



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report – Belgium

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**Independent national experts network in the area
of adult education/adult skills**

Full country report - Belgium

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1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW

1.1 Trends for the entire population

1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographical area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	73.2
Member State	66.3	66.5	67.6	67.3	67.2	67.2	67.3	67.2	67.7		

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code lfsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

With an employment rate of 67.7% in 2016, labour market participation in Belgium is still rather far away from the EU 2020 target of 75 percent.

-Comparison to National 2020 target

Although the national 2020 target is slightly lower than the EU 2020 target, it is clear Belgium has not yet reached the 73.2 percent requirement articulated in the target. At 67.7%, the current employment rate is thus still 5.5 percent away from the national target. Traditionally, the employment rate in Flanders is higher than in Wallonia. The unemployment rate in Wallonia tends to be 5 percent higher than in Flanders.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The country is doing worse than the overall EU-28 with a lower overall labour market participation rate.

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Although the EU-28 average now has succeeded in increasing their participation rates into the 70s, Belgium has not yet been able to achieve this.

-Evolution over time

It is important to point out that employment rates on average in the EU-28 have increased, while in Belgium it has remained rather similar over time. For example, the rate was 66.3% in 2005, which has only increased to 67.7% as of 2016.

As explained before, Belgium's 'lemon structure' model indicates that employment is mainly concentrated between the ages of 25 and 54 (see Boeren, 2016). Furthermore, low-qualified adults experience challenges in finding a job because of highly qualified people filling in vacancies. Despite the inability to catch up with the EU and national employment targets, it remains clear that Belgium has difficulties of filling in specific vacancies, e.g. in sectors such as nursing, building and construction (see Boeren, 2016). Given the high number of older workers (those from the 'Baby Boom' generation) going on to retirement in the next few years, it is expected that shortages in specific sectors will remain, requiring that workers are attracted from abroad.

1.1.2 *Participation rate – entire population*

Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographical area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8		
Member State	6.2	8.3	7.4	7.4	6.9	6.9	7.4	6.9	7	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code *trng_lfse_01*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

At 7% in 2016, participation rates in lifelong learning are below the EU 2020 target of 15%. In fact the existing rate stands at under half of the target outlined for achievement by 2020.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The participation rate (7%) also stood under the EU-28 average of 10.8% in 2016 (by 3 percentage points in 2016).

-Evolution over time

Participation rates have fluctuated around 7 percent in the last few years. Between 2000 and 2017 overall, we only see an increase of 0.8 percentage points between 6.2% and 7%, though fluctuations across the period are evident. For instance, the participation rate reached 8.3% in 2005, then falling to 6.9% in 2012, and remaining so in 2013.

As explained in the 2016 country report, Belgium lacks a strong lifelong learning climate and suffers from a 'Matthew effect' in the sector as the ones who do participate tend to be those coming from highly educated backgrounds and also those who are employed in knowledge intensive jobs. The country has still a long way to go to catch up on the 15 percent EU 2020 target and it is unlikely the country will succeed in reaching it. The previous target set out by the European Commission was a 12.5 percent participation rate to achieve by 2010. The country did not manage to reach this target either.

1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

1.2.1 *Share of low qualified adults*

Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years									
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
EU-28 average	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23	
Member State	41.5	33.9	29.5	28.7	28.4	27.2	26.4	25.3	24.9	

Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat_ifse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

Belgium has a slightly higher share of low qualified adults compared to the EU-28 (1.9 percent higher), although the percentage has reduced year after year. In 2016, the share of low-qualified adults was 24.9% (has dropped under 25 percent for the first time and has dropped by more than 15 percent since 2000). This compares to a EU-28 average rate of 23%.

-Evolution over time

Belgium has compulsory learning policy (in both Flanders and Wallonia) which requires pupils to be in education and training until age 18 (European Commission, 2015). The

statistics demonstrate that there are adolescents who drop out of education without a qualification of upper secondary education, although they include older adults as well, for whom compulsory education was shorter, e.g. compulsory education until the age of 18 instead of 14 was introduced in 1983 (see Boeren, 2016). Adults born before the 1970s were thus not required to stay until the end of secondary school.

It will be interesting to see in the coming years whether the percentage of low-qualified adults will further reduce and at what pace this will happen, or whether there will be a period within which this statistic will stabilise.

1.2.2 *Employment rate of low skilled adults*

Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
Member State	51.2	48.9	48.9	47.7	47.6	47.8	47.5	46.6	46.4

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code *lfsa_ergaed*, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The employment rate of low skilled adults in Belgium is lower than the EU-28 average (46.4% compared to 54.3%).

-Evolution over time

In the EU-28, the employment rate for this group was at a low point in 2013 when 52 percent was in employment – and even lower in Belgium (47.8 percent in 2013). However, the employment rate has since increased again to 54.3 per cent in 2016. This trend cannot be seen in Belgium as the rates have further decreased in previous years. As mentioned before, the low skilled population has difficulties in finding employment, not necessarily because of the lack of jobs, but because of the problem of more skilled adults taking their jobs, squeezing them out of the labour market. Low employment rates are more problematic in Wallonia than Flanders.

1.2.3 Participation rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – EU average in comparison to national average

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
Member State	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	2.9	3	3.1	3	2.8

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and trng_lfse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

Low skilled adults are known to be only marginally represented in lifelong learning statistics. This is the case in the EU-28, but also in Belgium. The participation rates for Belgian low skilled adults are below of those on average in Europe.

-Evolution over time

During the last ten years, these rates for Belgium have been around 3 percent. As mentioned before, Belgium lacks a strong lifelong learning climate and its' lifelong learning system represents a Matthew effect, with high skilled adults taking up most of the lifelong learning places on offer. No progress has been made in relation to these levels of inequalities in the last 10 years.

2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

There are multiple adult learning systems in Belgium and as education and training is devolved into the Communities, adult learning systems for Flanders and Wallonia are not the same. However, it is possible to recognise similar structures between the two regions. In both regions, adult learning belongs both the spheres of education as well as the labour market. This report reflects on the situation both in Flanders and Wallonia and differences between the two regions will be made clear throughout the text.

In relation to 'education', the main aims of the adult learning systems are either to help adults in raising their basic skills, or to offer them the opportunities to obtain a recognised qualification later in life, ranging from qualifications at lower levels similar to those obtained in compulsory education or higher education degrees. As can be seen from Table 2.1, the largest groups of adult learners are concentrated in courses at the equivalent level of upper secondary education (with one exception for adults aged 25+ in lower secondary education, which included 93,382 participants). This includes a wide range of courses offered in second chance education in Flanders and social advancement education in Wallonia, as will be further explored below.

Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age

	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)			
Primary	383	7,154	7,537
Lower secondary	12,425	93,382	105,807
Upper secondary	33,199	154,657	187,856
Post-secondary non-tertiary education		41,901	
Short-cycle tertiary education		15,927	
Bachelor's or equivalent level		36,550	
Master's or equivalent level		34,012	
Doctoral or equivalent level		14,480	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ_uoe_enra02)", accessed 21.08.2017

2.2 Provision

2.2.1 *Helps adults improve their Basic Skills*

In Flanders, there is a well-developed system of Centres for Basic Education (CBEs) that do not only offer courses in relation to literacy, but also in relation to numeracy and ICT skills¹. Dutch as a Second Language is an important component of the CBEs course provision. As outlined in Boeren et al. (2017), the Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB) are also active in offering basic skills provision, although with a stronger aim to increase adults' job skills.

In Wallonia, basic education training is one of the activities offered by Le Forem, a public organisation whose work is mainly focussed on the unemployed (Eurydice, 2017). Basic education is meant for people lacking necessary skills, including literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills, but is also perceived as a necessary step to take for those lacking the starting competencies to study towards officially recognised qualifications of secondary education.

2.2.2 *Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification*

Obtaining a recognised qualification in Flanders can be done through studying at one of the Centres for Adult Education (CVOs), of which there are more than 100 across the Flemish region, offering courses in a wide range of subjects. In fact, all CBEs and CVOs belong to one of the 13 consortia for adult education. Work undertaken in both the CBEs and CVOs falls under the Decree on Adult education signed by the Flemish Government on 15 June 2007. Qualifications of secondary education can be obtained through participation in either full-time or part-time courses, mostly a combination between vocational study with 'Supplementary General Education' (see Boeren et al., 2017). While general education is free, adult learners might have to pay up to EUR 300 per year, although exclusion rules apply: e.g. for asylum seekers, people living on disability or unemployment benefits.

Wallonia has an established system of social advancement training with 162 training centres (les établissements d'enseignement de promotion sociale) and has been organised through the decree on social advancement education of 16 April 1991². Information on these centres is listed on the general website³. Their courses are often linked to specific professional profiles but lead to officially recognised qualifications by the education system. Several universities also offer programmes in flexible modes accessible for adults.

2.2.3 *Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills, not for vocational purposes*

Part-time arts education is officially organised and recognised by education departments in both Flanders and Wallonia. This type of education is not limited to courses in painting,

¹ Centrum voor Basiseducatie: <http://www.basiseducatie.be/>

² L'enseignement de promotion sociale: <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27151>

³ Annuaire des établissements d'enseignement de promotion sociale:
<http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26034>

but has a range of music, dance and theatre courses on offer. Arts education develops artistic and technical skills, but also aims to develop competencies in relation to innovative thinking, working together with others and developing motivation.

The development of other knowledge and skills also takes place in the social and cultural sector, according to Boeren et al. (2017), happening in around 140 organisations in Flanders. This includes work undertaken in Folk High Schools and training organised at the level of trade unions or training organised for prisoners. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES) 2011, nine percent of Flemish men and 13 percent of Flemish women participated in non-formal adult education because of non-job related reasons. Although the AES does not provide detailed information on the types of courses undertaken by adults, it is likely these percentages relate to participation to develop knowledge and skills for non-vocational purposes. Wallonia is not being represented in the Adult Education Survey, but equally has activities on offer for adult learning in socio-cultural organisations, e.g. the organisation People and Culture (People et Culture) describes itself as a 'network of associations for popular education'⁴ and contains a course catalogue offering a wide range of learning activities for personal development.

2.2.4 *Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)*

In Flanders, the VDAB (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling), the Flemish Employment Service and Vocational Training Agency is the major provider offering more than 2000 programmes⁵. These services are largely targeted towards job seekers who can participate in these courses free of charge and there is a clear link between the training offered and the needs of the labour market through offering specific types of vocational training targeted towards specific professions. Several programmes include specific inductions and work experiences within the work environment. According to Boeren et al. (2017), different formats of courses at the level of the VDAB include programmes in competence centres or third parties, traineeships in companies, the Individual Company-based Vocational Training contract or web-based learning (Eurydice, 2016). The Company-based training is tailored towards the needs of the unemployed with little labour market experience and is linked to the assurance of an employment contract upon successful completion. VDAB also works around the needs of school leavers, through work placements and explorative internships and has a special 'work experience' programme for the long-term unemployed. For younger people, there are specific Part-time Training Centres, which offer preparatory pathways' and 'bridging projects' for them to make their transition into the labour market (CEDEFOP, 2014).

Although it is generally perceived that VDAB is delivering good work, more data on outcomes would help providing a clearer picture on the situation of people who have gone through these programmes.

⁴ <http://www.people-et-culture.org/spip.php?mot3>

⁵ Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling: <https://www.vdab.be/>

In Wallonia, Le Forem takes on the responsibility of helping job-seekers, through offering them a wide range of study programmes and has established a network of specific competence centres⁶. FORMAPass has been set up as a search engine, listing all available training offers⁷.

2.2.5 *Opens up Higher Education to adults*

Higher education in Belgium can be accessed with a qualification of upper secondary education, but does not have strict entrance conditions. As Belgian schools do not have standardised exit examinations, school results are not taken into account when accepting students into university or university colleges, which is done for example in England based on students' A level results. The exception is medicine for which there is an entrance exam, which also applies to some courses at university colleges for arts degrees. As such, the general discourse is not on the further 'opening up' of higher education, but on the growing concern that too many people are entering higher education and then dropping out, which is a significant worry for universities. However, this situation mainly applies to younger students making the transition from secondary school to higher education, and not the core issue of this report which is adult learning

In Flanders, every university and non-university college has the opportunity to offer their courses using distance learning or the organisation of evening classes. However, not every institution does offer these modes of study and an overview of courses available through alternative modes to daytime education are available at the 'registry for higher education' (<http://www.hogeronderwijsregister.be/home>). Flanders also has 'study centres' of the Dutch Open University at the premises of universities in Antwerp, Brussels, Leuven, Gent and Hasselt. Courses are generally organised using distance learning format and degrees are officially validated Dutch degrees.

Similarly, in Wallonia, several institutions offer programme 'à horaire décalé', mainly referring to classes taking place during the evening.

2.2.6 *Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills*

Apart from education and training organised as part of the duties carried out by the ministries of education and work, there are multiple training providers, which are not regulated but are funded by the State. These types of education and training mostly happen in the workplace and many of these providers operate privately. Some of these take place and are delivered in-house, while employers can choose to work with external organisations as well. Work-related learning for employees can take various forms, according to Boeren et al (2017), such as 'structured learning (courses) or less structured learning (such on-the-job training, work shadowing, seminars)'. As in most other countries, work-related education represents the highest proportion of adult learning in Belgium.

⁶ Le Forem: <https://www.leforem.be/>

⁷ FORMAPass: <https://www.leforem.be/FORMAPass/catalogue-des-formations-insertions.html>

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According to the Adult Education Survey (AES) 2011, the vast majority (89 percent) of all non-formal education and training was mainly job-related. Around 80 percent of these adult learners did receive some financial support from their employer. As explored above, adults can work on their basic skills helping them at work through cooperation with the Adult Basic Education Centres or the VDAB. According to Boeren et al. (2017), SYNTRA (Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training, not an acronym), is also an important player in Flanders in order to develop work-related skills, although mainly focussing on self-employed adults in small and medium enterprises (Cedefop, 2014). The CVTS, for which the results represent Belgium as a whole, indicated that 78 percent of all enterprises in 2010 provided some form of Continuing and Vocational Training for their employees, either through specific courses or through other arrangements such as on-the-job schemes. Formations en apprentissage et formations de chef d'entreprise (Apprenticeship training and CEO training, IFAPME) and Espace Formation Petites et Moyennes Entreprises (Space for the Training of Small and Medium companies, EFP) are additional vocational training providers that are targeted towards self-employed adults, similar to SYNTRA in Flanders.

2.2.7 *Other (if any)*

Education and training provisions are represented under the different headings above. That said, it needs to be recognised that the work of several providers belongs to different categories, e.g. organisations active in ALMP focus on the increase of basic skills as well, higher education institutions offer routes to officially recognised qualifications.

3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1 Context

Given the variety of providers in the adult learning landscape and the devolved responsibilities in relation to education and work, it is impossible to write about one single policy framework. In fact, education and training policies are different in the two major regions of Belgium, Dutch speaking Flanders and French speaking Wallonia. Adult learning policies also fall under the responsibilities of both education and labour market.

3.1.1 *Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning*

Adult learning in Belgium, as mentioned above, is a combination of education-oriented and labour market oriented learning activities. The Departments for Education and the Departments for Work in both Flanders and Wallonia have responsibilities to deal with adult learning. Each Ministry has their own quality control systems in place. Both in Flanders and Wallonia, education and training providers are set up in such a way that there is a good geographical spread, making sure learning opportunities are available to everyone. A specific example of how responsibilities for the provision of adult learning are distributed across different towns and cities has been the construction of 13 consortia for adult education in Flanders, as discussed in Section 2 of this text.

The Flemish Government is representing the Flemish Community and has, according to Boeren et al. (2017) legislative and executive power in the domains of 'culture, education, the use of languages, health policy, and assistance to individuals (such as protection of youth, social welfare, aid to families, immigrant assistance services). Scientific research is also a responsibility of the Flemish Government. Similarly, there is a Wallonian Community Government that is responsible for adult education (*éducation permanente*).

In Flanders, there is a specific Department for Education and Training that deals with education policies, but it has also responsibilities for the inspectorate of formal education and runs the HR department for employees working in the formal education sector. The Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Grants supports adult education in the Centres for Adult Education and the Centres for Basic Education, but which is also responsible for issues relating to learning objectives and qualifications. The Flemish Education Council (VLOR – Vlaamse Onderwijs Raad) acts as the advisory board for Flemish education policies.

As mentioned above, responsibilities in relation to adult education do not solely belong to departments of education, but also to departments dealing with labour market issues. In Flanders, the Department for Work and Social Economy is responsible for the community's employment policies, which includes aspects of education and training for job-related purposes, coordinated through its agencies VDAB (Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency) and SYNTRA. The Department for Work and Social Economy is also responsible for the administration of the Flemish part of the European Social Funds (ESF). There is also a Flemish Social-Economic Council (SERV – Sociaal Economische Raad Vlaanderen) that provides advice on work-related issues, representing both trade unions

and employer organisations. Different sectors of employment also have their own influences in the shaping of education and lifelong learning policies.

The Department for Culture, Youth and Media has an entity on socio-cultural work that delivers work in relation to education and training through both social and cultural participation, mainly through the non-commercial sector. SOCIUS offers support in this area.

In Wallonia, the Government of the French Community has large responsibilities for adult education (Eurydice, 2017). These include: distance learning, education for social advancement, and part-time arts education, but also has also legislative power in the area of apprenticeship courses. Higher education is also one of the responsibilities of the French Community, including those who attend using the alternative hours schedule, mainly through evening classes. The Academy of Research and Higher Education (ARES) was established as part of the 'Landscape Decree' in 2013 federates the universities, university colleges, arts colleges and higher education institutions for social advancement. The decree outlined objectives in relation to offering students the best support possible, but also focuses on the need to ensure there is adequate provision in the area of higher education.

Responsibilities for employment and vocational training are a responsibility of the Walloon Region, which has a Ministry of Economy and Employment. Similar to the situation in Flanders, where VDAB and SYNTRA carry out important responsibilities in the field of adult learning, its Walloon counterparts, FOREM and IFAPME carry out a similar role.

3.1.2 Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning

The current two major national socio-economic strategies that run in Flanders and Wallonia are the Vision 2050 plan (Flanders) and the Marshall 4.0 Plan (Wallonia). Vision 2050 was signed in 2015 and set out the long-term vision for Flanders until the middle of this Century. The Marshall Plan is the Walloon Government's flagship programme for the period 2015-2019.

These strategies are very broad in nature and adult learning is thus only a part of it. While there is a generally good spread of adult learning opportunities in Belgium, one of the weaknesses, in the author's opinion, remains the underrepresentation of disadvantaged adults, despite provisions for basic education, literacy training, second chance education and social advancement education all being present. As discussed above, participation is highest among highly educated adults. In order to further enhance the country's human capital and to stay competitive in the European and global knowledge economy, lifelong learning is being recognised in these strategic plans as an important area to focus on.

3.2 Adult learning policy framework

3.2.1 *A summary of major developments/ changes since 2010*

Currently, it seems that in both Flanders and Wallonia, work is undertaken in order to prepare new legislations in the field of adult education.

In Flanders, several concept notes have been signed. A concept note usually consists of an overview of current legislation and how improvements can be made in preparation for new legislation.

- Concept note on the reform of adult education (conceptnota volwassenenonderwijs): the last decree on adult education was signed on 15 June 2007. The decree regulates work undertaken in the Centres for Adult Education and the Centres for Basic Education. A discussion paper had been prepared in 2015, leading the way for the concept note that mainly focuses on making better use of resources, e.g. through modernising the finance system with more possibilities to attract disadvantaged groups, but also to review regulations in relation to personnel. The final version of the concept note has been approved by the Flemish Government on 25 March 2016. The title of the concept note (Volwassenenonderwijs als kansenonderwijs. Kansen op leren, integreren en kwalificeren, een leven lang) clearly focuses on the idea of 'chances' to be given to adults to learn, integrate and qualify across the life span. Similarly, a Concept note on the further enhancement of higher vocational education, organised in the Centres for Adult Education has been approved on 25 March 2016. One of the main priorities outline in the Flemish education policy, as discussed in Boeren et al. (2017) relates to the need to build stronger adult education institutions, which focuses on the role of Centres for Adult Education in the coming years to work more in partnerships with training providers in other domains, such as employment, and socio-cultural work. In order to increase efficiency, it has been proposed that Centres should be allowed to merge and that there should be no geographical barriers for learners to attend courses and in order to make learning as meaningful as possible for disadvantaged adults, dual learning facilitated by Centres for Adult Education is being explored. At the same time, it is recognised that optimising provisions will need an improved financing system. According to Boeren et al. (2017), the three key principles underlying the financial system in adult education are autonomy, economies of scale and social fairness. With the aim to optimise adult learning provisions, budgets will be more targeted towards specific groups, instead of solely separating budgets between Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education. There will also be a further differentiation in tuition costs to be paid by adult learning, taking into account their social characteristics. This will make sure basic skills courses keep on being available at a low cost for the most vulnerable.
- Concept note Dutch as a second language⁸ (conceptnota NT2): An evaluation of the current provision has been undertaken in early 2016 and led to a new concept

⁸ Conceptnota NT2: http://www.inburgering.be/sites/default/files/ConceptnotaNT2_VR_20162503.pdf

note, 'Dutch as a second language', also signed on 25 March 2016. The note focuses on the importance of Dutch as a second language and as a means for integration and puts forward that a stronger cooperation between diverse stakeholders is recommendable.

- Concept note on the reform of part-time arts education⁹ (conceptnota DKO): arts education is perceived as an important way for people to develop their talents and a broad offer already exists. However, a better spread of opportunities and a review of the system has been recommended, including making better use of resources and more and better cooperation with local actors in the field of culture and arts. This is now being taken forward with the aim to prepare a new decree. The concept note was approved at the last ministerial meeting before the Summer break in 2015. On 12 May 2017, the new Decree on part-time arts education received its first approval at the level of the Flemish Government. It is currently receiving advice from VLOR, employer organisations and trade unions and will then have to undergo a second round of approval. Afterwards, the Flemish Parliament will have to officially approve the Decree before it can be implemented.
- Concept note on the recognition of competences (conceptnota voor geïntegreerd beleid voor de erkenning van competencies): in line with international recommendations on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, such as by the EU and the OECD¹⁰, a concept note has been approved in July 2015. The note mentions the fragmented landscape on the recognition of competencies and the need to increase coherence and coordination in this field.
- A starting note on 'Transition priorities lifelong learning and dynamic life trajectories'¹¹ (startnota transitieprioriteit levenslang leren en dynamische loopbaan) has been approved by the Flemish Government in March 2017, outlining the plan for a renewed lifelong learning vision for Flanders, relevant in the Government's broader Vision 2050 strategy.

In Wallonia, the main flagship programme with policy guidelines is the Marshall Plan 4.0 that mainly focuses on enhancing training in relation to employment, but also to focus more on the digital skills of the population and higher levels of integration of ICT. In 2014, an additional Language Plan has also been signed off to make workers more mobile and help newcomers with language skills. However, the major new change relates to the sign off of the Employment and Training Pact in June 2016, which is a cooperation agreement between the Walloon Government and social partners. According to Eurydice, (2016) there are six main priorities within the pact: '1. Reorganisation of the employment aid ; 2. creation of training places for learners in dual vocational training ; 3. strengthening of vocational guidance throughout life ; 4. basic principles and method of creating an integration contract for young people ; 5. basic principles and method of reorganisation of financial incentives for the workers' continuing development ; 6. strengthening the social dialogue tools in Wallonia.

⁹ Conceptnota DKO – Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs: <http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/83051>

¹⁰ OECD Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>

¹¹ Start note lifelong learning <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/vlaamse-regering/levenslang-leren-en-de-dynamische-levensloopbaan>

Additional documents have been prepared and signed off:

New cooperation agreement on French-language Professions and Qualification Service (SFMQ)¹² (Service Francophone des Métiers et des Qualifications): this has been approved through a new decree signed on 29 October 2015 and aims to work towards an extensive list of professional profiles described in French language. This will be helpful in creating a clearer overview of the competences profiles on the labour market.

- **Decree on the creation and management of a French-speaking qualifications framework¹³ (Cadre francophone des certifications):** this new decree was signed on 15 May 2015 and is in accordance with Flemish and European aims to provide a better overview on current qualification structures.
- **Draft decree on inclusive social advancement education¹⁴ (Projet de décret relatif à l'enseignement de promotion sociale inclusive):** a draft decree has been produced in 2015 and focuses on the need to provide learners with more personal service and to pay more attention to the needs of students with various types of disabilities who want to study towards qualifications. Further work has been undertaken on the preparation of a new decree on social advancement education with the aim to include a better focus on the needs of adult learners. This includes the introduction of dual learning in secondary social advancement education, the availability of more personalised support for adult learners and increasing opportunities for the recognition of previous experience¹⁵.
- **Guidance note to boost education for social advancement and distance learning (promotion sociale et e-learning):** also in 2015, a guidance note was produced in order to point out that social advancement education should be accessible to every citizen, that a diversified range of educational offers should be available and that it is important to focus on quality control. In November 2016, a brand new website on e-learning has opened and is available at <http://www.elearning.cfwb.be/>
- **A training offer in higher education for all (l'enseignement supérieur pour tous):** In July 2016, a cooperation agreement has been approved to make more efficient use of higher education institutions in providing vocational education that corresponds to the needs of the local labour market and its population. This offer of vocational education will be open to a wide range of students, but have a specific focus on the unemployed and employees who want to participate in continuing education development.

Given the high number of concept notes, draft decrees and guidance notes being produced in 2015 and 2016, it is expected that a range of new decrees will be signed off in the next three years. In relation to the policy priorities set out within the EU2020 strategy, at the level of governance, it is clear that stronger cooperation between diverse policy domains

¹² Service Francophone des Métiers et des Qualifications: <http://www.sfmq.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1435>

¹³ Cadre francophone des certifications: <http://ccfee.be/fr/europe/education-et-formation/cadre-francophone-cfc>

¹⁴ Projet de décret relatif à l'enseignement de promotion sociale inclusive: <http://archive.pfwb.be/10000000203d004>

¹⁵ <http://www.pfwb.be/le-travail-du-parlement/doc-et-pub/documents-parlementaires-et-decrets/documents/001540590>

is what the Government strives for. Adult learning in Belgium is divided by education offers managed by education ministries, but also by training offers that fall under the responsibility of the ministries of work. Additionally, stronger cooperation with other welfare services is recommended, especially in relation to attracting the most disadvantaged groups in society. Plans put forward recognise the need for high quality, well spread supply and the need to undertake more efforts to attract disadvantaged adults. Distance education has been mentioned in relation to flexibility and access, as well as the recognition of previously obtained qualifications and competences. Quality assurance proposals seem to be embedded as well.

3.2.2 *Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning*

Flemish adult and lifelong learning strategy and framework

- **General**

In Flanders, a general Pact 2020 had been signed on 20 January 2009, listing a range of aims the region would like to achieve by 2020, in line with the European 2020 targets¹⁶. A number of targets (20 in total, in five broad domains) were established in relation to education and the labour market, such as reducing the proportion of adults with low or no qualification by half. The five broad themes of the Pact were: 'greater prosperity and welfare', 'a competitive and sustainable economy', 'more workers gainfully employed, in more suitable jobs, and for longer average career terms', 'a high quality standard of living' and 'an efficient and effective administration'. In 2015, a new Vision 2050 has been introduced as a replacement of the Pact 2020, shifting the realisation of targets from 2020 to 2050¹⁷. By then, Flanders aims to become a lifelong learning society and hopes to evolve into a more dynamic labour market. Pact 2050 is a plan for a vision of the future and is therefore a guidance framework for the development of policy-oriented actions in the future, which can include new legislative acts to better support the goals.

A starting note on 'Transition priorities lifelong learning and dynamic life trajectories' has been approved by the Flemish Government on 10 March 2017¹⁸. The note focuses on relevant elements, including jobs, qualifications, skills needed in the 21st Century, careers and evolutions to happen in education and training. The starting note outlines plans for the next two years to further develop an inspiring vision specifically on lifelong learning.

Furthermore, additional policy plans signed by the Flemish Government include the Strategic Plan to increase Literacy on 14 December 2012 which makes clear references to

¹⁶ PACT 2020: <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/en/about/pact-2020>

¹⁷ Visie 2050: <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/nieuws/vlaamse-regering-lanceert-visie-2050>

¹⁸ Startnote Transitieprioriteit levenslang leren
<https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/transitieprioriteit-levenslang-leren-en-dynamische-levensloopbaan-startnota>

the role of Adult Basic Education¹⁹. It also features a prominent role in the Flemish Plan on the Prevention of Poverty²⁰.

- **Education**

Specifically in Flanders, at the level of 'education', the Policy Paper on Education 2014-2019, falling under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, mentions several aspects in relation to adult learning²¹. The Policy Paper consists of five strategic and operational goals, of which the first is; 'nurturing the talents of every learner' (the other objectives relate to the quality of teaching staff, increasing the efficiency of educational institutions, the development of a master plan in relation to school buildings and the realisation of top quality in the education system overall). The first section of the Paper on nurturing talents focuses on specific policy priorities, mentioned by educational level. In relation to adult learning, there is a clear message about providing adult education centres with a stronger level of autonomy through optimising and modernising the finance system so that centres can make better use of their means. It also pays more attention to the cooperation of different learning providers in both the education and training sector, as well as the social sector, to avoid too much fragmentation. These priorities relate to optimising the Decree on Adult Education that was signed on 15 June 2007, which has been evaluated in 2012 and resulted in a new concept note on the future of adult education in 2016²². Priorities have also been formulated in relation to part-time arts education, mainly to guarantee an optimal spread of course offers across the Flemish region. A concept note has been produced and discussed in relation to this matter with the aim to prepare a new Decree, as the current one dates from 1990²³

- **Vocational training**

Related to 'training', as stated above, the main providers are VDAB and Syntra. Both organisations are regulated by a Decree that was signed on 7 May 2004²⁴. VDAB is best known for targeting their services towards job-seekers and helping them increase their chances of a successful job application, they also support employers through helping them with training. Syntra's main focus is on entrepreneurs as they are specialised in enterprise training. VDAB was established in 1984 and Syntra's predecessor was VIZO (Vlaams

¹⁹Strategisch Plan Geletterdheid Verhogen 2012-2016:

<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/geletterdheid/plan/StrategischPlanGeletterdheidVerhogen2012-2016.pdf>

²⁰Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding 2015-2019:

http://www4.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/20150702_ontwerptekst%20VAPA%20-%20DEFINITIEF%20-%20BIS.pdf

²¹ Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Onderwijs: <http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/65587>

²² Decreet betreffende het volwassenenonderwijs: <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=13914> ; Evaluatie decreet volwassenenonderwijs: http://ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/directies/evaluatie_decreet_volwassenenonderwijs.html

Conceptnota volwassenenonderwijs: <http://www.onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Conceptnota%20volwassenenonderwijs%20-%20definitief.pdf>

²³ Decreet Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs: <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/edulex/document.aspx?docid=12677> ; Conceptnota DKO – Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs: <http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/83051>

²⁴ Decreet VDAB:

http://www.ejustice.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2004050753&table_name=wet and Decreet SYNTRA Vlaanderen: <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Portals/Codex/documenten/1013081.html>

Instituut voor Zelfstandig Ondernemen), which had been established through the signing of a Decree in 1991.

Wallonian adult and lifelong learning framework and strategy (nothing to add to the first edition of this report)

- **General**

The current Wallonian flagship programme is called the Marshall Plan 4.0, for the period 2014-2019 and strongly focuses on innovation and employment²⁵. The plan sets out the need for a strong training policy that helps people into employment, a revaluation of vocational education and training and a stronger offer of arts education. In order to support these policies, a Structural and Investment Funds Programme has been set up and the total budget of the Marshall Plan 4.0 is 2.9 billion euros. A new Pact for Employment and Training (pacte pour l'emploi et la formation) has been recently signed off on 30 June 2016²⁶. The Pact focuses on reinforcing the set-up of a lifelong learning society and the need for better investments in relation to the training of employees. Similar to the situation in Flanders, the Wallonian Government has also set up a Network for the Fight Against Poverty which aims to reduce poverty and help people out of poverty through offering them social services, not only in terms of housing and employment, but also in relation to helping people gain an education²⁷.

- **Education**

In relation to 'education', social advancement education, a type of adult learning targeted towards providing adults with a second chance to climb the social ladder and undergo social mobility, was set up by the Decree signed on 16 April 1991, but additional Decrees in relation to social advancement education were signed on 14 November 2008 (integration in the European area) and 30 April 2009 (on literacy training)²⁸. The opportunity to take part in distance learning modes of education has been established in a Decree signed in 1984²⁹. Part-time arts education has been regulated by a Decree signed on 2 June 1998³⁰.

- **Vocational training**

In relation to 'labour market training', Le Forem, the main Wallonian office for Vocational Education and Employment was initially set up by a Decree signed on 16 December 1988,

²⁵ Plan Marshall 4.0: <http://planmarshall.wallonie.be/le-plan-0>

²⁶ Pacte pour l'Emploi et la Formation: www.cesw.be/uploads/Pacte%20emploi%20formation.pdf

²⁷ Plan Wallon de lutte contre la pauvreté: <http://socialsante.wallonie.be/?q=news-lutte-contre-la-pauvrete>

²⁸ Décret organisant l'enseignement de promotion sociale:

http://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/16184_015.pdf

²⁹ Décret organisant l'enseignement à distance de la Communauté française:

http://www.galilex.cfwb.be/document/pdf/10886_000.pdf

³⁰ L'enseignement secondaire artistique à horaire réduit (ESAHR):

<http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26984>

but further operationalised by Decrees signed in 1999 and 2003³¹. Le Forem is the Wallonian counterpart of the VDAB, mainly targeting its' services to job-seekers, guiding them through the process, helping them to secure employment, on the one hand through training, but also through helping jobseekers writing their CV (Curriculum Vitae). IFAPME was established by Decree in July 2003 and is the equivalent of Syntra in Flanders, targeting the self-employed, helping them to set up and maintain their own business through enterprise training³².

3.2.3 *Main strategy(-ies) (setting vision, goals and directions for the development of AL, usually with a long-term end-date)*

As mentioned in the previous section, both Flanders and Wallonia have a main social and economic strategic plan: the Vision 2050, which emerged from the 2020-2050 Vision plan; and the Marshall 4.0 plan respectively. Both plans start from the vision that the Belgian regions need to evolve towards competitive players in Europe and that the focus on human capital generation should increase. While the plans are not focussing on adult learning exclusively, it is clear that it plays an important role in both plans. Especially the Flemish strategy in Pact 2050 focuses on a long-term vision in which the region aims to become a lifelong learning society by the mid of this Century. In fact, as the author suggests, this might be a smart move, as it is clear from statistical monitoring that participation rates in lifelong learning and employment have remained rather stable over time. It might thus be too optimistic to expect strong changes in a limited number of years. Working out a long-term plan might be more effective. The Wallonian Marshall plan 4.0 is written for the tenure of the current Wallonian Government and is therefore mid-term in nature.

3.2.4 *Main implementing act(s) (setting concrete actions, budget, targets and guiding the implementation of national adult learning policy, usually with a short-term end-date)*

In both Flanders and Wallonia, quite a lot of work in recent years has gone into writing new concept notes and start notes with the aim to improve adult learning provisions, their financing and learners' experiences in the future. The main short-term focus is thus to get the proposed revisions to the wider system approved and to start implementing these changes. As governments are currently in the middle of their tenure, both in Flanders and Wallonia, the main aim for now is to carry out their policy plans and to spend the specific budgets they have set aside for education and training. Overall, as demonstrated by the Pact 2050 in Flanders, where targets in the past were focussing on shorter term end-dates, often in accordance with the European benchmarks on education and training, visions now tend to be longer term in nature.

31 Le Forem legal basis:

<http://www.pesmonitor.eu/Database/DatabaseNew.aspx?Lang=EN&PES=34&Topic=1&Content=5>

32 Décret IFAPME: <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=4042>

3.3 National quantitative policy targets

One of the weaknesses of the policy frameworks, such as the Pact 2020 and Vision 2050 in Flanders, and the Marshall plan in Wallonia is, according to the author, the lack of very specific quantitative policy targets. e.g. the Vision 2050 strategy contains an eight pages note on 'Lifelong learning and dynamic life trajectories' mentions the use of numbers for monitoring, but this is still work in progress. The note regarding the Pact 2020 had many sentences including the need to do 'better', to achieve 'more', to become 'more flexible', but without including a wide range of specific targets, although relevant to adult learning, specific percentages have been mentioned for adult learning participation and the employment rate. In the Wallonian Marshall plan 4.0, the focus on human capital is one of the key targets to achieve during the period 2014-2019, but there is no mentioning of specific quantitative targets in the plan, which is publicly available³³.

As a Member State of the European Union, Belgian data are available in European monitoring reports and reflections in relation to policy target also mention the desire to belong to the best performing countries in the continent.

Table 3.1 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies/LLL strategies/framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target
Employment rate of 70 percent by 2020 Mentioning of 73.2 percent	2009	67.7 percent in 2010	67.7 percent in 2016	Pact 2020 – no progress is being made and the target has not yet been achieved
Participation in lifelong learning rate of 15 percent by 2020	2009	7.6 percent in 2010	7 percent in 2016	Pact 2020 – no progress is being made and the target has not yet been achieved

As can be seen from table 3.1, the major targets in relation to adult learning refer to the employment rates and the participation rates in adult lifelong learning. This is streamlined in accordance with the European focus on benchmarks and indicators. As explained in the first section of this report, the country is lagging behind in reaching these targets.

³³ <http://www.investinwallonia.be/2015/06/the-government-of-wallonia-adopts-the-marshall-plan-4-0/?lang=en>

3.4 Quality assurance

Quality assurance in Flanders (first edition of this section seems up to date)

In order to monitor and assure the quality of education organised in education in Flanders, the Department for Education has an Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training in place³⁴. The inspectorate does not only undertake work in schools, but also in centres for adult education. VOCVO (Vlaams Ondersteuningscentrum voor het Volwassenenonderwijs) is the specific Flemish Support Centre for Adult Education that provides both organisational and pedagogical support to Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education offering Second Chance routes³⁵.

Quality control at the level of VDAB and Syntra is introduced through the need for trainers to hold certificates and train-the-trainer programmes. A concrete example is a training programme for mentors working with trainees in companies. Furthermore, work by SYNTRA is systematically evaluated every three years. Currently, research is being undertaken by the University of Leuven to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of training organised by VDAB and SYNTRA³⁶.

Quality assurance in Wallonia (first edition of this section seems up to date)

A system of quality assurance is implemented in different forms of adult education, such as in social advancement education, and a specific Guide to Quality Management is available for social advancement education. Le Forem and IFAPME also have a range of quality assurance mechanisms in place, including an annual evaluation of training policies set out by the Walloon government.

3.5 Future policy developments

It is clear from the evidence above that a wide range of new developments are currently going on. In Flanders, concept notes for adult education, including vocational higher education and part-time arts education have been signed off, focusing on the further rationalisation, widening opportunities for disadvantaged groups and a more efficient use of financial resources. Similarly in Wallonia, social advancement education has been widely discussed through notes and is developing towards a type of education with better integrated links to higher education, but also to increase its use of distance learning. Integration of new aspects will thus emerge in the next few years.

The current Wallonian Marshall Plan 4.0 has been launched for the period 2015-2019 and is thus in the middle of its running. The Flemish Vision 2050 focuses on long term goals, and as outlined above, a start note on priorities of lifelong learning has been approved for

³⁴ AKOV – *Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming*:
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/AKOV/>

³⁵ VOCVO: <http://www.vocvo.be/>

³⁶ *Onderzoek leerrendement van opleidingen in het beleidsdomein werk*:
<https://hiva.kuleuven.be/nl/onderzoek/onderzoeksprojecten/2015-2016-Leerrendement-opleidingen-beleidsdomein-Werk-conceptuele-analyse-ontwikkeling-meetsysteem>

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report - Belgium

further development earlier in 2017. The Flemish Government's Education Policy plan has also been written up for the period 2014-2019. Currently, both in Flanders and Wallonia, the focus is thus on carrying out proposed policy plans by Governments in office instead of extensively developing new policies.

4.0 INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

4.1 Total investment in adult learning and change over time

The total investment in adult learning is hard to judge as different players can be involved in making the investment. Adults themselves can invest in their learning, employers can decide to invest in their employees through direct financial investment such as paying tuition fees, but also through indirect support such as providing them with time to spend on education and training, which is likely costing them money in terms of labour productivity. Additionally, public investment in adult learning goes both to the providers and learners, which adds to the difficulty of estimating a total investment figure.

The OECD's database on Education and Training³⁷ contains information on educational expenditures by sources and destinations, however, spending of the Governments' budget on education is divided by ISCED levels, but does not contain information specifically about adult learning tracks. Adding in the complexity of having separate budgets in Flanders and Wallonia, more detailed breakdowns are needed. General figures demonstrate that 12 percent of the entire government budget in Flanders went to education, with the majority going to compulsory education and slightly below 2 percent to higher education. The investment in adult education is, according to the author, expected to be lower.

4.2 Public national investment

It is also difficult to estimate the public national investment going to adult learning, because this investment is spread across various streams.

In addition, adult learning relies on a combination of public and private contributions in Flanders and Wallonia. The corresponding governments heavily subsidise the system and provides financial support to learners. This is topped up by a private contribution, which is usually (but not systematically) expected from learner. Private contributions can also include investment from employers.

An overview of public funding is included in Table 4.1.

Flanders

The following sections breaks down and public national investment by type of organisation, which receives public funds³⁸.

The Flemish Government subsidises both adult education in Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education, as well as Training organised by VDAB and SYNTRA..

³⁷ OECD Education and Training Database: <http://www.oecd.org/education/database.htm>

³⁸ Please note that the budget is set for the period 2014-2019, the length of the term of the Government. Annual projections are used on an annual basis.

Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education staff is paid through this funding, each centre has a budget for a full-time director³⁹. The main difference between Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education lies in the fact that adult learners attending basic education do not have to pay fees themselves, while those attending adult education pay 1.50 Euro per teaching period⁴⁰. Instead, Centres for Basic Education receive an additional allowance per teaching hour per learner. Adult Education is supported by 13 regional consortia and these are also allocated an extra budget for support relating to staff and operation⁴¹. The Flemish Support Centre for Adult Education (VOCVO) also receives an annual budget. The total budget for Flemish Adult Education organised in Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education was 391 million in 2015 and was 3.60 percent of the total education budget⁴². The official budget of the current Government had foreseen 379 million for 2015, 404 million for 2016 and 412 million for 2017 for the same centres (please note that budgets are projected on an annual basis, following a general agreement made to cover the length of the governmental term 2014-2019).

The Flemish Government also funds the agency VDAB, which also been successful in receiving European funding whilst receiving extra funding from invoicing employers they work with. The VDAB budget in the last few years has been above 500 million euros⁴³.

VDAB also receives private contributions: Job-seekers can take part in VDAB's training programmes for free, but others who want to join specific vocational courses in their field of interest will be asked to pay a tuition fee, specified for each individual course⁴⁴. Furthermore, employers can ask VDAB to deliver specific training programmes for their employees, for which they tend to charge per participant, per day, although exemptions exist⁴⁵. SYNTRA also receives funding from the Flemish Government in order to operate their services and to make investments in their infrastructure, but they are also supposed to match this funding with income they get from tuition fees, which are variable based on the type and intensity of the course. Subsidies for companies who want to invest in training can do this through the 'KMO-portefeuille (KMO = kleine en middelgrote ondernemingen)', worth 10-15k euros a year⁴⁶.

Part-time arts education is subsidised by the Flemish Government through granting academies teaching packages, based on student enrolment figures from the previous year. They also receive some funding for general operational costs and the total budget for part-time arts education is 232.296.000 euros, which is 2.14 percent of the total budget for education, although this also includes part-time arts education for young people⁴⁷. The

³⁹ *Financiering Volwassenenonderwijs:*

<http://ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/directies/financiering.htm>

⁴⁰ *Studeren in het volwassenenonderwijs – wat kost het?* <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/studeren-in-het-volwassenenonderwijs-wat-kost-het>

⁴¹ *Opdracht en werking van de consortia:*

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/consortia/opdracht_werking.htm

⁴² *Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers 2014-2015:* <http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/83262>

⁴³ *Financiering VDAB:* docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=396582

⁴⁴ *VDAB Vraag en antwoord vind een opleiding:* <https://www.vdab.be/help/opleiding.shtml>

⁴⁵ *Vrijstelling van betaling werknemersopleidingen:*

<https://www.vdab.be/werknemersopleidingen/vrijstelling.shtml>

⁴⁶ *KMO-portefeuille voor ondernemers:* <http://www.kmo-portefeuille.be/>

⁴⁷ *Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers 2014-2015:* <http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/83262>

current Government budget put aside 208 million for part-time arts education in 2015, 215 million in 2016 and 214 million in 2017. As part-time arts education falls within the segment of non-compulsory education, adult learners themselves have to pay. Adults starting in October 2016 will pay 301 euros, although a lowered enrolment fee of 126 euros is available for adults under 25, the unemployed, people with disabilities and those on benefits⁴⁸.

Flanders has a system of paid educational leave for employees working in the private sector who want to participate in one of the courses with either a professional or academic orientation⁴⁹. Not automatically all courses give employees the right for paid educational leave, but mainly courses that lead to professions where there is a shortage in the labour market. Job-seekers who undertake VDAB courses do not have to pay tuition fees as explained above, but can also receive an additional allowance to pay for, e.g. childcare and transport. Several apprenticeship schemes organised by SYNTRA provide adults with a specific work-experience allowance⁵⁰.

Wallonia

Funding of adult learning systems in Wallonia can also be described as a combination of public funding (which goes toward the adult education providers and the learners), and private funding by adult learners themselves⁵¹. Social advancement education and distance education are subsidised by the French community and the total budget for increasing competences is around 245 million euros⁵². Social advancement education needs to pass inspection and the funding they receive is based on enrolment numbers and types of courses on offer. Providers of social advancement education can also be co-financed through cooperation with social partners. Adult learners have to pay fees, but maximum amounts have been introduced, and pay 0.18 euro for secondary level education per teaching hour of 50 minutes, and 0.28 euro per hour for higher education⁵³. People belonging to vulnerable groups such as the unemployed, those on benefits or people having a recognised disability are exempt from fees. Adults taking part in part-time arts education have to pay fees as well, for adults this stands at 176 euro for school year 2016-2017⁵⁴.

Vocational training through Le Forem is financed from the Walloon budget, as well as European budget and contributions from employers. Job-seekers entering a trainee contract with them do not have to pay themselves⁵⁵. It was announced in September 2017

⁴⁸ *Hoeveel inschrijfgeld betaal ik aan een academie:* <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/hoeveel-inschrijvingsgeld-betaal-ik-aan-een-academie>

⁴⁹ *Betaald educatief verlof voor werknemers in de privesector:* <http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/werk/opleiding/betaald-educatief-verlof-voor-werknemers-de-privesector>

⁵⁰ *SYNTRA De stageovereenkomst voor volwassenen:* <http://www.syntravlaanderen.be/leren-en-werken/de-stageovereenkomst>

⁵¹ Please note that budgets are set for the length of a Government tenure in Wallonia (2014-2019) with annual projections used.

⁵² *Avis présenté au nom de la Commission de l'Enseignement de Promotion sociale, de la Jeunesse, des Droits des femmes et de l'Egalité des chances:* <http://archive.pfwb.be/100000002028017>

⁵³ *Droits d'inscription dans l'enseignement de promotion sociale :* <http://inforjeunes.eu/droits-dinscription-dans-lenseignement-de-promotion-sociale/>

⁵⁴ *ESAGR – de l'inscription au diplôme* <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26989>

⁵⁵ *Le Forem – formations et stages:* <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/formations-et-stages.html>

that Le Forem's budget will decrease with around 20-25 million⁵⁶, but is thought to have a reserve working budget of 80 million currently.

Similar to the situation in Flanders, a system of paid educational leave exists for employees in Wallonia, mainly for those working in the private sector, mostly for courses of a minimum of 32 hours⁵⁷. Extra financial support is also available for unemployed adults who want to restart full-time education, through maintaining their unemployment benefits and receiving a reimbursement of their travel costs.

Sectoral training funds

Apart from the training providers directly under the responsibilities of the Flemish and Wallonian Government described above, it is important to note that several other providers of training are available. Quite often, employer organisations working in the same sector (e.g. transport, retail, electricians, hospitals, etc.) have their own sectoral training schemes. Organisations coordinating training activities for employees in their sector mostly have the structure of non-profit organisations. Social partners have agreed to construct funds based on small proportions of gross salaries and to use these funds for adult learning initiatives in the different sectors.

In general, participation in lifelong learning in Belgium is in most cases based on a co-financing model. On the one hand, the State sponsors these forms of education and training explained above, but in a wide range of courses adults are also expected to pay some sort of enrolment fee themselves. The exceptions are education for the most vulnerable adults, e.g. those who need basic education, or the unemployed who go through unemployment services and receive training as part of that.

Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start/ end date
Flemish Adult Education	Flemish Government	EUR 412 million	Adults in general	Basic to vocational higher education	Figure for 2017
Flemish part-time arts education	Flemish Government	EUR 214 million	Includes young people as well	Equivalent of primary and secondary education	Figure 2017

⁵⁶ RTL (2017) 'Walloon government to take away 25 million from Le Forem - Le gouvernement wallon boucle son budget et va puiser dans son bas de laine - RTL news channel 25 September 2017' <http://www.rtl.be/info/belgique/politique/le-gouvernement-wallon-boucle-son-budget-et-va-puiser-dans-son-bas-de-laine-956212.aspx>

⁵⁷ Conge-éducation payé: <https://www.leforem.be/entreprises/aides-financieres-conge-education-payee.html>

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VDAB	Flemish Government	EUR million	500	Unemployed, ALMP	Basic skills, vocational education	Government budget 2014-2019
SYNTRA	Flemish Government	EUR million	65	Self-employed, entrepreneurs	Vocational education	Government budget 2014-2019
Social Advancement Education	Wallonian Government	EUR million	245	Adults in general	Wide range of levels, basic as well	Figure for 2016
Le Forum	Walonian Government	EUR million	80	Unemployed, ALMP	Basic Education, vocational education	Figure published in September 2017
Marshall Plan 4.0	Wallonian Government	2.9 million of which 304.5 million for investment in human capital		all	Increasing human capital among population ⁵⁸	Budget for the period 2015-2019

4.3 EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

ESF budgets in Belgium, including both Flanders and Wallonia, focus on improving people's skills and increasing social cohesion among them. This is important in order to bring an adequately skilled workforce into the labour market, especially needed among the most vulnerable in society. Below is an overview on budget spending during the periods 2014-2020 and 2007-2013.

4.3.1 Structural fund support planned as part of 2014-2020 financial framework

The European Social Fund (ESF) is an important player in the country supporting a wide range of projects. In Wallonia, for the period 2014-2020, around 400 projects have been approved, with an underlying budget of 800 million euro⁵⁹. In Flanders, this is estimated to be around 1 billion⁶⁰. In Wallonia, around 84 million of the budget goes to projects in relation to business and creativity, including training for job-seekers to set up their own businesses. A further 316 million euros is used for training purposes to increase knowledge and skills among the population in Wallonia.

In Flanders, the majority of funding is going to projects promoting high quality employment and labour mobility, including the necessary training and lifelong learning. Around 20 percent of the budget goes towards projects supporting social integration and the prevention of poverty. The promotion of employment for older adults has also been recognised as a specific goal. According to the data on financial support to the Member

⁵⁸ Please note that the Marshall plan relates to the increase in human capital in a broad sense and does not include a precise quantitative target in terms of number of adult learners to reach.

⁵⁹ National Reform Programme 2015: economie.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/NRP_2015_EN.pdf

⁶⁰ ESF Vlaanderen: <http://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/>

States between 2014 and 2020, available in July 2016 from the European Commission for Operational Programmes from the European Social Fund (ESF), the planned financial support from the European Union for the investment priority most directly targeting adult learning, i.e. Investment priority 10.3 – Enhancing access to lifelong learning, is 246.8 million euros.

4.3.2 *EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework*

As stated above, not all money coming from the Structural funds are used specifically in relation to adult learning and it can be argued whether this level of education and training receives sufficient attention, given the low participation rates in lifelong learning, and the levels of unemployment and educated population being below target. In relation to lifelong learning, a core focus of the use of structural funds during the period 2007-2013 related to the increase of the population's human capital, as well as the increased adaptability of employees⁶¹.

The Flemish overview of ESF priorities can be found on their website⁶². The five priorities within which funding has been distributed are: (1) activating talents, (2) provide employment chances, (3) trading with people, (4) innovation and (5) transnational and interregional cooperation. ESF Flanders also has its own YouTube Channel where more information about their projects can be found⁶³.

A list of approved projects in the Wallonian region can be found at the Wallonian ESF website⁶⁴.

4.4 **Effectiveness of investment**

Despite investments in education and training for adults, enrolment figures for Belgium remain low and employment targets have not yet been reached. This might be a result of a poor investment in adult lifelong learning, but as mentioned, it might also be the result of a poor lifelong learning climate in the country. Participation rates in lifelong learning over the past five years have hardly changed, so it seems that despite a number of actions, e.g. at the level of ESF and the wide range of learning provisions available in the country, it is hard to change the situation.

As outlined above, and mentioned by Boeren et al. (2017), a documentary analysis in the Flemish context indicated that one key priorities for adult education is the need for a more efficient use of the budget, such as working together across various providers, and focusing budgets towards specific groups who need it the most. The barriers towards

⁶¹ Results of the negotiations of Cohesion Policy strategies and programmes 2007–13: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/negotiation/country_be_en.pdf

⁶² ESF Programme inhoud 2007-2013: <http://esf-vlaanderen.be/nl/over-ons/europees-sociaal-fonds/programmmainhoud-2007-2013/programmmainhoud-2007-2013>

⁶³ ESF *Vlaanderen* Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCILqCftaNZNSyYypQS-ytrg>

⁶⁴ ESF *Projets 2007-2013 approuvés*: <http://europe.wallonie.be/?q=node/24>

lifelong learning as experienced by adults has also been documented by Lavrijsen and Nicaise (2015).

Evaluations of the use of Structural Funds in Belgium have been undertaken, both in Flanders and Wallonia. In Flanders, all five ESF priorities were evaluated by 2014⁶⁵. The annual report of the Flemish part ESF mentions no further meetings of the evaluation group have taken place in 2016⁶⁶. In Wallonia, evaluations were undertaken before 2007 in order to prepare for the 2007-2013 cycle, separate evaluations have been conducted during the cycle, but evaluations have also focused on input for the preparation of the 2014-2020 cycle⁶⁷. The focus in evaluations is on increasing the level of innovation in the economy and the increase of human capital among the population. Understanding how to undertake self-evaluations of ESF projects is carefully explained to project co-ordinators. Evaluations conclude that, despite the large sums of funding for ESF projects, a more rigorous examination of whether the demand for adult education of those who are the most in needs are met, . While it seems good that investments are being made, it is also important that adults themselves are part of these projects. Once adults participate, it is important that training and learning activities are targeted towards their needs and starting competencies in order to optimise their learning process.

⁶⁵ ESF in *Vlaanderen jaarverslag 2014*:
http://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/articles/jaarverslag_2014_0.pdf

⁶⁶ ESF *jaarverslag 2016* http://www.esf-agentschap.be/sites/default/files/attachments/articles/jaarverslag_2016_esf-agentschap.pdf

⁶⁷ ESF Wallonia evaluations: <http://europe.wallonie.be/node/21>

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

As stated above, a range of new concept notes and preparatory work for new policies in the field of adult learning has been undertaken in recent years. One could argue that this indicates a level of critical thinking among policy makers themselves who agree that improvement is needed and that current policies demonstrate some significant weaknesses. The first part of this review clearly showed that Belgium has not yet reached targets in relation to labour market participation and lifelong learning participation. According to the author, understanding the reasons for this shortfall is needed.

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.⁶⁸

5.1 Develop learners' interest in learning

Without a positive attitude towards learning, there is little chance that an intention to be involved in learning activities is going to develop. People might also be unaware of the courses on offer available to them or not be aware of the support mechanisms in place. One of the reasons often cited in this regard is the existence of a compulsory education system that is too focused on selection and failure and that this is not good for the development of positive dispositions towards learning (see Boeren et al., 2017). In Flanders, concrete actions have been undertaken to update the structure of secondary schooling, in the hope that a new way of presenting different trajectories in compulsory education will be able to change the perception of vocational education as less valuable than academic education. Across both sides of the language border, it is clear that courses are available for those who need introductory learning experiences, e.g. through offering courses at Centres for Basic Education and through Social Advancement Education. These courses tend to be free for the most vulnerable groups in society and could therefore help them getting on the educational ladder. However, as recognised by policy makers themselves, more cooperation with social partners might be needed, as the education and training landscape in both Wallonia and Flanders currently seems to be fragmented.

5.2 Increase employers' investment in learning

At both sides of the language border, support mechanisms are in place to make it more attractive for employers to invest in the training of their employees. Cooperation is also present between employers and employment and training services such as Le Forem and VDAB. However, research has demonstrated that employers tend to focus on the development of very specific tasks and skills related to the current job instead of paying attention to the development of general transferable skills as well. Furthermore, maybe

⁶⁸ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all EU languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

unsurprisingly, the largest part of employers' investment in learning goes to already highly skilled white collar workers, not to low-skilled and low-qualified blue collar workers⁶⁹. This remains an area of concern.

5.3 Improve equity of access for all

Participation rates in adult learning are low and those with no or low qualifications barely participate. While there are clear provisions available for this group, through Basic Education and Social Advancement Education, but also training for the unemployed often free of charge, more actions need to be undertaken to make learning more attractive for the most vulnerable in society, which is currently taken into consideration both in Flanders and Wallonia through their new intended policy directions in formal adult education and social advancement education as outlined above. Based on Flemish results of the PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills, the gap between the highest and lowest skills adults is among the widest in Europe. The failure of the education and training system to attract low-qualified adults is unlikely going to change this situation. While qualifications structures have now been developed, it also becomes clear that more work needs to be undertaken in the field of recognition of informal and non-formal learning, which might help certain people to enter the education and training system at a level more suitable for them.

5.4 Deliver learning that is relevant

Nowadays, the system of paid educational leave is linked to the needs of the labour market. Previously, learners could take up paid educational leave for whatever course they wanted to study, but the system has now changed to ensure that investment is made towards programmes that develop skills and grant qualifications most needed, thus for which there is a labour shortage. However, adults interested in other courses are also likely to find a course offer but are more likely to be asked to pay tuition fees themselves and undertake preparations in their own time. Examples include participation in the majority of part-time arts education. Qualification frameworks have been set up but actions are being undertaken to further improve these. New developments in adult education are also explicit in their references to the local socio-economic needs, such as rethinking the courses to be offered in the Centres for Adult Education in Flanders. It is expected that course offers will have stronger links to the dominant labour market sectors in different regions and to target the increase of skills to work in these sectors.

5.5 Deliver learning that is of high quality

Having explored the various types and decrees on adult learning in the country, it seems that all of them have elements of quality control embedded in them, through a range of evaluations, inspectorates and attention to the qualifications and quality of teaching staff, e.g. through train-the-trainer programmes. This ensures the likelihood of high quality

⁶⁹ See 'The employment practices of multinationals in Belgium':
<https://soc.kuleuven.be/ceso/files/executivesummary>

provisions for those who attend adult learning, but as explained before, inequalities in access remain problematic. This also indicates that parts of public funding go to adults who are less in need of receiving it, contributing to growth in social inequalities.

5.6 Ensure coherent policy

Apart from the overarching flagship programmes, such as the Flanders in Action plan, Vision 2050 and the Marshall 4.0 plan in Wallonia that set out very general targets in relation to education and the labour market, adult learning is regulated through a wide variety of different decrees. This leads to a fragmented adult learning system which might be hard to navigate for learners. Furthermore, as pointed out by policy makers themselves, more attention needs to be paid to working with social partners, which is especially important to attract the most vulnerable adults into learning and to keep on satisfying the needs of employers. As outlined above, the Flemish work that is undertaken in revising the effort undertaken in Centres for Adult Education and Basic Education explicitly mentions the need to cooperate more with other training providers, employers and a wider range of services (see concept note discussed above). Fragmentation of policies is also present in Wallonia.

6.0 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

Based on a review of major policies and policy developments in Belgium relating to adult education, the following strengths and weaknesses are being put forward.

6.1 Strengths

1. Despite the low participation rates of the adult population in Flanders and Wallonia, it is important to recognise the attention policy makers are giving to education to the most vulnerable in society, for them to fight against poverty, to increase their literacy skills and to find a job. While systems can and have to be improved in the future to make better and more efficient use of resources, it is clear that several basic structures and infrastructures already exist on which further policy developments can be built. The low participation rate itself is a clear weakness.
2. Although the regional spread of education and training offers might be optimised in the future, it is important to recognise that courses in a broad range of interest fields are already available to learners, both in Wallonia and Flanders. This strength was also recognised by Boeren et al. (2017) in relation to the context of adult learning provisions in Flanders. There is basic and literacy training available, education leading to official qualifications, training to help job-seekers and workers to help develop their professions and those interested in arts and culture can participate in part-time arts education and socio-cultural work. A wide range of offers exists, even if there is a perceived need to establish more of a learning culture in the country.
3. Based on international assessments such as PIAAC, published in 2013, it is clear that Flanders (no data available for Wallonia) scores among the highest achievers in the OECD region, especially for numeracy. One of the downsides is that the gap between low and high achievers is among the largest as well, which is clearly a weakness, but there is no doubt that the highest achievers are among the most highly skilled people in the world.

6.2 Weaknesses

Belgium does not have a learning culture, participation rates are rather average compared to European neighbours and low for adults with low or no qualifications. More actions will have to be undertaken to fully understand why this is the case, but also to make sure children grow up with a positive attitude towards learning. More attention to learning attitudes in compulsory education might be one way forward, but we also know that employers are less likely to invest in education and training for employees in blue collar jobs, reinforcing the cycle of being low skilled and in fact widening the gaps between high and low skilled groups. For Flanders, this was also found as a result of the PIAAC project.

The current landscape of adult education is rather fragmented and therefore becomes rather hard to navigate. There are a range of different providers with their own sets of rules and regulations. This leads to the danger that resources are not used in the most effective way. In this regard, stronger links between different providers and social partners

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could be built. Although flagship programmes mentioning the role of education, training and the labour market exist, such as the Flanders in Action plan and the Marshall 4.0 plan, goals and targets in relation to these subjects are rather vague and general, while concrete legislation is embedded in a wide range of different decrees.

In order to evaluate adult learning systems, a need for more and better data exists. While good quality data is not always available for each specific subject, this is especially the case for Wallonia. The region did not participate in the recent PIAAC project of which the results were published in 2013 and Skills Beyond School reviews on the OECD website thus only focus on the situation in Flanders. Policy targets have been written up using language indicating 'more', 'better', 'higher', 'above average', ... but specific quantifiable targets have not always been put in place.

7.0 FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

Belgium has a lot of work to do on the establishment of a strong learning culture. This process needs to start from a young age and therefore goes beyond the level of adult learning. Preschool, primary and secondary education will have to play a role in this as well. At the level of adult education, a lot of work has been undertaken in the last two years to prepare for new policies to be developed and pushed through. Examples are the numerous concept notes and draft decrees, which indicates the awareness among policy makers of the weaknesses of the system. In summarising and reviewing these policy preparations, the following points for attention are recommended by the author:

- In redesigning the adult learning policies, it is important to avoid too much fragmentation and to provide potential learners with a better understanding of offers, together with a stronger focus on working together with social partners. This will profit the system as a whole, but might also be crucial to attract more disadvantaged learners, a group that is now hardly recognisable in the statistics. In Flanders, these aspects have been recognised in the concept note on Adult Education, in Wallonia, there are draft decrees on social advancement education. It has been positive to see a focus on the more effective use of financial resources within the broad area of lifelong learning.
- In order to better integrate adults in the labour market and to make a stronger bridge between education and employment, it has been good to see that at both sides of the language border, work is being undertaken in order to update qualifications' frameworks and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning so that adults' competencies are being recognised by both employers and educational institutions. It will be vital to monitor this process in the future and to evaluate whether procedures for recognition and validation are adequately working when implemented.
- Employment rates of adults with no or low qualifications are low as well as their lifelong learning participation rates. Although both adult education and training are available to them, it is important to raise awareness about the needs of this group towards employers, as their training investments seem mainly to go to highly educated white collar workers. It might be worthwhile to familiarise employers with the evidence regarding the benefits of learning to stimulate them to take an open approach towards organising learning activities for their lower skilled employees.

8.0 SUMMARY

So far, Belgium has not yet reached the Europe 2020 targets on employment and participation in lifelong learning activities and little progress has been made in recent years. Not only have targets not yet been reached, the performances of adults with no or low qualifications are very poor. Less than half of adults are active in the labour market and only a very small fraction of them participates in lifelong learning activities. While highly educated adults in this country perform generally well, gaps between the most and least disadvantaged are big and the country is therefore often characterised by its strong socio-economic inequalities. Given that no significant changes over the past couple of years, the author expects that improvement will only be visible in official statistics over the medium to long-term. Indeed, many proposed changes in the organisation and funding of adult education still need to be approved or put in practice.

The 2016 CSR recognises the existence of strong socio-economic inequalities in the country and specifically mentions this in relation to education and training, through focussing on the need to reduce early school leaving and the strengthening of vocational pathways. The 2016 NRP provides action points to tackle these problems. These challenges includes paying more attention to the employment of young adults and offering more opportunities for combining learning with work, providing a stronger cooperation between the compulsory school system and the lifelong learning and training system, extending the work undertaken on qualifications frameworks and the validation of prior learning, a stronger focus on stimulating education in the STEM fields, and a stronger cooperation with social partners.

A number of key challenges for the Belgian adult learning system can be recognised. First of all, the low participation rates in adult lifelong learning indicate a lack of a learning culture among the adult population in the country. Through reforms of the compulsory education system and the cooperation with social partners, attempts will be undertaken to make a shift towards a more positive learning culture. Secondly, the strong socio-economic inequalities in the country remain problematic and will have to be addressed in order to avoid even further social and economic gaps in society. Thirdly, it is hard to recognise one single Belgian, or even Flemish or Wallonian adult learning policy, which indicates that the system is fragmented. It is a key challenge to make the system more comprehensive, effective and efficient. Finally, more high quality data, especially in the Wallonian context could help making better interpretations on the current status of adults' learning.

A range of concept notes and draft degrees have been prepared by both the Flemish and Wallonian Government, who are currently in the middle of their terms. In general, the focus is on limiting the existing fragmentation of the system, with a strong aim to make support more accessible for the most disadvantaged in society. Given the strong inequalities in the country, this is highly needed. Furthermore, a stronger development of qualifications frameworks and the recognition of prior learning is recommended as well. Finally, it is important that these actions for more inclusion are recognised by social partners and employers.

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Evaluatie decreet volwassenenonderwijs (evaluation decree adult education):
http://ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/directies/evaluatie_decreet_volwasseneonderwijs.htm

Financiering VDAB (Financing VDAB): docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=396582

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<http://ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/directies/financiering.htm>

Flemish Higher Education Registry

<http://www.hogeronderwijsregister.be/home>

FORMAPass: <https://www.leforem.be/FORMAPass/catalogue-des-formations-insertions.html>

Hoeveel inschrijfgeld betaal ik aan een academie (How much registration fee do I pay at an academy?): <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/hoeveel-inschrijvingsgeld-betaal-ik-aan-een-academie>

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Kansengroepen in kaart: laaggeschoolden op de Vlaamse arbeidsmarkt (mapping underrepresented groups – low skilled workers in the Flemish labour market): https://www.vdab.be/sites/web/files/doc/trends/KiK_Laaggeschoolden201002.pdf

KMO-portefeuille voor ondernemers (SME portfolio for entrepreneurs): <http://www.kmo-portefeuille.be/>

Knelpuntberoepen (hard to fill vacancies): http://www.belgium.be/nl/werk/werk_zoeken/arbeidsmarkt/knelpuntberoepen

In search of the Nordic model of education: http://wanda.uef.fi/~anti/publ/in_english/162.pdf

Labour market information – Belgium: <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=296&acro=Imi&lang=en&countryId=BE®ionId=BE2&nuts2Code=null&nuts3Code=null®ionName=Vlaams Gewest>

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L'enseignement de promotion sociale (Education for social advancement): <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=27151>

L'enseignement secondaire artistique à horaire réduit (ESAHR) (Part-time arts education): <http://www.enseignement.be/index.php?page=26984>

Le Forem: <https://www.leforem.be/>

Le Forem – formations et stages (training and internships): <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/formations-et-stages.html>

Le Forem legal basis: <http://www.pesmonitor.eu/Database/DatabaseNew.aspx?Lang=EN&PES=34&Topic=1&Content=5>

Le Forem to lose 25 million in funding

<http://www.rtl.be/info/belgique/politique/le-gouvernement-wallon-boucle-son-budget-et-va-puise-dans-son-bas-de-laine-956212.aspx>

National Reform Programme 2015: economie.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/NRP_2015_EN.pdf

National Reform Programme – Belgium 2016: <http://www.be2020.eu/Index.php?lang=en&IS=91>

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OECD Education and Training Database: <http://www.oecd.org/education/database.htm>

OECD Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>

Onderzoek leerrendement van opleidingen in het beleidsdomein werk (Research on the returns of training within the policy field of work): <https://hiva.kuleuven.be/nl/onderzoek/onderzoeksprojecten/2015-2016-Leerrendement-opleidingen-beleidsdomein-Werk-conceptuele-analyse-ontwikkeling-meetsysteem>

Opdracht en werking van de consortia (Mission and operation of the consortia): http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/consortia/opdracht_werking.htm

PACT 2020: <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/en/about/pact-2020>

Pacte pour l'Emploi et la Formation (Pact for Employment and Training): www.cesw.be/uploads/Pacte%20emploi%20formation.pdf

Parcours d'intégration des primo-arrivants (Integration path for newcomers): <http://socialsante.wallonie.be/?q=action-sociale/integration-personne-origine-etrangere/dispositifs/parcours-integration-prim-arrivant>

Patterns in lifelong learning participation: https://steunpuntssl.be/Publicaties/Publicaties_docs/ssl-2014.19-1-1-1-patterns-in-lifelong-learning-participation/at_download/file

PIAAC website Flanders: <http://www.piaac.ugent.be/>

PISA website Flanders: <http://www.pisa.ugent.be/nl>

Plan Marshall 4.0: <http://planmarshall.wallonie.be/le-plan-0>

Plan Wallon de lutte contre la pauvreté (Walloon Plan for the fight against poverty): <http://socialsante.wallonie.be/?q=news-lutte-contre-la-pauvrete>

Prettig geleerd – social-culturele activiteitenkalender (Socio-cultural activity planner): <http://www.prettiggeleerd.be/>

Projet de décret relative a l'enseignement de promotion social inclusive (Draft decree on the teaching of inclusive social promotion): <http://archive.pfwb.be/10000000203d004>

Results of the negotiations of Cohesion Policy strategies and programmes 2007–13: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/negotiation/country_be_en.pdf

Service Francophone des Métiers et des Qualifications (Walloon services on trade and qualifications): <http://www.sfmq.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1435>

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Start note lifelong learning

<https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/vlaamse-regering/levenslang-leren-en-de-dynamische-levensloopbaan>

Strategisch Plan Geletterdheid Verhogen 2012-2016 (Strategic Plan on the increase of literacy 2012-2016):
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/geletterdheid/plan/StrategischPlanGeletterdheidVerhogen2012-2016.pdf>

Studeren in het volwassenenonderwijs – wat kost het? (Studying in adult education, what does it cost?) <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/studeren-in-het-volwassenenonderwijs-wat-kost-het>

SYNTRA: <http://www.syntra.be/>

SYNTRA De stageovereenkomst voor volwassenen (Apprenticeship agreement for adults):
<http://www.syntravlaanderen.be/leren-en-werken/de-stageovereenkomst>

Systemic obstacles to participation in lifelong learning:
https://steunpuntssl.be/Publicaties/Publicaties_docs/ssl-2015.11-1-1-1-systemic-obstacles-to-participation-in-lifelong-learning/at_download/file

Tempus Fugit. Een aggiornamento van toekomstverkenningen voor de zorgberoepen in de Vlaamse Gemeenschap: (exploring the future for the caring sector in Flanders)
<https://steunpuntwvg.be/images/rapporten-en-werknotas/tempus-fugit>

The employment practices of multinationals in Belgium:
<https://soc.kuleuven.be/ceso/files/executivesummary>

Vaardig genoeg voor de 21ste eeuw? De eerste Vlaamse resultaten by PIAAC (Skilled enough for the 21st Century? The first Flemish results of PIAAC)
<http://www.piaac.ugent.be/uploads/assets/65/1381236408405-Vaardig%20genoeg%20voor%20de%2021ste%20eeuw.pdf>

VDAB Vraag en antwoord vind een opleiding (VDAB question and answer in relation to the search for training): <https://www.vdab.be/help/opleiding.shtml>

Visie 2050 (Vision 2050): <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/nieuws/vlaamse-regering-lanceert-visie-2050>

Vlaams Actieplan Armoedebestrijding 2015-2019 (Flemish Action Plan Poverty Reduction 2015-2019):
http://www4.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/20150702_ontwerp%20tekst%20VAPA%20-%20DEFINITIEF%20-%20BIS.pdf

Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling (Flemish Employment Office):
<https://www.vdab.be/>

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Vlaams onderwijs in cijfers 2014-2015 (Flemish education in numbers 2014-2015):
<http://ebl.vlaanderen.be/publications/documents/83262>

VOCVO: <http://www.vocvo.be/>

Vrijstelling van betaling werknemersopleidingen (Exemption from payment of employee training): <https://www.vdab.be/werknemersopleidingen/vrijstelling.shtml>

13 consortia Volwassenenonderwijs (13 consortia adult education):
http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/volwassenenonderwijs/consortia/13_consortia.asp

ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
FLEMISH DOCUMENTS		
Decree on Adult Education	2007	This Decree sets out the regulations of work undertaken in the Centres for Adult Education and Centres for Basic Education.
Pact 2020	2009	This pact outlined a number of targets (20 in total, in five broad domains) which Flanders wanted to achieve by 2020. A number of targets were in relation to education and the labour market, such as reducing the proportion of adults with low or no qualification by half.
Strategic Plan to increase Literacy	2012	The aim of this plan is to combat literacy problems and dedicates an important role to work that takes place in the Centres for Basic Education.
Vision 2050	2015	Vision 2050 has been introduced as a replacement of the Pact 2020, shifting the realisation of targets from 2020 to 2050. By then, Flanders aims to become a lifelong learning society and hopes to evolve into a more dynamic labour market.
Concept note on the reform of adult education	25 March 2016	This concept note focuses on work undertaken in Centres for Basic Education and Centres for Adult Education. It proposes to make better use of resources, e.g. through modernising the finance system with more possibilities to attract disadvantaged groups, but also to review regulations in relation to personnel
Concept note on the further enhancement of higher vocational education	25 March 2016	This concept note outlines plans for the expansion of vocational higher education in the Centres for Adult Education.
Concept note Dutch as a second language	25 March 2016	This concept note focuses on the importance of Dutch as a second language and as a means for integration and puts forward that a stronger cooperation between diverse stakeholders is recommendable.
Concept note on the reform of part-time arts education	Summer 2015	This concept note outlines the ideas for a new decree and proposes a better spread of opportunities and a review of the system has been recommended, including making better use of resources and more

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		and better cooperation with local actors in the field of culture and arts.
Concept note on the recognition of competences	July 2015	This note mentions the fragmented landscape on the recognition of competencies and the need to increase coherence and coordination in this field, with reference to the role of non-formal and informal learning.
Starting note on 'Transition priorities lifelong learning and dynamic life trajectories	March 2017	This starting note outlines the plan for a renewed lifelong learning vision for Flanders, relevant in the Government's broader Vision 2050 strategy.
WALLONIAN DOCUMENTS		
Decree on Social Advancement Education	16 April 1991	This Decree sets out the regulations for Social Advancement Education in Wallonia and had add-ons in 2008 and 2009 to focus on further European integration and the need to focus on literacy training.
Marshall Plan 4.0	2015-2019	This is the Wallonian's flagship programme for the period 2015-2019 and has a key strategy on human capital through enhancing training in relation to employment, but also to focus more on the digital skills of the population and higher levels of integration of ICT.
Employment and Training Pact	June 2016	This is a cooperation agreement between the Walloon Government and social partners to enhance employment and training in the broad sense.
New cooperation agreement on French-language Professions and Qualification Service (SFMQ)	29 October 2015	This cooperation agreement aims to work towards an extensive list of professional profiles described in French language. This will be helpful in creating a clearer overview of the competences profiles on the labour market.
Decree on the creation and management of a French-speaking qualifications framework	25 May 2015	This framework aims to provide a better overview on current qualification structures
Draft decree on inclusive social advancement education	2015	This draft decree outlines the need to provide learners with more personal service and to pay more attention to the needs of students with various types of disabilities who want to study towards qualifications.
Guidance note to boost education for	2015	This note points out that social advancement education should be accessible to every citizen, that

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social advancement and distance learning		a diversified range of educational offers should be available and that it is important to focus on quality control.
A training offer in higher education for all	July 2016	This cooperation agreement has been approved to make more efficient use of higher education institutions in providing vocational education that corresponds to the needs of the local labour market and its population.

Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions⁷⁰

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Pact 2020	https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/pact-2020-een-nieuw-toekomstpact-voor-vlaanderen-20-doelstellingen	List of goals in multiple domains – Flemish budget	Participation target in adult education not achieved	v	v	v	v	v	v	Launched in 2009 but replaced in 2015 by Vision 2050, this was a set of goals to be achieved by Flanders. Given

⁷⁰ While adult learning is regulated by a range of decrees as outlined in the text, major initiatives to intervene in the field of adult education policy are being linked to strategic plans outlining visions for the future and how lifelong learning can play a role in succeeding to be a strong knowledge based economy.

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											the low participation rates in adult education, it cannot be said goals have been achieved.
Strategic Plan to Increase Literacy	https://vocvo.be/content/evaluatie-van-het-strategisch-plan-geletterdheid-verhogen-2012-2016	No specific budget, but investment in participation PIAAC to measure literacy	An evaluation has been published which mentions the lack of focus of the plan	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	The strategic plan ran between 2012 and 2016 and has been evaluated now. The general conclusion is that much more work in this area is needed
Vision 2050	https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/vlaamse-regering/visie-2050	List of goals in multiple domains – Flemish budget	Work in progress	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	Long-term Flemish vision with focus on lifelong learning. Starting note on the future of lifelong learning has now been developed.
Marshall Pan 4.0	http://planmarshall.wallonie.be/	2.9 billion with budget	Work in progress	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	Wallonia's main strategic plan that runs until 2019

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		focussing on human capital developme nt									
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