PAL LAB

State of the Art Review
of the Educational System in Belgium

Developed by: PAL NETWORK

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Contents

This document is created as part of the project PAL LAB: Pedagogical approaches for upskilling of teachers, mediators and experts working with Romani children and youth – Equal Opportunities and reducing early school leaving. It is an essential part of WP2 / Task 2.1: State of the art review of schools' educational systems in partner countries, which will be delivered by all partner countries of the project.

The following document provides a consolidated report done by PAL NETWORK, Belgium. It is intended to provide an overview of the current stage of the national education system and its correlation with early school leaving.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In preparing this report, we conducted extensive research focusing on the Belgian educational landscape, reviewing educational materials and initiatives, using a methodological approach that involved analyzing key reports and case studies.

Our methodology emphasized understanding policies, challenges, and best practices in Belgium's education system. A strong focus was shed into the different communities in the country, examining regulations, and scrutinizing trends, such as early school leaving and detailed examination of Flanders' unique educational dynamics.

By gathering information from these targeted sources, our report builds on a substantial base of knowledge about Belgian education and aligns closely with our project's primary goals.

The selected documents are:

Report 1 - Inclusive Education: Inclusive Education: The Way Forward

Report 2 - The education system in Belgium

Report 3 - Education at a Glance 2022

Report 4 - Education Policy Outlook - Belgium

Report 5 - Early School Leaving – Statistics, Policies and Good Practices in Collaborative Learning

Report 6 – Refugee Education in Flanders (Belgium)

Report 7 – The Schooling of Roma children in Belgium – The parents' voice

Report 8 - Country fiche: Belgium, Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

and

Case study 1 – **Schools in Ghent whose student body consists of a significant percentage of socially disadvantaged students**. Two innovative programs in Belgium promote both educational equity and quality as they reach out to ethnically diverse families. The Bridge

Person project in Ghent addresses Belgium's immigrant achievement gap by creating meaningful relationships between schools and socially disadvantaged families. The School in Sight project in Antwerp seeks to achieve desegregation by bringing more middle-class students into schools that enroll a majority of low-income and immigrant students.

Case study 2 – **School Consultation Roma and Education (voluntary consultation platform)**. A volunteer dialogue forum called "School Consultation Roma and Education" was created by educational professionals who frequently engage with Roma students. Chance encounters between some of these individuals, who were dealing with issues and difficulties that were similar to their own and that they were not always able to solve, served as the catalyst for the project.

Case study 3 - **Co-Teaching in Teacher Education.**

Case study 4 - **Flemish schools.** One of the communities, regions, and linguistic regions of Belgium is Flanders, which is the northern part of the country where Flemish is spoken. Despite not being the largest region in Belgium, Flanders has the highest population when Brussels is taken into account. Only 8% of people who live in Brussels identify as Flemish; the remainder are either non-Belgian or speak French.

We hope that our report will support the project development and that together with our partners we shall have a better understanding of the early leaving situation in our countries, based on the understanding of the national educational systems. At the end it will be possible to offer equal opportunities for our students and a way to reduce the early school leaving in schools/communities.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Section A: Examination of Reports

Report 1

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: Inclusive Education: Inclusive Education: The Way Forward

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: Consortium of the Project IE+ Promoting positive attitudes and evidence-based policy for inclusive education

Year of publication: 2017

Source / Reference: www.easpd.eu/en/content/promoting-inclusive-education

Executive Summary

This report was developed with the support of the Erasmus+ funding programme for the project "IE+ Promoting attitudes and evidence-based policy for inclusive education". It is part of a series of five national reports and contributes to an overview of the current legal, policy and schools practice currently in place.

Highlights

Belgium has a history of segregated education and both special primary and secondary schools operate in all three Communities. Since 2009 however there have been increased efforts to support inclusion through policy. At Federal level, Belgium guarantees the right to free education to all in its Constitution. Compulsory education starts on the 1st of September of the year in which a child turns 6 years old and lasts 12 full school years.

Under Belgium's freedom of education principle, all schools are free to develop their own curricula (subject to the curriculum being compatible with achieving legislative mandated educational objectives), this means that both mainstream and special schools have the freedom to develop their own curricula. According to legislation, any (legal) person may organise education and establish schools while parents can freely choose the school to send their children.

The role of the Federal Government in Belgium is limited to the determination of the beginning and end of compulsory education, setting minimum requirements for issuing

diplomas and the regulation of retirement for employees in the educational system. Further legislation on education is managed at a regional level.

Belgium has 3 autonomous education systems whoa are responsible for education in their region. These education systems are split via Communities: a) The Flemish Speaking Community, b) the French Speaking Community, and c) the German Speaking Community.

Around 58% of students in Belgium attend schools in the Flemish Speaking community and 37% or students attend schools in the French Speaking Community. The remaining 5% of students attend schools in the German Speaking Community.

Due to this division of competences, educational policies concerning inclusive education and children with a disability differ for each community and all schools in Belgium have freedom to develop their own curricula, assessments and self-evaluations.

In the Flemish Speaking Community, the Flemish Parliament Act of 28th June 2002, on equal opportunities in education, granted, in principle, all pupils who, on the basis of a statement of special educational needs are oriented towards a type of special education, the right to enrolment in a school or school site of their choice.

This Act was followed by the Flemish Parliament Act of 10th July 2008, which provided a framework for the Flemish equal opportunities and equal treatment policy, which includes provisions for equal treatment during the school career. In 2011 the Parliamentary Act on the Right to Enrolment further promoted equal opportunities in Education. Following the passing of its M-Decree in 2014, the Flemish Speaking Community is seen to have the highest levels of inclusive education of all the communities in Belgium. The MDecree legally reinforces the right of students with special educational needs (SEN) to be enrolled in mainstream education.

The M-Decree's measures include: 1. Updating the definition categories for students with special educational needs, including a category for children with autism. 2. Requiring mainstream schools to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with special education needs and requiring mainstream schools to only refer a student to special education once all such "reasonable adaptations" have been tried. 3. Providing parents of a child with special educational needs, who disagree with a schools' refusal to enroll their child, with the right to appeal to a Student Rights Commission.

Report 2

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: The education system in Belgium

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: Expatica Communications B.V.

Year of publication: 2022

Source / Reference: https://www.expatica.com/be/education/children-education/education-in-belgium-100088/

Executive Summary

This specific article provides a comprehensive overview of the education system in Belgium. It covers the varying regulations between the Dutch-, French-, and German-speaking communities, of the three distinct communities and the compulsory education age. The article also discusses various school types, from public to private, and their enrollment processes, highlighting the flexibility for children's registration. It also explores primary and secondary education systems, emphasizing assessment, and graduation requirements. Another focus is the language learning support, including summer camps and language courses for expat students.

Highlights

Belgium is divided into three distinct language communities: The Dutch-speaking, the French-speaking, and the German-speaking. Each community has its own regulations in regard to the educational system and enrollment in schools. While some aspects may differ, the compulsory school age throughout Belgium is between 6 and 18. Compulsory education is divided into:

- ⊃ Primary: 6 to 12 years of age
- ⊃ Secondary: 12 to 18 years of age

Before the compulsory school age, there are also free pre-primary school facilities for children aged 2.5 years and over.

Within each region there are three main types of institutions:

- Community schools – state education that is neutral in terms of religion
- Subsidized public schools – organized by municipalities
- Subsidized private schools – including schools with a religious affiliation
- Free-paying private schools – including international schools and Montessori schools

All children living in Belgium must enroll within the first 60 days of their registration in the municipality. The documents you will need to enroll include proof of identity, proof of vaccinations in Belgium, proof of address and any previous academic records. Parents

are free to choose the school their children will attend and are not obliged to enroll them in the school of their region.

There are different enrollment systems in public schools depending also on when in the academic year you are relocating. In Belgium one can also find international schools that provide a more global curriculum and pupils can obtain internationally recognized qualifications.

Education standards in Belgium are pretty high, with the OECD ranking Belgium's education among the top 10 countries with students performing above average in science, mathematics, and reading. Investment in education is also one of the highest among 40 OECD countries.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION:

Preschool education is not compulsory but can be very useful for a number of reasons. Public funding means nurseries and pre-schools provide free childcare for working parents. Plus, while there are few formal lessons, classes actively prepare children for school on an educational and social level through play-focused learning. As a result, over 90% of children attend a pre-school in Belgium. Do be aware, however, that places in popular preschools can be limited. Nurseries are available for babies and toddlers up to 2.5 years and kindergartens from then until school age. Often, a kindergarten has a relationship with a local primary school, making for an easy transition into formal education.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary education is compulsory from ages 6 to 12. The local departments of education oversee the requirements and curriculum of each region. Establishing the correct pace of education is important in Belgium. Children receive assessments at every level, from pre-primary to secondary schooling, to determine whether they are ready to move forward. As a part of this testing, it is common for children to repeat a year, and doing so has no negative stigma attached.

On completing their primary education, children will graduate with a certificate of primary education, which is important when moving to secondary education.

Public primary education is free to all throughout the country and possible costs include learning materials and excursions. The curricula tend to be fairly traditional, with morning classes based around literacy and mathematics and a range of other subjects, including music and history, taught in the afternoon. Wednesday afternoons are often free. There is also a strong emphasis on learning a foreign language. In the final years of primary education, learning Dutch or German for the French-speaking community, and French for the Dutch-speaking community, usually becomes compulsory.

Private primary education is also available in Belgium and include method and Montessori schools, International schools and Religious schools.

SECONDARY EDUCATION:

Secondary education in Belgium is compulsory from ages 12 to 18, however after 16 years of age students can opt to study part-time and undertake vocational or technical training.

State schools are free to all pupils, although they may require contribution for textbook costs. The curriculum is broad in the beginning but as students move into higher years, or cycles, they have more choice about the subjects they take. In the final cycle, between ages 16 and 18, it is also possible for students to study part-time while undergoing vocational training. There are four areas of focus, when students begin to specialize: General, Technical, Vocational and Art education. There are also many private secondary schools in Belgium, such as international schools, Montessori schools, Steiner schools, etc.

Upon completion of secondary education, students are awarded a diploma or certificate that provides access to higher education.

As with other elements of education, support for children with Special Educational Needs is determined by the department of education in each community. The national approach to special needs education in Belgium is one of inclusion and equality, meaning children are integrated into mainstream schools where possible. Many schools have permanent members of staff who specialize in special needs education.

Where integration in mainstream schooling is not possible, a variety of specialist schools are available from preschool age until 21 years. Some cater, for example, to those with a physical disability, and others to students with behavioral difficulties.

Report 3

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: Education at a Glance 2022

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: OECD-Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Year of publication: 2022

Executive Summary

The specific paper studies different aspects of Education in Belgium and compares the performance of the Educational System in Belgium with the average indicators in OECD. Subject areas analyzed include:

➲ The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

➲ Access to education, participation and progress

➲ Financial resources invested in education

➲ Teachers, the learning environment and the organization of schools

Focus on tertiary education and the years of the pandemic

Highlights

➲ The output of educational institutions and the impact of learning

Between 2000 and 2021, the share of 25-34 year olds with tertiary attainment has shown an increase of 15 p.p. (from 36% to 51%) in Belgium, although at a slower pace than that of OECD average. Belgium in one of the 14 OECD countries where at least half of 25-34 y.o. have a tertiary education. In Belgium 13% of young adults left school without an upper secondary qualification. In Belgium, like in all OECD countries, higher educational attainment is associated with better employment prospects and better wages. Moreover, labor market benefits of tertiary attainment have proved especially strong during economic crisis because of the pandemic.

There are big differences in educational attainment across subnational regions in Belgium. In 2021, the difference between the region with the highest share (Brussels, Capital Region) and that with the lowest share (Walloon Region) was 11 p.p. These variations not only reflect differences in education opportunities but also showcase economic conditions and internal migration patterns.

➲ Access to education, participation, and progress

Although compulsory education begins in age 6 and ends at age 18, at least 90% of population is enrolled for more years (usually from the age of 3). 56% of those graduating from general upper secondary education are women while men are overrepresented (52% of total) among graduates of vocational upper secondary programs.

➲ Financial resources invested in education

Belgium spends 5.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to educational institutions while the period 2008-2019 funding for educational institutions from all sources grew by 14%. Public spending on primary to tertiary education was 10.7% of total government expenditure. Belgium spends USD 10,024 on average per student each year while the country's cumulative expenditure on educating a student from the age of 6 to 15 is almost USD 130,000. Public funding dominates non-tertiary education and in Belgium private funding accounts for 3% (significantly lower than the average in OECD countries)

⟳ Teachers, the learning environment, and the organization of schools

In Belgium, actual salaries of school teachers average USD 58,799 at pre-primary level and USD 69,587 at upper secondary level int h Flemish Community and USD 56,152 at pre-primary level and USD 67,490 at upper secondary level in the French Community. In the Flemish Community between 2015-2021 real wages of teachers at lower secondary level largely stagnated while they declined by 1% in the French Community.

The average number of teaching hours per year required from a typical teacher in public educational institutions tends to decrease as the level of education increases. Based on official regulations or agreements, annual teaching hours in the Flemish Community of Belgium are 669 hours per year at pre-primary and primary level, 616 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 575 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes). In the French Community, the annual teaching time reaches 736 hours per year at pre-primary level, 680 hours at primary level, 621 hours at lower secondary level (general programmes) and 588 hours at upper secondary level (general programmes). Continuing professional development is compulsory for all teachers of general programs.

Report 4

General Information
Name/Title of the Report: Education Policy Outlook - Belgium
Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: OECD
Year of publication: 2017
Source / Reference: https://www.oecd.org/education/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Belgium.pdf
Executive Summary
The specific report presents the Belgium educational separated on the Flemish, the French and the German-speaking Community giving insights on the context, key issues

and goals, and policies. Moreover, it analyzes the equity and quality of the educational system and studies the way the system prepares students for the future. It also analyzes the way the country fosters better teaching and leadership as well as the way the system is evaluated and assessed so as to improve student outcomes. There is also a reference to the governance of the educational system and the funding of education in general.

Highlights

Belgium's educational context

Belgium is organized into a three-tier government that comprises the Federal State, the Regions (the Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels Capital Regions) and the Communities (the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities). Communities and Regions do not follow the same dividing lines; for instance, the Brussels Capital Region has a mixture of both Flemish and French Community schools, while the Walloon Region has French Community as well as German-speaking Community schools. Communities are primarily responsible for person-related matters, such as the delivery of education services, and each has its own autonomous education system. Around 5% of students in Belgium attend schools in the German-speaking Community, with the remainder of the school-aged student population divided between the Flemish Community (58% of students) and French Community (37% of students).

Students: Belgium performed above the OECD average in PISA 2015 in science, mathematics and reading, with performance variations among Communities. Overall average performance in mathematics decreased across PISA cycles, while average performance in science and reading remained unchanged. Belgium has some positive equity indicators, such as universal access to pre-primary education and a longer duration of compulsory education; although socio-economic background had an above-average impact on students' performance in PISA 2015, and performance gaps between migrant and non-migrant students remain high. While the population without an upper secondary qualification has decreased and is now below the EU average, disparities persist between the larger urban areas and the rest of the country.

Institutions: Teachers from pre-primary to lower secondary education follow on average three years of teacher education at bachelor's level, including a mandatory teaching practicum. In upper secondary education, a master's degree in addition to the teacher training certificate is the typical qualification requirement for most teachers in secondary general, vocational and art education. Teachers' working conditions in primary and secondary education include a teacher-student ratio below the OECD average and salaries which are above the OECD average overall, mainly driven by the salaries of the more highly qualified upper secondary teachers. However, disadvantaged schools appear to lack experienced teaching staff in some cases, and have a higher staff turnover.

System: Belgium has three autonomous education systems (for the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community), and the role of the federal government is limited to determining the duration and age range of compulsory education, establishing the minimum requirements for the delivery of recognized qualifications and setting general retirement regulations, which also affect teachers and educational staff. All schools in Belgium have freedom to develop their own curricula, assessments, and self-evaluations. Schools can be classified in three different funding/management categories: publicly funded education managed by the Community authorities, grant-aided education managed by other levels of public government (such as cities, municipalities, and provinces), and grant-aided private education. Schools that are not grant-aided (fully private) represent less than 1% of the school offer.

Key issues and goals:

Belgium, through its different Communities, faces the challenge of providing equitable learning opportunities in a context of disparities in performance, changing demography and increasing student diversity, especially in larger urban areas. Providing better career guidance to students, increasing flexibility among education pathways, and continuing to promote integration of students with special education needs in mainstream education settings can help to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. In schools, a challenge exists to increase the qualifications of teachers in the profession, particularly in disadvantaged schools. Also, in a context of the education system's high autonomy, Belgium has a diversity of assessment and evaluation measures which could benefit from increased coherence. Based on available evidence, the Flemish Community and the French Community will also need to deal with increasing complexity in allocating resources and optimising spending efficiency, particularly given recent demographic change and budget constraints.

Selected policy responses

The Flemish Community Government adopted the "M-decree" in 2013, to strengthen support and provision for special education needs in the mainstream education system, and to protect and activate the rights of children with special educational needs with regard to school choice. The French Community Government ran the Pact for Excellence in Teaching (Pacte pour un enseignement d'excellence), a collaborative multi-stakeholder initiative to strengthen quality in education, from 2015 to mid-2016. The pact defined key priorities and investment themes for the education system for a 15-year horizon, with investment and reforms from 2015 organized under its key aims.

In Belgium, the share of 25-34 year-olds with at least an upper secondary education is 83%, one percentage point below the OECD average (84%), although regional variations

are significant. About 43% of 25-34 year-olds have attained tertiary education overall in Belgium in 2015, close to the OECD average of 42%.

Report 5

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: Early School Leaving – Statistics, Policies and Good Practices in Collaborative Learning

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: University of Murcia

Year of publication: 2017

Source / Reference: https://cesie.org/media/Early-School-Leaving-Statistics-Policies-Good-Practices-in-Collaborative-Learning-Report_EN.pdf

Executive Summary

This report is a result of an in-depth research study for the project "CARMA-RMA and other non-formal learning methods for student motivation" carried out across 7 European countries, one of which is Belgium. The report includes statistics and policies regarding early school leaving, existing national frameworks for the assessment of teacher competences, benchmarks used and applied standards as well as a collection of good practices in collaborative learning in schools.

Highlights

Early school leaving (ESL) in Belgium is around 13%. However, there are big differences among regions within the country due to socio-economic conditions and equal opportunities in education. For example, the Flemish region presents an early school leaving of more than 15% while the Walloon region 7.2%. In all cases, the percentage of early school leaving is far more lower for females rather than males.

Socio-economic features are the predictors of ESL as they are connected to equal opportunities in education. Also, the ethnic background of the students plays an important role, but research demonstrates that the effect of ethnicity on ESL can be explained by the often unfavorable socio-economic background. Gender plays an important part; boys have a bigger chance of ESL than girls and the more years they have to start over again at school the higher the risk on ESL. The same counts for changing school or level of secondary. Next to some push-factors like boredom, wrong vocation, there are also some pull factors that lead students to ESL, e.g. the (alleged) attraction of the labour market.

As far as national actions are concerned to prevent Early School Leaving, Belgium has issued the following 3 actions:

➲ Actieplan Vroegtijdig Schoolverlaten (2014) (Action Plan Early School Leaving). Flanders, Belgium

Flemish government, The VDAB is the public employment service of Flanders, other organizations concerned with professional training for jobs (e.g. Syntra).

➲ Wallonian decree (2014). Wallonia Government.

Organizing various school Devices promoting welfare of young people at the school, school attachment, the prevention of violence in schools and support approaches to school guidance. 35 This decree applies to basic and secondary education institutions, and ordinary specialized, organized or subsidized by the French Community, as well as psychological, medical and social centers. The purpose of this Order is to promote, within the the institutions mentioned bellow:

● Well-being of young people in school.

● School setting, including dropout prevention truancy and exclusion.

● Prevention of violence in schools.

● Support for school counseling approaches.

➲ Measures to fight against school dropout in place by the Brussels Capital Region Public Service (2015). Brussels Capital Region.

This national action is developed by the Public services, in cooperation with schools, and with 18 municipalities in Brussels Capital region and a special cell Nota Bene in Brussels City. Note Bene provides:

● Support in the establishment or development of dropout prevention projects: design, research partners or stakeholders or subsidies, support to project progress.

● Awareness of animations on education, notably on the basis of a curriculum material on the school system, suitable for all age groups

● Expertise and information tools: list of schools, school legislation, factsheets, project inventories and actors.

● An inventory including an exhaustive list of resources and actors, a study of the problems and a compendium of best practices.

● Youth information sessions and professionals about the school system

Some of the projects already implemented for the same cause include:

➲ "Roma Plus" developed by the training center Foyer in Brussels.

The training center Foyer in Brussels focuses on the project Roma Plus mainly young Roma. Roma stewards accompany these disadvantaged young people in their search for work and training.

⊃ The association Odyssée focuses on adolescent school dropouts in Brussels.

The association Odyssée focuses on adolescent school dropouts in Brussels. In collaboration with 17 schools are young people after an individual analysis escorted to still get a diploma or certificate. After the roundtable with the youngster and his parents 36 are working intensively on motivation and self-esteem. But there is also scope for prevention through group workshops for young people and training for teachers and educators. The jury believes in the individual approach and the hatch prevention.

⊃ The association Perspectives from Flémalle has been working 30 years for low-skilled and / or long-term unemployed.

The association Perspectives from Flémalle has been working 30 years for low-skilled and / or long-term unemployed. The project stage "Digital techniques" allows 12 unskilled young people between 18 and 25 years old to put a show around light and sound. For nine months, the young people are taught in a non-school but fun and motivating way on mathematics, electricity and IT.

⊃ Project From chaos to zen. The association School Bridge. · The project Tutoring. Association La Teignouse.

The association School Bridge is the bridge between the school on the one hand, and socially vulnerable young people and their parents on the other side. The project From chaos to zen in class, they want to work together through an internal counseling with teachers, class groups and parents to prevent early school leaving. The jury believes in the individual analyzes of young people, the great parent involvement and prevention. Also, the formation of the teachers' contributes to the success of this project.

⊃ The project Tutoring. Association La Teignouse

The association La Teignouse offers include preventive assistance to youth and their families in their own environment through personal or group projects. The proposed project Tutoring to grow about coaching: young students learning from older, more experienced classmates. In private sessions, a mentor between 18 and 25 years tries to answer all possible questions of youngsters between 12 and 16 years old. This approach creates a win-win situation for both parties

Teacher Education institutions in Flanders are free to choose the way of how to assess the competences of teachers. There is no strict national policy on assessment of teacher in Teacher Education or when in service. Teachers are not assessed by national inspectors or any national actors. Schools do have to show a clear policy on how they evaluate the performance of the teachers during summative performance reviews and evaluations of their performance. The government just issued a competence profile that

TE institutions should pursue in their programmes. These competences are clustered in 10 Job specifications and attitudes. By decree, these have to be the object of assessments in Teacher Education programmes and of performance reviews and evaluations in schools.

Good Practice

"Co-operative Learning In Multicultural groups" (CLIM) is quite popular in Flemish primary schools. CUM projects are a didactic tool or set of strategies used for the enhancement of intercultural education. The projects are a means to promote equal participation in interaction and consequently allow equal access to learning.

Report 6

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: Refugee Education in Flanders (Belgium)

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: SIRIUS – Policy Network on Migrant Education

Year of publication: 2018

Source / Reference:

https://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Refugee-Education-in-Flanders-final.pdf

Executive Summary

This specific research report aims to map the integration process of newly arrived migrant children in Flemish education, as in the past decades Belgium has undergone several constitutional reforms dividing the power of the state. In the current federal state of Belgium, asylum procedures and immigration law are federal authorities, while integration and education policies are regulated by the three communities (Flemish, French and German-speaking). This report focuses on integration in Flemish education, and more specifically in Flemish secondary education.

Highlights

The number of newly arrived minor students (NAMS) in full time secondary reception education in Flanders is rising. At the end of the past school year (2015-2016), the amount of NAMS in reception education has increased by 62% compared to the previous school year (2014-2015) (AgODI, 2016). This is a strong rise, knowing that this

same amount decreased with almost -15% between 2011 and 2012 (AgODI, 2015). The recent drastic increase in asylum applicants will probably place more pressure on Belgium and other EU member states to develop strategies for effectively integrating newly arrived immigrants into society. Immigrant students often find themselves in a disadvantaged position compared to their native peers.

During the first months of their arrival in Belgium, refugee students mostly reside in reception centers spread over the country. In this phase, students are enrolled in a school nearby the center that offers reception education for foreign-speaking minor newcomers. Reception education was launched in the beginning of the 90's and aims at integrating newly arrived minors as fast as possible into mainstream education by mainly focusing on language acquisition. Schools appear to be dependent on themselves to find methods and ways to adequately teach and support refugee students. The vulnerable profiles of refugee minors in the recent influx increases the challenges in this task. There is no coordinating central approach. The government has only set out some basic conditions and rules on reception education. This raises concerns regarding reception education that is being organized rapidly nearby the shelters. Schools in rural areas or smaller cities often do not have experience with reception education and refugee students, whereas schools in large multicultural cities such as Antwerp do. These experienced schools for example argue that because of the many wide disparities between the levels of prior schooling and literacy among newcomers, it is important to work with ability grouping as well as to differentiate in class.

Next to their didactic function, schools that offer reception education pay attention to the social integration of newcomers both within and outside of school. Activities are organized to stimulate interaction between foreign newcomers and their fellow students in mainstream education as well as with native students outside of school. Despite some efforts to stimulate social integration outside of school and bridge the gap between foreign newcomers and natives, segregation is still persistent in Flanders. Refugee students find it difficult to build networks and start friendships outside of school. Newcomers (and other migrant students) and native students seem to be living in two separate worlds.

The recent refugee influx consists of many refugee minors dealing with trauma's and other socioemotional difficulties. Currently, there is a strong need for more resources to offer more psychological support and guidance to these vulnerable youngsters. In addition to possible traumatic experiences, refugee students often feel very stressed due to uncertainty about their asylum procedure. These psychological issues can have a significant impact on the educational performances and outcomes of refugee students.

Based on the fieldwork in this study, we can conclude that the main stakeholders involved in our study point out that the major challenge in the integration process of

refugee students in Flemish education system is the phase where they make the transition from reception to mainstream education. Generally, refugee students and other newcomers follow one year of reception education. Some schools offer so called 'transition classes' to bridge the gap between reception and 47 mainstream education. In these transition classes, (former) newcomers are prepared towards general or vocational study programs while maintaining a strong focus on language acquisition.

The obstacles that refugee students and other newcomers face when making the transition from reception to mainstream education can be attributed to two important factors. First, there is a lack of know-how in mainstream education on how to teach and support former newcomers with a language deficiency. There is a strong need for a general integrated language policy in mainstream classes which can benefit all students. An interesting initiative that has had positive effects is the deployment of language coaches in schools to train teachers in mainstream education how to combine specific course objectives with language objectives. The second important factor that hinders successful transition and educational performance in mainstream education is the lack of flexible trajectories and curricula in the Flemish education system. As statistics in the first section of this report proved, refugee students and other newcomers are strongly overrepresented in vocational education. Several interviewees testified that (former) newcomers often drop out of school or end up in vocational education even though they are more interested in, and/or academically capable of, following a study program in technical or general education

Report 7

General Information
Name/Title of the Report: The Schooling of Roma children in Belgium – The parents' voice
Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: -
Year of publication: -
Source / Reference:
https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/library/attachments/766_767_EN_original.pdf

Executive Summary
This report covers a study commissioned for the King Baudouin Foundation in 2007. It examines the views of Roma parents, originating from Central and Eastern Europe, regarding the schooling of their children in Belgium. The Roma were asked to give their views about their children's and their own schooling, the difficulties they face in life and

their vision of the world. Interviews were conducted with forty-five Roma, of various nationalities and representing almost all of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with the help of several Roma cultural mediators, all of the interlocutors making a significant contribution throughout the research.

Highlights

Roma see their children's schooling above all as the possibility for a better status that in turn leads to a better standard of living and a regular income. Having been extremely marginalized in the societies from which they have originated, the parents have mostly had negative experiences of school (segregation, stigmatization and violence) and express the wish, which might seem paradoxical, that their own children be treated with affection and enjoy greater attention from the teachers. Furthermore, as Roma cultural identity assigns greater importance to marriage than studies from the point of view of Roma social capital, Roma morality and co-education at school are frequently seen as incompatible. Finally, migration itself (often involving a journey across several countries) does not facilitate educational integration. The accounts given by the Roma parents, whilst illustrating their willingness to send their children to school, showed that, given the differing socio-cultural foundations, it is hardly possible for them to transform their children's schooling into a strategy for social success.

Conclusions to from the research:

➲ Institutionalized education is perceived as important in the provision of useful instruction, the content of which is very vague because of the lack of school experience and linguistic comprehension between Roma parents and Gadje managers (head teachers, teachers, social workers). According to the parents, the objective of schooling for Roma children is to provide access to remunerated work and progress (technical and technological, modern customs), as well as an apprenticeship in morality, respect and discipline.

➲ For many Roma, sending their children to school requires a considerable material investment, given their precarious economic situations. It is for this reason that they appreciate the hot meals and school trips that they are sometimes offered free of charge.

➲ School ruptures the logic of family childcare for young children and so nursery schools are rarely attended. As a more general rule, the parents, and especially the mothers, want to be certain that their children receive particular care at school: thus compliments and kisses, for instance, are interpreted as gestures of affection and count for a great deal in the parents' (mother's) positive evaluation of the school.

- Back in the country of origin, the parents' experience of school was under the shadow of the stigma of being "Gypsy". Such violence was not only experienced in the school environment, but across all social frameworks. Its imprint seems to have been transmitted in the family memory, not in the form of a structured story (as among the Jews) but in the form of distrust, distance and suspicion towards the Gadje institutions. The individual attention (and affection) that parents expect from the teaching staff and social workers with regard to their children is a symbolic compensation and at the same time a symptom of the traumas experienced.

- The school career of the parents and children is affected by the migratory journeys: several languages, different methods of teaching also mean difficulties of adaptation and a shattering of expectations, motivation and the whole school project.

- Social success, status and prestige (honor) only have a sense at the level of the Roma community. They are constructed on the axe of the family and are consolidated in marriage. Formal diplomas provided by schools do not count in this register, although a higher level of schooling is nevertheless well-regarded.

- Women have less education than the men, and the girls less than the boys and this difference is part of a system of gender inequality that is in no way specifically Roma. Masculine domination does not preclude an important autonomy among the women, which manifests itself, among other things, in the importance they attach to the couple, to the detriment of the extended family. Within the framework of the couple, women defend sharing the work of caring and the education of the children. We believe that communication between educational and social institutions on the one hand, and the parents on the other hand, would benefit if one took into account female preoccupation with the couple. In our opinion, schools should encourage the simultaneous presence of both parents in situations of dialogue.

Adult education also seems to be a prospect, a real avenue worth exploring, and which could be targeted in future projects of integration. From this point of view, the lessons given to the women in Sint-Niklaas are of great interest and we suggest that more detailed information regarding these should be collected and their efficacy tested in other fields

Report 8

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: Country fiche: Belgium, Position of civil society involved in the Roma Civil Monitor

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: ROMA Civil Monitor

Year of publication: -

Source / Reference:

https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3172/c3-belgium.pdf

Executive Summary

This report presents a SWOT analysis in substantive policy areas in Belgium. Sectors include education, employment, healthcare and housing. Moreover, the report includes SWOT analysis of horizontal measures taken for Anti-discrimination, for fighting antigypsyism and addressing specific needs of most vulnerable groups among ROMA. SWOT analysis is also developed for Structural Measures such as the stakeholder involvement at central level, civil participation and empowerment, mainstreaming of ROMA inclusion at local level, data collection and funding for civil society.

Highlights

The strengths and Weaknesses of Education in Belgium for ROMA inclusion:

STRENGTHS

- The Belgian education system includes several tools to support diversity in schools.

- In certain cities, Traveller children can attend language classes on-site several days a week.

- In Flanders, the NRIS mentioned additional funds for schools with a significant number of Travellers, in order for them to develop more tailor-made approaches to education. There does not seem to be details available on the use of these funds.

- For Wallonia, the NRIS planned on the deployment of Roma mediators. However, only one Roma mediator has been hired since.

WEAKNESSES

- Extreme poverty even homelessness that many Roma face has negative impact on school attendance.

- The educational system not adapted to mobile lifestyle is a reason for low school participation among Travellers.

Many Roma face school discrimination, with enrolment denials explained by their so-called "learning lag" or out of fear of "attracting too many disadvantaged children".

Section B: Revision of Case Studies

Education is undergoing a continuous transformation spurred by several major drivers: the need to minimize early school leaving of children from social exclusion groups and Romani children; to mitigate low performance of these children; to illustrate the skills and competences teachers and facilitators must acquire in order to better understand the needs of these children and help them develop and flourish within the educational system.

In the framework of PAL LAB project, each partner is invited to select 4 case studies that explore how schools in their countries are adopting specific tools, methods, techniques, and approaches in their pedagogical system and learning environment to help children form exclusion groups and Romani children stay in school and consider schools an interesting and useful place to be in. Moreover, case studies should reflect the skills and competences that teachers must have when working with these children and implementing the suggested practices and methods. In the following tables, 4 case studies from Belgium are being presented and analysed.

Case Study 1

General Information
Country: Belgium
Name of the school: Schools in Ghent whose student body consists of a significant percentage of socially disadvantaged students
Level(s) of education: Elementary schools
Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.): N/A
Description of the community in which the facility is located: The city and municipality of Ghent is located in Belgium's Flemish Region. It is the third-biggest city in the nation and the capital and major city of the province of East Flanders. Many immigrants and persons of foreign origin reside in Ghent. 15.3% of residents were not Belgian citizens, while 35.5% of residents had roots outside of Belgium. Most of the city's minority-dominated neighborhoods are located in the north, east, and west of the city, with notable exceptions in the south
Source of the case study (reference): Bridge Person Project (https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/a-tale-of-two-cities-bridging-families-and-schools)
Project information
The challenge addressed

The Bridge Person initiative seeks to solve the achievement gap for immigrants by fostering strong connections between educational institutions and families from low-income backgrounds.

The project developed

The bridge person acts as a link between families and the school, as the name suggests. Many bridge workers are of Turkish or North African descent; they can converse with immigrant families since they know Dutch, French, Turkish, Arabic, or one of the Berber languages in addition to their native tongues of North Africa and Turkey. Although some have a background in teaching, it is not necessary. Instead, candidates for the bridge program are chosen based on their interpersonal, organizational, and communication abilities as well as their prior experiences in the community. The majority of bridge workers have prior social work expertise. Three project coordinators provide them with initial coaching, and the city of Ghent's education counseling department provides them with additional training.

Way(s) of implementation

(1) Home visits. Most bridge volunteers aim to go to each new student's house. A visit can be requested by either a parent or a teacher. Parents can request a visit if they have concerns about their kid, and instructors can request a visit if they see that a student's parents seldom show up for parents' nights, where teachers and parents review each student's progress.

(2) Parent visits to the school. The weekly events known as "coffee-drinking moments" are typical school visits in Ghent. Parents (mainly moms) talk casually about interesting school-related subjects during these gatherings.

(3) Offering families basic social service assistance, such as assistance with form completion.

(4) Translation of documents

(5) Encouraging parents to participate in normal school activities, such as interacting with teachers while dropping off their children in the morning, going to parents' nights, and participating in different end-of-year events.

Activities aimed for teachers must be carried out by the bridge person as well. These include:

(1)   Strengthening teachers' attitudes about ethnic and socioeconomic diversity by educating them on the origins and effects of social disadvantage in education. Formal talks are organized by certain bridge members, guest speakers on various subjects are invited, and some bridge members prefer to meet with professors informally during the day.

(2)   Supplying data on pupils' living circumstances. A teacher can mistakenly assume that a student's parents are uninterested in their child's education if they do not show up for parents' nights. However, the bridge person might let the instructor know if their absence was caused by a financial or work-related issue.

(3)   Provide comments and guidance on instructional strategies, such as how to recognize and make use of students' linguistic variety in the classroom. Such critique is frequently welcomed by teachers, especially when it comes from more seasoned bridge members.

(4)   Translating at parent-organized school programs.

Results

A small-scale evaluation of the Bridge Person project's efficacy found that parents and teachers now trust one another more, parents are becoming more involved in their children's education, and teachers have a better understanding of underachievement and poverty. The Bridge Person project was first started as a short-term experiment. However, due to its resounding success, the regional government has opted to continue funding the initiative through 2014.

There are three reasons why the project was successful.

The bridge person's independence. The cost of the bridge worker's salary is covered by the local government; therefore they are not financially dependent on the school board. This ensures that a bridge person, although working closely with the school team, is capable of functioning independently. Such autonomy makes it easier for parents and schools to communicate further, particularly when parents and teachers are at odds.

The bridge person and families are matched based on ethnicity. For the bridge person roles, local candidates—that is, members of the immigrant communities—are given preference. When the parents are non-native Dutch speakers and the bridge person can serve as a translator, this connection is extremely crucial.

A determination to get past deficit thinking. Many interventions concentrate on the alleged deficiencies of the family, assuming that the reason low-income or immigrant parents are less active in their children's education is that they are unaware of or uninterested in the educational system. Making instructors aware of their own possible prejudices is one of the main duties of a bridge person so that they may comprehend the complicated reality that socially disadvantaged kids and their families must deal with.

Case Study 2

General Information

Country: Belgium

Name of the school: School Consultation Roma and Education (voluntary consultation platform)

Level(s) of education: Primary and secondary education

Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.): N/A

Description of the community in which the facility is located (village, town, small city, segregated / developed area, concentration of specific social groups, etc.): Schools around Belgium

Source of the case study (reference): Roma en Onderwijs: een verhaal apart? (https://www.mi-is.be/sites/default/files/documents/discussienota_roma_en_onderwijs_-_elias_hemelsoet.pdf

Project information

The challenge addressed

A volunteer dialogue forum called "School Consultation Roma and Education" was created by educational professionals who frequently engage with Roma students. Chance encounters between some of these individuals, who were dealing with issues and difficulties that were similar to their own and that they were not always able to solve, served as the catalyst for the project.

The project developed

The bottom-up process that emerged "from the bottom up" and was not institutionally motivated is what stands out about its genesis. This has drawbacks since the group's composition is arbitrary and other potentially interested parties' name recognition varies. The program bridges network borders (people from both the free and the urban education networks), educational levels (people from both primary and secondary education), and educational kinds (people from both primary and secondary education), which adds value (people from both mainstream and special education). In essence, it facilitates conversations between individuals who may not otherwise interact, and it does so through a problem-driven methodology that draws inspiration from comparable and shared real-world experiences.

Way(s) of implementation

The schools consultation meets roughly every two months and discusses policy objectives, policy formation (by invited outside experts), experience sharing (often based on real examples), and internal preparation for political action (e.g., in the past, initiative was taken to write to politicians regarding concrete problems or initiatives).

The main emphasis is not so much on educating the Roma community as it is on underlying issues including living situations, residency status, poverty, teen pregnancies, scholarships, and child support, among others.

Results

Although the initial starting point is always the concrete needs that arise in educational practice, the consultations have evolved over the past few years from an initiative in which concrete problems in practice were exchanged to a platform in which more and more thought is given to the underlying structure that contribute to the creation or maintenance of problems. The participants in the consultation form opinions on potential policy changes and declare their viewpoints in the public discourse as a result of their intense participation and broad range of combined experience. The schools consultations are combining to become a significant player in the development of policy initiatives as an independent consultative body that builds on experience from practice.

Case Study 3

General Information

Country: Belgium

Name of the school: University College Leuven-Limburg, Belgium

Level(s) of education: Primary and secondary education

Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.): N/A

Description of the community in which the facility is located (village, town, small city, segregated / developed area, concentration of specific social groups, etc.): Teachers in Flanders

Source of the case study (reference): Case study: Co-Teaching in Teacher Education (https://www.mie.ie/en/research/research_projects/empowering_inclusive_teachers_for_today_and_tomorrow_eittt_/eittt-case-study_co-teaching-in-teacher-education-ucll-%E2%80%93-belgium-.pdf)

Project information

The challenge addressed

Cochran-Smith and Zeichner pointed up a data gap between student teaching success and student learning outcomes in 2005. Due to the fact that both the practice and research of this method are still in their infancy, this is still the case with regard to the influence of co-teaching in student teaching. But the study results that are now available

are encouraging and highlight the potential benefit of such a system for training inclusive teachers.

The project developed & Way(s) of implementation

The goal of the UCLL teacher education program is to train students to become creative educators who always take into account the variety of their students. They strive high and impart knowledge on diversity, inclusion, and particularly co-teaching methodologies to their student teachers in early childhood, primary, and secondary education as well as their student teachers in the advanced bachelor's degree in special educational needs. The M-Decree is a first step in the process of expanding inclusive education in Flanders' educational system. Their goal is to get our future educators ready for this new world. Their teacher education department uses three ways to help student teachers get ready for the classroom:

1. Promoting co-teaching in school placements and internships. They look for chances for their student teachers to co-teach with classroom instructors in partner schools. Throughout their classes, they also serve as a co-teaching model.

2. Supporting teacher educators in their presentation of the Universal Design for Learning framework to their pupils (they are just beginning this process; the first step is to help them).

3. Educating teacher candidates and aspiring educators on the unique dynamics of poverty (both within their student body and among schoolchildren)'.

The project team learnt about each of these strategies while on the trip to UCLL. The team concentrated in particular on the approach of introducing co-teaching to aspiring teachers throughout teacher education as a way to support their growth as inclusive practitioners.

What is co-teaching: As equal partners sharing the responsibilities of a class, two instructors may create an effective learning environment for all students by:

1. Working together to prepare the lessons or activities, taking into consideration the unique educational requirements of the students in their class.

2. Completing the course or task as a group

3. Jointly assessing and improving the activity or lesson.

Results

The project team concentrated on the use of co-teaching to advance the learning of aspiring teachers and subsequently help students in classrooms. A more collaborative system of co-teaching that promotes a more equal relationship between the student teacher and classroom teacher is being implemented by this teacher preparation program in place of the more conventional method of school placement in which the mentor serves as the expert who provides feedback to the future teacher. It is thought

that student teachers would have more opportunities to learn if the power dynamics between them and their mentor / host teacher are more equal. Given that co-teaching dynamics are likely to be similar to those in classes taught by two experienced co-teachers, there is potential to learn much more about the opportunities offered by co-teaching and further integrate it into the curricula at UCLL and other teacher education institutions.

Case Study 4

General Information

Country: Belgium

Name of the school: Flemish schools

Level(s) of education: Primary education

Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.): N/A.

Description of the community in which the facility is located: One of the communities, regions, and linguistic regions of Belgium is Flanders, which is the northern part of the country where Flemish is spoken. Despite not being the largest region in Belgium, Flanders has the highest population when Brussels is taken into account. Only 8% of people who live in Brussels identify as Flemish; the remainder are either non-Belgian or speak French

Source of the case study (reference): https://carma-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Early-School-Leaving-Statistics-Policies-Good-Practices-in-Collaborative-Learning-Report_EN.pdf;
https://sagiter.eu/files/bf_fichierjoint_CLIM_Video_Method.pdf

Project information

The challenge addressed

Enhancement of intercultural education. The projects are a way to encourage equal contact and, as a result, give everyone access to learning.

The project developed & Way(s) of implementation

In Flemish elementary classrooms, "Cooperative Learning In Multicultural (CLIM)" is popular. CUM projects are a methodological tool or a collection of tactics used to improve intercultural education. The projects are a way to encourage equal contact and, as a result, give everyone access to learning. This small classroom study that combines

quantitative and qualitative methods addresses some of CLIM's fundamental presumptions about how students connect socially and academically. We'll start by introducing CUM, its theoretical underpinnings, and its educational approaches. The primary findings of the quantitative analysis are then discussed, followed by the research questions and design. The findings of the qualitative analyses of the students' participation in social and academic activities are next reported. Finally, the subject of teaching is covered. They have identified the following phases among the various CLIM tasks:

1. The introductory task: This is compressed; the teacher's goals are to define the ideas or concepts that need to be learned, form the groups, assign the roles, explain how each student participates in the process, explain any role rotations or group reconstructions, and, finally, distribute information about the tasks that need to be completed.

2. Expression of the students' perspectives on the idea or concept they are learning can be broken down into two stages: (1) an individual expression by the student using an impromptu tool (word list, drawing, diagram, Q-sort, photo-language, etc.), (2) a discussion on the various impressions within each group, followed by an argument or debate. This assignment aims to foster a basic level of reflection on the idea or concept that has to be learned and to increase the student's motivation.

3. Individual reading of the numerous supplementary materials that the teacher has suggested, each of which offers a different perspective on the concept or idea. If the resources' nature and place of origin vary from group to group, they ought to be unique for each learner. Accordingly, the instructor must prepare 4 to 5 resource files that highlight particular abilities, modes of reasoning, or activities in relation to the concept or idea that needs to be learned (depending on the number of students in each group).

4. Cross-referencing pupils who shared the same resources. This exercise should improve understanding.

5. Returning to the group (or forming new ones while making sure all the resources are present in each group) and having the students share the major ideas from each document with one another.

6. Using the skills learned in earlier activities as well as information based on experience and beliefs (in relation to the concept or idea that the students may provide), a situation-problem is resolved. Each problem-situation varies from one group to another.

7. Presentation of the findings from the issue situations in a plenary session. The teacher can inspire the pupils to come up with their own unique presentation strategies (theatre, role playing, etc.).

8. A judgment from the teacher. The main ideas of the concept or thought are reviewed, any unanswered concerns are addressed, the challenges experienced during group

work sessions are highlighted, and the behavioral components of collaboration are discussed (what works and what doesn't).

Results

(1) It promotes teamwork while taking into account the diverse personalities and skills of the students. (2) After gaining the required information and abilities in a group setting, each participant is handed responsibility for their portion of the work.

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS

Belgium's education system is actively addressing inclusivity and equality challenges, particularly for immigrants and disadvantaged groups. Through innovative approaches like the Bridge Person project, the system is fostering enhanced trust and cooperation between educational institutions and families. These initiatives are characterized by independent operation, cultural competence, and a shift away from deficit thinking, all contributing to a more equitable educational landscape.

1. Bridge Person Initiative:

- Bridge person's financial independence ensured by the local government's funding

- Operating autonomously and facilitating more open communication

- Importance of effectively mediating between parents and schools even in instances of disagreement.

2. School Consultation Roma and Education:

- The platform evolved from addressing immediate, practical educational issues to a more comprehensive examination of the systemic structures contributing to these challenges, signaling a deeper understanding of pervasive issues.

- The diverse experiences of the participants are now shaping policy discussions, with the group providing informed opinions on potential educational reforms, marking its influence on educational policies.

- The consultation has grown into an influential body in educational policy, its recommendations and insights based on real-world experiences adding significant value to policy formulation.

3. Co-Teaching at University College Leuven-Limburg:

- The use of co-teaching significantly enhanced the educational experience for aspiring teachers, who, in turn, positively impacted their students' learning, showing the method's effectiveness.

- A more equitable dynamic between student teachers and classroom teachers, moving away from a hierarchical mentor-mentee relationship to a partnership, enhances the learning experience.

- The successful integration of co-teaching has highlighted its potential, suggesting it could be beneficial if adopted more widely in teacher education curricula.

4. Teamwork in Flemish Schools:

- The approach successfully promoted teamwork among students, accommodating diverse personalities and skill sets, thus indicating a more inclusive and effective method of group-based learning.

- Following collaborative learning sessions, students were entrusted with individual responsibilities, reinforcing accountability, and personal growth within a collective learning framework.