



LITERACY IN BELGIUM (French Community)

COUNTRY REPORT
SHORT VERSION

March 2016

This document has been published by the European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET).

The report was completed in 2016.

The contents of this publication may be reproduced in part, except for commercial purposes, provided the extract is preceded by a reference to "Elinet", followed by the date of publication of the document.

Authors (in alphabetical order): Stéphanie Géron, Dominique Lafontaine, Patricia Schillings

Contributing authors (in alphabetical order): Christine Garbe, David Mallows, Gerry Shiel, Renate Valtin

Coordinator of the ELINET-Project:

University of Cologne

Prof. Dr. Christine Garbe

Institut für Deutsche Sprache und Literatur

Richard-Strauss-Str. 2

50931 Köln – Cologne

Germany

christine.garbe@uni-koeln.de

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	4
2	General Information about the Belgian Education System.....	5
3	Literacy Performance Data.....	6
4	Key Literacy Policy Areas for Development (age-specific and across age-groups).....	8
4.1	Creating a Literate Environment.....	8
4.1.1	Pre-Primary Years.....	8
4.1.2	Primary Children and Adolescents.....	8
4.1.3	Adults.....	9
4.2	Improving the Quality of Teaching.....	10
4.2.1	Pre-Primary Years.....	10
4.2.2	Primary Children and Adolescents.....	11
4.2.3	Adults.....	12
4.3	Increasing Participation, Inclusion and Equity.....	13
4.3.1	Pre-Primary Years.....	14
4.3.2	Primary Children and Adolescents.....	14
4.3.3	Adults.....	15
5	References.....	16

1 Introduction

This report on the state of literacy in Belgium (French Community) is one of a series produced in 2015 and 2016 by ELINET, the European Literacy Policy Network. ELINET was founded in February 2014 and has 78 partner organisations in 28 European countries¹. ELINET aims to improve literacy policies in its member countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. One major tool to achieve this aim is to produce a set of reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has one or more partners, and to provide guidance towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

ELINET continues the work of the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (HLG) which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012². All country reports produced by ELINET use a common theoretical framework which is described here: "ELINET Country Reports – Frame of Reference"³.

The Country Reports are organised around the three recommendations of the HLG's literacy report:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion (and equity⁴).

Within its two-year funding period ELINET has completed Literacy Country Reports for all 30 ELINET member countries. In most cases we published separate **Long Reports** for specific age groups (Children / Adolescents and Adults), in some cases comprehensive reports covering all age groups. Additionally, for all 30 countries, we published **Short Reports** covering all age groups, containing the summary of performance data and policy messages of the Long Reports. These reports are accompanied by a collection of good practice examples which cover all age groups and policy areas as well. These examples refer to the **European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels**; both are to be found in the section "Good Practice"⁵.

All reports refer to four appendices. **Appendix A** provides information on criteria for the choice of indicators and the chosen indicators for the **pre-primary age group**. For each of these indicators, **Appendix B** contains a table with numbers of the European countries participating in ELINET. **Appendix C** has been created using the international database for PIRLS 2011 – and contains separate tables for all information reported. If countries did not participate in PIRLS 2011, data for PIRLS 2006 are referred to. **Appendix D** contains this information for PIRLS 2006 data, as well as achievement data for PIRLS 2001.

¹ For more information about the network and its activities see: www.eli-net.eu.

² In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as "HLG report". This report can be downloaded under the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf.

³ See: <http://www.eli-net.eu/research/country-reports/>.

⁴ "Equity" was added by ELINET.

⁵ See: <http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/>.

2 General Information about the Belgian Education System

Belgium is a Federal State with three official languages: French, Dutch and German.

In 1989, the Education Department was transferred from the federal government to the French, Flemish, and German Communities defined on linguistic and cultural basis. There are also three Regions defined on geographical basis: the Flemish region, Brussels capital and the Wallonia.

The federal authorities still are responsible for deciding the extent of compulsory education, minimum conditions for obtaining a diploma, and teachers' pensions. Competence for Primary and Secondary education lies with the Communities. Education is either organised by the French Community or subsidised by it (grant-aided public education and denominational or non-denominational grant-aided independent education). Provided they comply with laws, decrees and orders, controlling authorities enjoy fairly extensive autonomy, particularly with regard to methods of education and assessment.

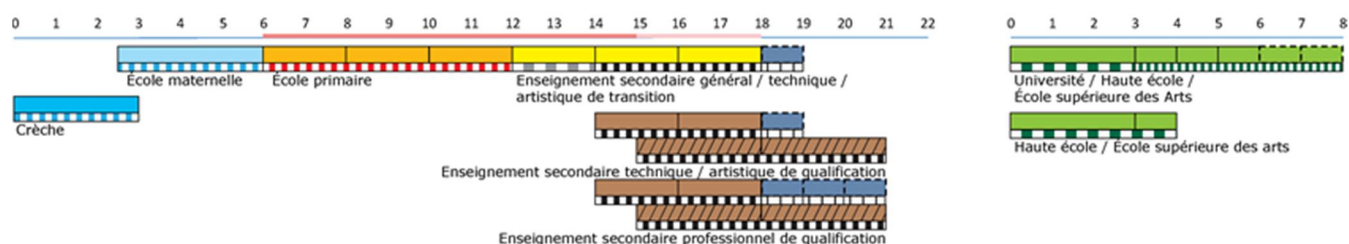
Compulsory schooling starts at age 6 and ends at 18. Between 15 and 18 year-olds, students can follow part time schooling. Pre-primary education is well developed and free of charge. Children can enter preschools at the age of 2 and a half year-olds. The vast majority of children regularly attend preschool.

Primary education last 6 years (grade 1 to 6) and secondary education too (grade 7 to 12).

Continuing the work of primary education, the first stage of secondary education aims to construct and develop basic knowledge and skills among all pupils. From the third year of secondary education onwards, a distinction is made between four forms of education each of which options. As well as full-time secondary education, there is qualification-stream dual vocational secondary education and training and, in some institutions, post-secondary non-tertiary education.

Specialised education is provided for pupils with special educational needs, but various measures have been taken recently to help ensure the integration of some of these children in ordinary education.

Figure 1: Structure of the Belgian School System⁶



⁶ See: Structure of European education systems, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/facts_and_figures_en.php#diagram

3 Literacy Performance Data

French-speaking Belgium participated in IEA's PIRLS (4th graders reading comprehension) in 2006 and 2011, and has been participating in OECD's PISA (15 year-olds' reading literacy) since 2000. It consequently is possible to describe the changes over time in average reading proficiency, according to different characteristics of the readers, and to compare relative reading levels of proficiencies for different age groups.

French-speaking Belgium performed well below the EU average in PIRLS 2011 (506 vs 535 EU-average) and slightly above the EU average in PISA 2012 (497 vs 489 EU average). While the performance in PIRLS remained about the same in 2006 and 2011 (500 vs 506), a significant increase (+ 21 score points) - the equivalent of about half a year of schooling - was observed in PISA between 2000 and 2012.

The proportion of pupils who can be considered as low-performing readers was almost the same in PISA as on EU average (20%). At grade 4, this proportion of low-performing readers was higher than the EU average (29% vs 20%). These students can read simple texts, retrieve explicit information, or make straightforward inferences, but they are not able to deal with longer or more complex texts, and are unable to interpret beyond what is explicitly stated in the text. The proportion of low-performing readers has slightly decreased in PIRLS between 2006 and 2011 (34.4% vs 29.6%). That proportion decreased as well in PISA between 2000 and 2012 but more drastically (from 28.2% to 19.2%). The decrease is high for boys (-7%) and even higher for girls (-8.5%).

The proportion of top-performing readers was very low (2%) in PIRLS, compared to EU average (9%). This proportion reached 10% in PISA, a little more than in EU countries on average (7%).

The gap according to the pupils' socio-economic background was somewhat lower than the EU average in PIRLS (65 vs 76 on average). It should be underlined that the percentage of parents whose highest level of education was university or higher was much above the EU average. In PISA, the socio-economic gap was much higher than the EU average (136 vs 89 on average). However, the indices of socio-economic background are not the same in PIRLS and PISA, so the comparison should be taken with caution. The higher socio-economic gap among 15 year-olds is potentially linked with the structure of the educational system, in which tracking starts earlier than in most of the countries. Early tracking is known to increase inequity.

In PISA 2009, the gap between native students and students with a migrant background was higher than in EU countries on average (60 vs 38 EU-average). It should be underlined that the proportion of students with an immigrant background was very high in BFR (22.1% vs 8.3 on EU average). In PIRLS, the mean score difference between those who always spoke the test language at home, and those who sometimes or never did so was below the EU average (16 vs 26). Here again, the proportion of pupils reporting they sometimes/never spoke the test language at home was much higher than in other countries on average (29% vs 20%). In PISA, this gap according to language spoken at home was above the EU average (79 vs 54).

In French-speaking Belgium, the gender gap (in favour of girls) was lower than the corresponding EU average differences both in PIRLS (5 vs 12 on EU average) and in PISA (26 vs 44 on average). The gender difference was stable over time both in PIRLS and in PISA. At both levels, the increase in reading performance observed across the three cycles was quite similar among girls as among boys

(+19 score point for girls, +20 for boys in PISA; +7 score points for both in PIRLS), resulting in the observed status quo of the gender gaps.

In conclusion, French-speaking Belgium has significantly increased its performance in reading over time among 15 year-olds, whereas its performance in PIRLS remained quite unchanged, showing an increase not large enough to be significant. In PIRLS, French-speaking Belgium still performs well below the EU countries on average, and has a proportion of low-performing readers higher than the EU countries on average, but it significantly decreased. In PISA, a drastic decrease of this proportion was observed between 2000 and 2012. It is now slightly below the EU average and the proportion of top-performers is above. The spread of achievement (gap between low and top performing readers) is lower than in the EU on average in PIRLS and higher in PISA.

The gap according to the gender is lower than on EU average in both studies. The trends are similar among girls and boys: both improved their overall reading performance to the same extent and in PISA, a drastic decrease of the proportion of low-performing readers was observed in both groups. The gap according to socio-economic status is somewhat lower in PIRLS and very much higher in PISA. The gap according to migration or language spoken at home is lower than the EU average in PIRLS but higher in PISA. Results regarding equity are still a matter of concern for 15 year-old students in French-speaking Belgium.

4 Key Literacy Policy Areas for Development (age-specific and across age-groups)

4.1 Creating a Literate Environment

4.1.1 Pre-Primary Years

Providing a supportive home environment: Compared to the European average, Belgium (French) has favourable scores as PIRLS data show: Most parents have positive attitudes to reading; however, 14% of pupils have parents who do not like reading. The availability of children's books in the home is high; yet 11% of pupils in Belgium (French) had 10 or fewer books at home, and these students did less well on PIRLS overall reading literacy (by 72 score points), compared with students who had 200 or more books.

In Belgium (French), parents engage often in literacy related activities with their children (30%). It is lower than the European average.

In addition, in Belgium (French), there are fewer parents who never engage in the nine literacy related activities, than in the EU 24 (2%). This Early Literacy Activity Scale correlates with later reading performance in grade 4. Students who were sometimes or never or almost never engaged in these activities with their parents before the beginning of primary school did less well on PIRLS overall reading literacy compared with students who were engaged often in these activities.

4.1.2 Primary Children and Adolescents

Providing a literate environment in school: According to PIRLS 2011, 89% of 4th graders in Belgium (French) were in classrooms which had class libraries – well above the corresponding EU-24 average of 73% (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table H2).

Supporting reading motivation, especially among boys and adolescents: In Belgium (French), as in some other countries, the reading motivation from 4th grade (cf. PIRLS 2011) to age 15 (cf. PISA 2009) has been declining.

In Belgium, all the individual characteristics studied are significantly connected to the reading performances. The girls, the non-retained pupils, those speaking French, those stemming from a socioculturally privileged environment, and those having positive good reading self-perceptions have better results than the others.

Moreover, the effect of the reading motivation on reading performances is not similar for all the pupils. The effect is stronger for pupils stemming from a socioculturally privileged environment.

Supporting reading motivation among Belgian boys is an important issue since achievement differs according to reading purpose. In Belgium (French), the reading scores of the girls for the literary texts are significantly superior to those of their male classmates (513 versus 503). Regarding the reading of informative texts, the results (profits) do not differ: the average of the girls amounts to 504, that of the boys to 503.

Strengthening the role of public libraries in reading promotion: There are about 180 public libraries in the French part of Belgium, which are recognised by the Ministry of the French Community.

Their role is to develop the reading practices. They propose a department of loan of documents and, very often, they give their members the opportunity to browse the Internet, to participate in writing workshops or to take part in sessions of tales for example.

In some cities in the French part of Belgium, some public libraries are especially dedicated to children and to teenagers.

Offering digital literacy learning opportunities at school: Since 1998-1999, primary and secondary schools have started a huge programme for fitting out primary and secondary schools with computers. Unfortunately, especially in primary schools, computer rooms are largely underused. Many teachers are not trained to use this kind of tools as a support for their teaching.

According to Hindryckx and Lafontaine (in Mullis et al., 2012), computer technology is not emphasised in the process of teaching reading, and actual usage may depend on personal preference or on initiatives put in place by school staff. They point out that computers are used most often to locate information, and in activities designed to increase reading speed, lexical and syntactic knowledge, or text comprehension.

4.1.3 Adults

Broadly speaking, there are four types of literacy provision in two streams available to adults in Belgium (French), with adults assigned to each type depending on their educational level and their knowledge of the French language. Literacy training is aimed at adults who have either not completed school or not obtained the competences equivalent to those gained by the end of primary schooling: within this stream a distinction is also made between Francophones and non-Francophones. In basic training, aimed at adults who have a school leaving certificate or the equivalent competences, a distinction is made between programmes which are designed as refresher courses for Francophones and those which offer French as a Foreign Language.

There is a strong history in Belgium (French) of literacy programmes being offered by volunteers, which can still be seen in the number of informal literacy offers in community settings. A number of different organisations are now involved in the provision of literacy courses for adults: within the formal adult education sector, there are Schools for Social Promotion; in the informal sector, non-profit organisations and NGOs, and some public bodies, organise literacy courses, often aimed at increasing access to jobs and the labour market, or at promoting social inclusion.

Although this diversity works well in terms of ensuring that the offer is broad enough to take account of adults' individual needs, funding for adult literacy programmes is complex and can come from a multiplicity of sources, meaning that there is a lack of coherence, that funding is unstable, and that groups can be excluded.

Since 2005 there have been a number of initiatives to formalise coordination and collaboration in adult literacy policy in Belgium (French), including inter-ministerial conferences, the establishment of a Permanent Piloting Committee on Adult Literacy and a review of regulatory frameworks, budgets, types of programmes, financing, and jobs. The permanent piloting committee draws together representatives from government, local authorities and public bodies, as well as adult literacy experts, and is responsible for making recommendations to government. However, although inter-ministerial conferences are meant to take place annually, this has not the case in recent years, and in general there has been a muted political response to the permanent piloting committee's proposals. Furthermore, although the Belgian (French) government has acknowledged the importance of

developing literacy programmes for at-risk and vulnerable groups, and is committed to increasing the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning, there is no national plan for literacy and literacy support and the political focus remains on the economic benefits to training and continuing education, and on educating migrants. In general the supply of training is insufficient to meet demand, especially in the Brussels area.

Lire et Écrire is the main non-profit organisation working in the literacy sector in Belgium (French) and the main force in the public promotion of literacy, coordination national awareness campaigns and lobbying government. Lire et Écrire is actively involved in the training offer for literacy teachers (see section 4.2.3. below), in literacy programmes such as projects aiming to reduce the digital gap, and working in collaboration with other organisations such as libraries on reading for pleasure initiatives.

4.2 Improving the Quality of Teaching

4.2.1 Pre-Primary Years

Improving the quality of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): According to Eurostat the total public expenditure per child in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP in Belgium is 0.6% (2014, Figure D3) and the student/teacher ratio in pre-primary schools for children at the age of four is 16.1 students per teacher.

2.7% of the pre-primary teachers in Belgium are males.

Moreover, in the French part of Belgium, the length and the content of the preschool pre-service training is an important issue. The Statement of the Governmental policy advocates for a master's level in teacher initial education. The recruitment of pre-primary teacher is also a matter of preoccupation since a large part of students studying in order to become a pre-primary teacher have a certificate from vocational secondary education.

Improving early language and literacy screening and training: In Belgium (French), there is no systematic testing of students to diagnose reading difficulties. Moreover, outcomes from diagnostic tests must be confirmed through specialised testing by a psychologist or speech therapist. Since 2011-12, one person in each school is required to be trained in the area of dyslexia.

Introducing comprehensive literacy curricula in pre-primary schools: In the French Community of Belgium, there are core skills, ("*Socles de compétences*") that all teachers and schools, whatever the organising authority⁷ have to follow. Each organising authority develops its own program, but a commission checks whether the program is coherent with the "*Socles de compétences*".

At pre-primary school level, play is the prime agent in pedagogical work. Official legislation emphasises welcoming, closely observing and listening to the child, in order to provide pedagogical support in his or her development. It refers to the need to respect the child's individual learning pace and to center activities within a functional context.

Thus, in most of the programmes for the pre-primary level developed by the organising authorities, the activities to be carried out are in relation to the subjects. For example, as regards communication situations, from the first cycle onwards the suggested activities related to the skill "orienting one's reading based on the communication situation" include using a reading corner, using the library, and

⁷ There are three main organising authorities: the State, the provinces/municipalities, and what is called « réseau libre » (in the vast majority of cases, catholic schools). All schools are publicly funded.

finding a book in the classroom's library corner (schools administered by the French Community). At this cycle, it is rather a matter of initiation, as the language skills only need to be mastered at the end of the 2nd cycle (8 years).

4.2.2 Primary Children and Adolescents

Ensuring adequate time for language and literacy instruction in primary and secondary schools:

According to PIRLS 2011 teachers in Belgium (French) report allocating less time to teaching reading across the curriculum and in reading classes (120 hours) than on average across EU countries (147 hours).

Improving the quality of literacy instruction: Belgium (French) is far below the EU-24 average on the frequency with which students engage in activities such as locating information in the text, identifying the main idea and explaining or supporting their understanding. The data suggest a weak emphasis on teaching reading comprehension strategies in Belgium (French). One might speculate whether this lack of teaching comprehension skills contribute to the weak reading performance of an important proportion of Belgian (French students) in grade four and at the age of fifteen years.

Improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training: According to PIRLS 2011, fourth-grade students are typically taught reading by general-purpose primary school teachers who are responsible for teaching all basic subjects.

There is **less emphasis on teaching reading pedagogy in initial teacher education in Belgium (French)** (33% of students are taught by teachers who identify it as an area of emphasis), compared with the EU-24 average (59%). This may arise because among pre-service teachers, reading is included French language rather than being considered as a subject matter in its own right. According to PIRLS 2011, 5% of students in Belgium (French) are taught by teachers who report that remedial reading was an area of emphasis in their pre-service teacher education. The corresponding EU-24 average is 22%.

Furthermore, 5% of students in Belgium in PIRLS 2011 have a teacher who reported assessment methods in reading as an area of major emphasis in initial teacher education, compared with an EU-24 average of 27%.

Improving the quality and quantity (participation rates) of continuing professional development (CPD):

Although teachers in Belgium (French) are expected to participate in continuous professional education as a professional duty (6 half-days per year are obligatory), the participation rates are still wanting. According to PIRLS 2011 41% of students in Belgium (French) were taught by teachers who had allocated no time to professional development in reading in the last two years.

Improving the quality and participation rates of continuing professional development targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers is especially important considering the high proportion of weak readers among Belgian (French) primary and secondary classes.

Extending systematic assessment of literacy skills: Since 2008, the Basic Studies Certificate (CEB, grade 6) is delivered at the end of primary education on the basis of an **external certifying assessment**, which is compulsory in every school type¹⁴. This examination assesses the mastery of the competencies expected at the end of primary education in French language but also in mathematics, science, history, and geography.

A common external certificative examination is also organised at the end of the third phase (grade 8) in the educational continuum (CE1D). Students are tested in French (but also in mathematics, science and foreign language).

Building a stronger focus on literacy into curricula: In both primary and secondary schools curricula, literacy is seldom considered as the integration of reading, writing skills and speaking skills. This segmented output approach doesn't favor the development of an integrated approach, considering the interrelated dimensions of the cognitive, social and sociocultural components of literacy;

In primary school curricula, the range of reading skills to be developed is quite large but doesn't include metacognitive processes. This doesn't make visible the importance to develop explicit teaching of reading strategies. The term "strategy" is not even mentioned in the standards. Then skills are exercised rather than explicitly taught.

4.2.3 Adults

Quality: In Belgium (French) there is an inspection service which assures quality in the formal adult education section, and non-profit organisation offering courses in their sector are also subject to inspection measures including evaluation where they receive public funds. Non-profit organisations offering courses in continuing education or geared towards labour market insertion are required to submit annual reports including the number of learners participating in their programmes and destination data and five-yearly evaluations of their activities. As in many countries, the required evaluation measures are general focused on cost-benefit criteria and return on investment; there is far less focus on the quality of literacy provision in terms of its benefits to learners, and most especially to those social and other benefits of learning which are less easy to quantify.

There is no national literacy programme in Belgium (French) as the intention with literacy provision for adults is to offer curricula that take account of the individual learner's context (that is, a social practices model). In the formal adult education sector courses are more likely to take a traditional "school" format than those offered outside of the formal sector, which often have a strong emphasis on active participation by learners and include learning in settings outside of the classroom. There is no specific treatment for people with dyslexia-linked difficulties in the context of literacy training.

People with reading and writing difficulties can be identified through interviews with representatives from job centres, or by social workers from Public Social Action Centres (CPAS). Others are made aware of their need for literacy provision through public awareness campaigns such as those organised by Lire et Écrire – and in practice, most people on literacy courses self-refer to providers rather than being identified through external agencies. For training in the informal sector, there is no standard skills assessment test either at entry or during programme participation, although Lire et Écrire has designed a tool that assesses skills level in reading, writing, and oral language, on a 5-point scale.

Teachers: In Belgium (French) the role and status of adult literacy teachers is linked to the sector in which they work. Those working in the formal adult education sector enjoy the same status as teachers in compulsory education.

There are no qualification requirements for those teaching adult literacy in the informal sector, although their standard of education is generally quite high, with around a quarter having university degrees. Those working in the Schools for Social Promotion in Belgium (France), however, are required to hold a teaching certificate and a three year training programme for literacy tutors leading to a

Brevet of Higher Education (BES) is available for those working in this sector. The entry requirements for this course are broad in order to encourage a wide range of applicants and the course is funded by the State. In addition, Lire et Écrire and other non-profit organisations offer basic training modules of varying durations= (from 12 to more than 20 hours depending on objectives and content) and these can be accessed by literacy teachers working in the informal sector. There is a good take-up of these courses, and of the annual Spring University organised by Lire et Écrire, although this take-up is not as systematic as it could be and in general there is insufficient time and resources for continuing professional development in the informal sector.

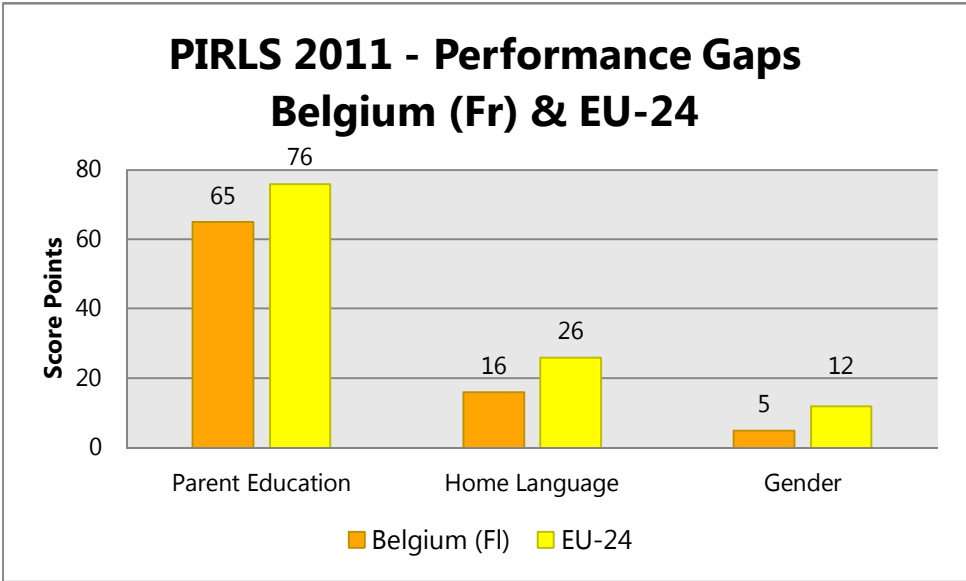
Volunteers comprise a substantial proportion of the adult literacy workforce. Most volunteers have a teaching diploma. Like salaried trainers, volunteers are strongly encouraged to take training modules.

4.3 Increasing Participation, Inclusion and Equity

The High Level Group of Experts on Literacy drew attention to persistent gaps in literacy, namely the gender gap, the socio-economic gap, and the migrant gap (HLG Final report 2012, pp. 46–50). These gaps derive from the reading literacy studies that repeatedly show unequal distribution of results among groups of children and adolescents (PIRLS, PISA).

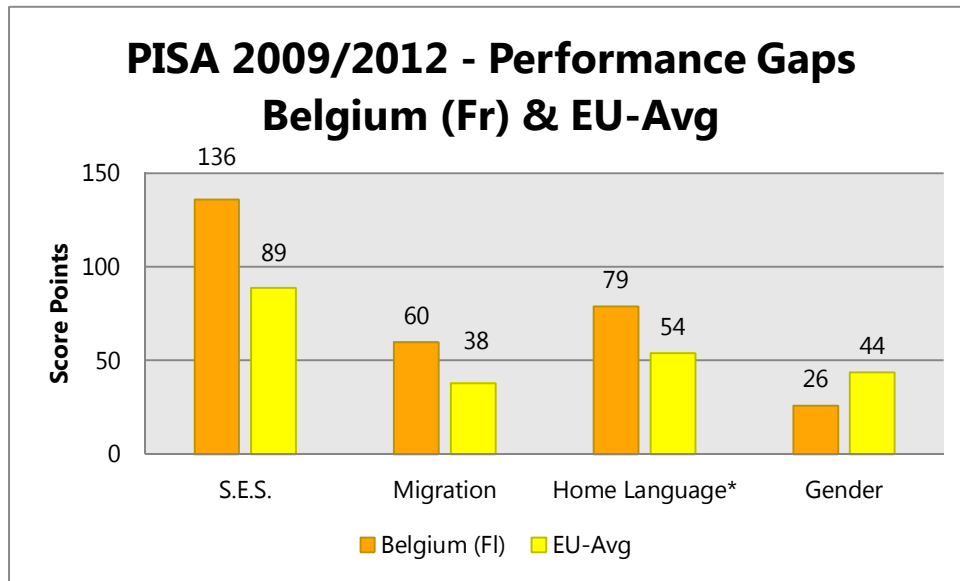
Performance gaps in Belgium (French Community) and on average across the EU-24 are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Performance Gaps in Belgium (Fr.) and on Average across the EU-24 - Primary Level



Education: University – Lower Secondary or lower; Language: Language of test spoken always – sometimes/never; Gender: Girls – Boys.

Figure 3: Performance Gaps in Belgium (Fr.) and on Average across EU Countries - Post-Primary Level



SES: Top – Bottom quartile on PISA ESCS scale; Migration: Native – first/second generation immigrants; Language: Speaks language of the PISA test at home – speaks another language; Gender: Girls - Boys

4.3.1 Pre-Primary Years

Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors: Belgium (French) has a high percentage of pupils who have a migration background. About 29% sometimes speak a language other than French at home. The difference in reading achievement between pupils in Belgium (French) reporting that they always or sometimes/never spoke French was 16 score points, which is lower than the corresponding EU-24 average difference (26).

Increasing pre-school attendance of disadvantaged children: The participation rate at age 3 is 92% and at age 4 and age 5 is about 96% (Mangez, Joseph, Delvaux, 2002). However, there is a difference in enrolment rate between children aged 3 to 5 with and without migration background.

The length of kindergarten attendance has a positive effect on reading. In Belgium (French), children who attended 3 years and more had a higher reading score at grade 4 (513) than children who attended between 1 and 3 years (490).

4.3.2 Primary Children and Adolescents

Supporting struggling literacy learners: In Belgium (French), students have significantly increased their performance in reading over time among 15 year-olds, whereas their performance in PIRLS remained quite unchanged.

In PIRLS, Belgium (French) still performs well below the EU countries on average, and has a proportion of low-performing readers higher than the EU countries on average. This proportion has slightly declined in 2011. In PISA, a drastic decrease of this proportion was observed between 2000 and 2012. It is now slightly below the EU average and the proportion of top-performers is above.

In PIRLS 2011, teachers estimated that 21% of students in fourth grade in Belgium (French) are considered to be in need of remedial reading instruction. Teachers also estimated that 7% of pupils do indeed benefit from remedial reading instruction (ELINET PIRLS 2011 Appendix, Table K1). Hence, there

is a shortfall of 14% between those in need and those benefiting. On average across EU countries, 18% of students in Grade 4 are identified by their teachers as being in need of remedial teaching, while 13% are identified as benefiting of such teaching.

4.3.3 Adults

Different types of support are available for second-language learners in Belgium (France) depending on the individual's level of literacy skills in their native language. Migrants with good levels of literacy in their own language can access FLE (French as a Foreign Language) classes financed by the State or by regional authorities. Those migrants who have both second language and literacy needs have access to both "Alpha francophones" (and Alpha written) and "Alpha-FLE" courses. In practice, a number of literacy providers in both the formal and informal sectors offer both FLE training for those with higher education levels and for those with literacy needs, because of their expertise in the area of teaching French.

In non-profit organisations, non-francophone people with little to no grasp of writing are taught in the same classes as native Belgians with low literacy skills. Those with no French language at all join these Alpha written classes only after first attending oral classes. Teachers on these courses in this sector have no specific initial training but can follow different continuous training programmes, notably in language teaching. Teachers working in Schools for Social Promotion must hold the qualifications required by the administration.

5 References

- Eurydice (2011). *Teaching Reading in Europe: Contexts, Policies and Practices*. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, p. 60, Figure 1.4. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/130en.pdf (Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Eurydice, Eurydice (2011). *Belgium (French Community): Teaching and Learning in Programmes for Children over 2-3 years*. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Teaching_and_Learning_in_Programmes_for_Children_over_2-3_years(Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Hindryckx, G., & Lafontaine, A. (2012). Belgium (French Community). In I.V.S. Mullis, M.O. Martin, C.A. Minnich, K.T. Drucker & M.A. Ragan (Eds.), *PIRLS 2011 Encyclopedia. Educational policy and curriculum in reading (Vol. 1 A-K)*, pp. 89-100). Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College, TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Centre. http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/downloads/PIRLS2011_Enc-v1.pdf (Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Lafontaine, A., & Nyssen, M.-C. (2004). *L'apprentissage de la lecture au début de l'enseignement primaire en Communauté française de Belgique*. Université de Liège: Service de pédagogie expérimentale.
- Lafontaine, D. (2014). A petits pas dans la bonne direction. *Traces de changement*, 215, 4-5. <http://hdl.handle.net/2268/173350> (Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Lafontaine, D. (2006). The Belgian Education system after PISA: reform approaches in French speaking Community of Belgium. In R. Rotte (Ed.). *International Perspectives on Education Policy*, 93-104.
- European Commission (November 2013). *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support, Final Report of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving*. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf (accessed August 10, 2015).
- Eurostat, *Early leavers from education and training by sex and labour status*. <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/setupDownloads.do> (accessed August 10, 2015).
- Eurydice (2011a). *Fundamental Principles and National Policies*. Website. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Fundamental_Principles_and_National_Policies (Accessed August 10, 2015).
- Eurydice (2011b). *Political and Economic Situation*. Website. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Political_and_Economic_Situation (Accessed August 10, 2015).
- Eurydice (2012a). *Primary Education*. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Primary_Education (Accessed August 6, 2015)
- Eurydice (2012b). *Support Measures for Learner in Early Childhood and School Education*. Website. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Support_Measures_for_Learners_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education#Course_of_adaptation_to_the_language_of_instruction (Accessed August 6, 2015)

- Eurydice (2012c). *Teaching and Learning in General Lower Secondary Education*. Website. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Teaching_and_Learning_in_General_Lower_Secondary_Education (Accessed August 10, 2015)
- Eurydice (2013a). *Assessment in the General Upper Secondary Education*. Website. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Assessment_in_General_Upper_Secondary_Education (Accessed August 10, 2015)
- Eurydice (2013b). *Early Childhood and School Education Funding*. Website. https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Early_Childhood_and_School_Education_Funding (Accessed August 6, 2015)
- Eurydice Facts and Figures. Compulsory Education in Europe 2013/14 http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/compulsory_education_EN.pdf (accessed August 10, 2015)
- Eurypedia Reports on CPD. Available online at https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Continuing_Professional_Development_for_Teachers_Working_in_Early_Childhood_and_School_Education.
- Eurypedia: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Overview>
- Further reading: Decree on the Missions of Schools (in French) http://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/fr/leg_res_01.php?ncda=21557&referant=l02 (Accessed August 6, 2015)
- Mangez, E., Joseph M. & Delvaux, B. (2002). *Les familles défavorisées à l'épreuve de l'école maternelle*. Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire pour la solidarité et l'innovation sociale. Louvain-la-Neuve : CERESIS-UCL.
- Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Minnich, C.A., Drucker, K.T., & Ragan, M.A. (2012). *Pirls 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Reading*, IEA.
- Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Foy, P., & Drucker, K.T. (2012). *PIRLS 2011 International results in reading*. Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College, TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Centre. http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/downloads/P11_IR_FullBook.pdf (Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Minnich, C.A., Drucker, K.T., & Ragan, M.A. (2012) (Eds.), *PIRLS 2011 Encyclopedia. Educational policy and curriculum in reading (Vol. 1 and 2)*. Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College, TIMSS and PIRLS International Study Centre. http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/downloads/PIRLS2011_Enc-v1.pdf (Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Schillings, P., Hindryckx, G., Dupont, V., Matoul, A., & Lafontaine, D. (2012). *Pirls 2011. Enquête internationale sur le développement des compétences en lecture des élèves de 4^e année primaire. Note de synthèse*. http://www.enseignement.be/download.php?do_id=9687&do_check=(Accessed August 6, 2015).
- Teaching Reading in Europe. Available online at http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/130EN.pdf (Accessed August 6, 2015).