Beyond skills: learning as a cultural right

Overall, the situation in Belgium reflects limited participation of learners and only moderate involvement of civil society organisations in policy-making processes. According to EAEA's member Lire et crire, both EU and national or local funding remain insufficient to ensure accessible and sustainable adult learning opportunities, while private funding does not provide a viable alternative. As a result, most adults cannot afford to enroll in education or training programs. Although Belgium has a range of adult learning and education initiatives that address the issues identified in previous Commission reports, the system remains fragmented.

Note: the Flemish and Walloon regions operate under distinct policy frameworks, with notable disparities in priorities and funding mechanisms; recent defunding of several adult education courses in Flanders has further deepened the imbalance across the country.

Skills dimension

For Lire et crire, the process of learning to read and write is not just about acquiring skills. First and foremost, it is a cultural right: the right to access literacy training in a society built on written communication.

Even though learners may attend training to gain specific skills, the impact goes far beyond that. It affects their social relationships, their perception of time, their agency as citizens, and their understanding of the world. Reducing literacy learning to a mere question of skills therefore narrows and oversimplifies its true impact. Lire et crire

believes it is essential to evolve the language used in public policy narratives, so that learners are not portrayed as people who lack skills. People possess a wide range of abilities - it simply depends on which skills society chooses to value at a given moment.

AI in adult learning

Lire et crire has stated that it does not use AI at the organisational level. While some trainers or staff members might experiment with AI tools individually, the organisation as a whole has so far chosen to stay away from adopting AI for several reasons. Recently, Lire et crire organised a conference on the use of AI in social policies, particularly focusing on how such tools are increasingly applied to detect fraud and on the associated risks of reproducing existing social biases.

Participation in decision-making

In 2024, Lire et crire took part in public consultations, emphasising their continuous participation in the Comit de pilotage de lalphabtisation - a multi-stakeholder body that guides and coordinates public policies related to literacy. However, they consider that civil society organisations generally do not actively participate in policy-making processes and their views and concerns arent particularly taken into account. In the case of learners, they consider this is even less the case.

Belgian member's view on the PIAAC results

Lire et crire agrees with the PIAAC results.

Funding of adult education

According to Lire et crire, the funding situation for adult education in Belgium remained unchanged in 2024- 2025. The funding for literacy training has also not changed so far; however, a new regional government in the Wallonia Region could lead to changes. They anticipate a 2% reduction in overall funding.

The member organisation mentions multiple sources of funding, including:

- project funding
- programme funding
- operating grants/structural funding
- contribution paid by employers
- paid training leave

DISCLAIMER ON THE PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING DATA: the data focuses on formal and non-formal education and training, excluding guided on-the-job training. Participation is higher when on-the-job training is included. Data coming from sources such as OECD and the monitoring framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights may differ from the presented data.