

Belgium (French speaking)

introduction

In the French-speaking part of Belgium the adult education sector is dedicating most of its efforts to several challenging areas, ranging from professional training to social inclusion issues. One of the themes on the agenda of local authorities and actors is literacy education for low-educated and illiterate adults.

Recent developments in Belgium (French speaking)

The question of literacy is one of the most important issues for the French-speaking Belgian community. In Belgium literacy for adults is fragmented and exists within the frameworks of a number of policies (social integration, education, labour, culture, etc.), it is considered by many different governmental structures at many different several levels (this is because Belgium has one state, and five federal governments, in addition to the European Commission) and is also coordinated by a steering committee. As a result, it is challenging to draw up a representative picture of the state of adult education and its new developments in Belgium in general. On one hand, the fragmentation of the field brings positive effects: it is able to address the diversity of needs that range from region to region, from organisation to organisation. It also brings together different sources of funding and ensures the sustainability of actions. On the other hand, however, the fragmentation creates an overweight administrative burden and prevents the creation of comprehensive strategies.

Due to the fragmented structure of the Belgian administrative bodies, the policies in education also vary from region to region, which makes it difficult to construct an understanding of the sector as a whole. EAEA member, Lire et crire, is focusing specifically on literacy issues in French-speaking Belgian communities.

Links to EU and international policy in Belgium (French speaking)

With their literacy initiatives and advocacy work for clearer and more efficient literacy policies, Belgian EAEA member, Lire et crire, supports the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

Challenges and recommendations in Belgium (French speaking)

In the field of literacy adult education, there are several challenges that need the attention of administrative bodies. First of all, offers of learning opportunities have been shortened due to the bureaucratic burden linked to the ongoing assessment demands.

Secondly, literacy education has been limited to increasing learners employability, leaving very little space for innovative pedagogy, furthermore this programme is unlikely to ensure language proficiency (including mathematics) and basic digital skills.

In addition, current labour and social policies are struggling to support the most vulnerable groups.

There is a lack of data on literacy levels in Belgium which prevents reliable needs-assessments. EAEA member, Lire et écrire, is currently working on encouraging Belgian authorities and Eurostat to organise an appropriate survey in order to better implement adult education policies.

At the same time, sophisticated digital literacy training is needed. The digitalisation of public services is already considerable in many fields (health, school, banking, etc.). As a result, thousands of people are in danger of being left behind due to inadequate digital skills, a violation of their fundamental rights.
