVATE](#)

[Cedefop European Skills Index](#)

[Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#)

This Spotlight was drafted by Cedefop's Skills intelligence and foresight team.

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