



Domus Mugglium Dursleorum

orum<sup>27</sup> Mugglense<sup>28</sup>, quod admodum<sup>29</sup> amo.“  
 „Nolo,“ inquit Professor McGonagall frigide, quasi non putaret, id esse tempus citrinis fervescentibus. „Sententia mea, etiamsi Quidam re vera abiit –“

Als besonders motivierend zeigte sich die schülerorientierte Erstellung von produktiv-kreativen Produkten rund um das HP-Universum, wodurch den Heranwachsenden nicht nur der große Einfluss von Latein auf HP bewusst wurde, sondern auch die Tatsache, dass Lateinunterricht

mehr als Übersetzen, das Aneignen von Grammatikregeln und das Abfragen von Vokabeln bedeuten kann – ganz im Sinne *Latein ist tot – es verzaubere Latein.* ■

Die Literatur finden Sie unter folgendem QR-Code:



- 22 acutus, -a, -um: scharf
- 23 „Du-weißt-schon-wer“
- 24 Muggles, -ium: Name für gewöhnliche Menschen
- 25 citrina: Zitronenbonbon
- 26 ferverescere: heiß werden > Brause
- 27 bellaria, -orum n.: Süßigkeiten
- 28 Mugglensis, -e: Adjektiv zu Muggle
- 29 admodum: ganz

# Quo vadimus?

## Latin and Greek in Flemish secondary schools

Christian Laes

### 1. Introduction

*Il Belgio è un paese complicato.* Thus Felix Claus, in a survey on the situation of the teaching of Latin and Greek in schools of the Flemish community in Belgium.<sup>1</sup> Since 1989, there isn't anything as a Belgian educational system, since federalism caused the Dutch speaking part of Flanders, the French Wallonian region, and the small German community to be responsible each for their own educational system. They do so in very different ways. As in Claus' publication, I will only focus on Flanders – but also for this part of the country, the situation is complicated at first sight.

No less than five educational networks organise schools and education. In order of numbers of pupils, the Catholic network is by far the most important (**KOV = Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen** – accounting for 72.3 % of the total of pupils

according to the most recent survey).<sup>2</sup> Note that all these schools are subsidised by the Flemish government, they are not fee-paying private institutions. Then follow the schools organised by the Flemish community (**GO! = Gemeenschapsonderwijs**; 19.2 %). Also provinces organise schools (**POV = Provinciaal Onderwijs Vlaanderen**), as well as cities and communities, which are united in yet another educational network (**OVSG = Onderwijs door Steden en Gemeenten**). Together, POV and OVSG count for 7.5 % of the total school population. Lastly, there is a very small educational network (1 %) of all sorts of different schools that, despite being subsidised by the state, very much stick to their independency and only unite for practical matters: protestant or Jewish schools, Steiner or other pedagogical projects (**OKO = Onderwijs door Kleine Onderwijsverstrekkers**).

As for secondary schools – education after primary school and before higher education or university, in the Flemish system between 12 and 18 years of age – they are mostly organised in three cycles of two years each (with a small exception for voca-

<sup>1</sup> F. Claus, “La situazione delle lingue classiche nella comunità fiamminga del Belgio”, in L. Canfora and U. Cardinale (eds), *Disegnare il futuro con intelligenza antica. L'insegnamento del latino e del greco antico in Italia e nel mondo* (Bologna, 2013) p. 337–344, p. 337. See also J. Facq and L. Waumans, “Belgium. I. Flanders”, in J. Bulwer (ed.), *Classics Teaching in Europe* (London, 2006) p. 22–26.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/vlaams-onderwijs-in-cijfers-2016-2017>



tional schools). After each cycle, pupils get a degree that gives access to the next cycle. A degree of the third cycle gives access to university or higher education. There are no state exams, and it is up to the schools and more specifically the board of teachers who teach a pupil to decide whether he/she passes and gets his/her degree.

Though paedagogical freedom of schools is held in high esteem, there are of course rules to be followed. The Flemish government sets out the general attainment targets, as well as attainment targets related to specific subjects. Based on these targets, the various educational networks write out their own programs, which the schools belonging to the educational network should follow (though they are to a certain extent allowed to ask for changes, exceptions and adaptations). It is the inspection that, based on the attainment targets as developed by the Flemish government, decides on the approval of the programs proposed by the educational networks. The same inspection also visits schools in order to see whether the programs are implemented in the right way in the individual schools.

Lately, there has been considerable political debate on issues concerning programs of schools. While teachers frequently complain about excessive bureaucracy, programs that are administratively over-demanding and restricting their paedagogical agency, the minister of education refers to the paedagogical freedom of the different educational networks to organise education. These educational networks, in turn, refer to ... the minister and the government, stressing that they cannot but adapt their programs to the requirements of the general and specific attainment targets developed by the Flemish community, lest these programs would not be approved by the inspection.

## 2. The position of Latin and Greek

In the following table, I enumerate the different sections with Greek and/or Latin on the program, as well as the weekly hours attributed to these subjects. Though schools might offer a slightly different amount of hours, the scheme applies to the vast majority of the Flemish schools of all educational networks (notable exceptions are Catholic schools that stick to five weekly hours of Classical Studies – mainly Latin, but also initiation in Greek and Ancient Culture – in the first year of the first cycle, and again Catholic schools that offer four hours of Latin and four hours of Greek in the second year of this cycle).

While the first grade of the first cycle is dedicated to Latin in the schools of GO!, Catholic Schools offer the subject called Classical Studies in this grade.

### Cycle 1

1st year  
option 4 hours Classical Studies/Latin<sup>3</sup>  
2nd year

Latin section: 5  
Greek-Latin: 3 / 4

### Cycle 2

1st/2nd year each with

Latin section: 5  
Greek-Latin: 4 / 4  
Greek section: 5

### Cycle 3

1st/2nd year each with  
Latin-Modern Languages: 4  
Latin-Mathematics: 4  
Latin-Sciences: 4  
Greek-Latin: 4 / 4  
Greek-Modern Languages: 4  
Greek-Mathematics: 4  
Greek-Sciences: 4

It should be noted that the amount of hours attributed to classical languages is considerable, surely when one compares with the situation in most European countries.

## 3. Numbers of students

Though the declining number of students is a constant worry to classics teachers in Flanders, the situation is surely not that bad in terms of absolute numbers. The decline is undeniable: a decrease of 5,699 students for Latin in fifteen years, and 1,162 for Greek. However, if one looks at the total percentage of students in secondary schools, one sees that the situation is not dramatic, though there are obviously difficult points as the steadily declining number of pupils in the Graeco-Latin section in the third cycle, and the weak position of Greek in schools of the GO! educational network in general.<sup>4</sup>

Total no. of students (3 cycles)		
	2002–2003	2017–2018
Latin	39,325 (11.99)	33,626 (10.16)
Greek	6010 (1.83)	4848 (1.46)

<sup>3</sup> While KOV schools offer a course of introduction to classical studies (including some Ancient Greek and classical civilisation), the schools of the GO! network offer a course of Latin.

<sup>4</sup> On the position of Greek, see now C. Laes, "Grieks-Latijnse: meer dan ooit. Een pleidooi voor een kroonjuweel", *Prora* 23, 4 (2018) p. 11–14.

A special menace seems to be the introduction of STEM-subjects (Science-Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in the first cycle. Since classical languages are optional subjects, competition has driven some schools that were traditionally oriented towards classical languages to advertise new sections with strong concentration on STEM subjects, promising their pupils a steady progress in later cycles with scientific orientation. This is a particularly deplorable situation, since Flemish education has always had sections that made possible a combination of the study of one classical language with scientific or mathematical subjects.

2nd grade of cycle 1	Latin	Greek-Latin
2012–2013	10282 (15.5)	2129 (3.2)
2013–2014	9978 (14.9)	2129 (3.2)
2014–2015	9568 (14.5)	2048 (3.1)
2015–2016	9414 (14.4)	2070 (3.1)
2016–2017	9258 (13.9)	2068 (3.1)
2017–2018	8974 (13)	1898 (2.8)

Here, the decline goes steadily, and both teachers and classical associations have to do their utter best to demonstrate that 1) interest for science can be combined with the study of ancient languages and culture, 2) the scope of general education (study of humanities) should rather be *Bildung* than technical *Ausbildung*. The excellent results in higher education of pupils who studied classic languages at secondary school should be an extra argument in discussions and negotiations with boards of schools, headmasters and parents' organisations, which all often have their say in the introduction of 'new' programs in their schools and the eternal competition for attracting enough students.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> On STEM in Flemish schools, see C. Laes, "Waarom STEM het nieuwe Latijn niet is (en dat ook niet hoeft te zijn)", *Prora* 21, 4 (2016) p. 14–17 and C. Laes, "Repliek over STEM", *Prora* 22, 1 (2017) p. 18. Excellent networking and public relations are now offered by the Dutch website *Klassieken Nu* [http://klassieken.nu/], with which *Classica Vlaanderen* affiliated. Recent pleas for *Bildung* in A. Marcolongo, *La lingua geniale. 9 ragioni per amare il Greco* (Rome, 2016) and N. Gardini, *Viva il Latino. Storie di una bellezza di una lingua inutile* (Milan, 2017).

**4. Different networks – different approaches**

A further peculiar feature of the Flemish system is that the approach to classical languages and the specific attainment targets and programs differ quite significantly among the educational networks.

First, it needs to be pointed out that Catholic schools have the large majority of the pupils in classical languages, as proves the following sample for 2017–2018 for the second year of the first cycle:

	Number of students (GL + L)	% of students studying classical languages
KOV	9011 (1630 + 7381)	83
GO!	1642 (268 + 1374)	15
OVSF	206 (0 + 206)	2
POV	13 (0 + 13)	0

The differences between the three programs (KOV, GO! and OVSF all have their own) mainly concern the following points:

- 1) Should acquaintance with authentic texts happen in a more direct way or rather gradually? While the programs of the Catholic schools opt for the gradual approach and in the first stages offer ‘simple’ and adapted/rewritten texts, the schools of the Flemish community (GO!) offer texts that from the first stage come close to the originals.
- 2) As a consequence of this, GO! schools tend to offer authentic and not adapted texts at the latest in the third year of the study of Latin and the second year of Greek, while Catholic schools for both languages offer such texts one year later.
- 3) While both programs allow their teachers a good amount of freedom in choosing texts and authors, the GO! programs focus slightly more on the thematic approach, while KOV schools tend to rather chose specific authors and genres.
- 4) While Catholic schools focus on valency grammar, which starts from the verb as the central point of the sentence, GO! schools have an approach to grammar they like to call functional.
- 5) While both programs tend to disapprove of the active approach towards Latin and Greek, such active approach is most strongly discouraged in the context of GO! schools.

Now, how would an average six year program for Latin look like in a Flemish school? Given the preponderance of Catholic schools in terms of numbers of pupils, I offer an outline of this program.

**Cycle 1**

Morphology of nouns and pronouns; syntax of all cases; indicative, infinitive, participle and imperative. Reading of adapted and simplified texts. Graeco-Roman culture.

**Cycle 2**

Morphology of the subjunctive; syntax of Latin sentences; stylistics. Graeco-Roman culture. Authors: Caesar, Pliny and Ovid.

**Cycle 3**

Six genres: epics (Virgil), lyric poets (often Horace), legal texts, rhetorics (almost always Cicero), historiography (Tacit) and an anthology of philosophical texts.

**5. New challenges – omnia mutantur**

As a classics teacher in a gymnasium (1995–2011), and as a university professor (from 2007), I have often felt that, much more than official programs, mentalities and unspoken presuppositions matter a lot in the daily practice of teaching. As such, “active” approaches as the writing of Latin or Greek forms – let alone translation to these languages or forms of composition – were often severely disapproved off, as they would detract the pupils from the main target, the comprehension and reading of authentic ancient texts. Such condemnation needs to be understood with the background of the fifties and the sixties of the former century in mind, when excessive grammatical exercises and a strong focus on the difficulties of transposing the Dutch mother tongue in appropriate Latin and Greek indeed led away teachers and pupils from the ability of reading and comprehension of the ancient authors. On the other hand, neglecting any form of active approach is counterintuitive to young pupils, who feel an immediate urge to “use” a language when they start studying it.

*Tempora mutantur.* An “active” immersion method, originally meant as teaching by correspondence, and with the explicit aim of making pupils acquainted with the Latin language and its patterns by abundant contact with the language, was developed by the Danish Latinist Hans Ørberg (1920–2010) in his *Lingua Latina*

*per se illustrata.* In the last decade, outstanding private initiatives, often by means of summer schools and other particular conventions, have managed to spread out this method worldwide.<sup>6</sup>

The taboo on Latinitas Viva does not seem to persist in Flanders. In fact, a conference in February 2017 was attended by a large group of classics teachers, and highlighted different possibilities of active approach, all in order to enhance the pupil’s abilities to get to the texts. Representatives of the various educational networks as well as academics involved in the didactics of classical languages were present.<sup>7</sup> Teachers’ training sessions for the subject are now being organised, and authors of handbooks explore new possibilities. This new wake seems to come at the right moment.

In September 2019, a reform will start in Flemish secondary schools. While the amount of hours and the different sections will largely remain the same for classical languages, new programs will be written out. There is a good chance that at least one major network will include the possibility of more active approaches in its program. Yet, the danger that such program would not be approved by the inspection is rather small. Indeed, the Flemish government has not written out specific attainment targets for classical languages in the first cycle, which means that inspectors can hardly disapprove of a program proposed by an educational network that allows active approaches. For any such disapproval, the inspectors would have to base themselves on specific attainment targets, which for classical languages ... are non-existent. *Il Belgio è un paese complicato – anche le Fiandre.*<sup>8</sup> ■

<sup>6</sup> I only mention, *inter alios*, the Italian private school Vivarium Novum, lead by the brilliant Luigi Miraglia [https://vivariumnovum.it/catalogo/latino], the Dutch Addisco lead by Caspar Porton. [http://www.addisco.nl/] or the Swedish Latinitium, initiated by Daniel Pettersson [https://www.latinitium.com/]. Both Vivarium Novum and Addisco also offer stimulating initiatives for the study of Ancient Greek.

<sup>7</sup> C. Laes, “Tussen droom en daad: Levend Latijn en Oudgrieks in het Vlaamse onderwijs”, in *Kleio. Tijdschrift voor oude talen en antieke cultuur* 47, 1-2 (2018) p. 70-86; C. Laes, “Ex Antverpia lux? De conventu quodam didascalico”, in *Melissa* 197 (2017) p. 3-4. For the international context of this “Living Latin” movement, see *inter multa alia*: A. Gratius Avitus, “Spoken Latin: Learning, Teaching, Lecturing and Research”, in *Journal of Classics Teaching* 19, 37 (2018) p. 46-52.

<sup>8</sup> In a way, this article tries to supplement the information as found in the most useful book J. Bulwer (ed.), *Classics Teaching in Europe* (London, 2006), with contributions from fifteen different countries. I share the hope that, in the context of Euroclassica, a new and updated similar volume would appear.