



ERASMUS+ - Strategic Partnership in Adult Education 2016-2018

Understanding Europe

A guide to Belgian citizenship (English version)

INTRODUCTION

"ERASMUS+ - Understanding Europe 2016-2018" (2016-1-AT01-KA204-016702) is a European strategic partnership based on the idea that education plays a key role in the current immigration to Europe.

Since the ideas, hopes, opinions and the knowledge concerning Europe differ widely among refugees and migrants, "Understanding Europe" approaches information deficits, sets educational processes in motion and produces -in addition to learning the local language- a comprehensive learning module with two parts:

- "Understanding Europe - A guide to European Citizenship" and
- "Understanding Germany / Austria / Poland / Romania / Bulgaria / Belgium - A guide to German / Austrian / Bulgarian / Polish / Romanian, Belgian citizenship".

The project aim is based on the idea that only well-informed people can make a sound decision about how they want to settle in in Europe and create their future. The consortium of "Understanding Europe" also endeavors to support the refugees and migrants in this complex integration process.

At hand, you find the module part "A guide to Belgian citizenship" (English version).

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Curriculum Module No. 1.1 – Understanding Europe – Belgian History

The Kingdom of Belgium is a constitutional parliamentary monarchy. At the time of its creation in 1830, it was a unified state. Separation of powers is the principle on which the Constitution is built: there is the legislative power (the King, the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate), the executive power (the King and the Government) and the judicial power.

The government exercises executive power. Federal legislative power is vested in both the government and the two chambers of parliament, the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. The Belgian federation consists of language-based communities and territorial regions.

Since around the seventies, the relevant national Belgian political parties have split into distinct representations for each communities' interests (besides standing for their respective ideologies). The political parties belong to three main political families, which are basically close to the centre: the right-wing Liberals, the social conservative Christian Democrats and left-wing Socialists. Newer important parties are the Green parties and, mainly in the Flemish part, the nationalist and far-right parties. Majority rule is often pushed aside by a de facto confederal decision-making process in which the (French-speaking) minority enjoys important protections through specialty majorities (2/3 overall and majority in each of the 2 main communities).

The Constitution of Belgium (established on February 7th in 1831) is the primary source of law. It is the basis of the political system and it underwent changes several times. The most important reforms were put in action in the years 1970 and 1993.

In 1970, the Government declared, "the unitary state, its structure and functioning as laid down by law, had become obsolete". This was the response to a growing and escalating civil conflict between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities in the capital, Brussels. The new constitution recognised the existence of strong communitarian and regional differences within Belgium. It also endeavoured to reconcile those differences through a diffusion of power to the communities and the regions.

In the second half of the 19th century, a surfacing language conflict had a strong impact on the Belgian reality. The request was to recognize the Dutch language as an adequate language alongside French (which had been the only official language).

- In 1930, the Ghent University became the first official Dutch-language University. From 1936, most lectures at the University of Leuven were taught both in Dutch and in French.
- Dutch only became an official legal language in 1959.
- In 1960, the unified broadcasting institution was split up language-wise.
- In 1962 the ministerial portfolio for Culture was divided, in 1968 that of National Education (predecessor of Education and Training).
- In 1962, the language boundary was territorially defined and in 1963 Belgium was divided into four language areas.

In 1962, a linguistic boundary was defined between the Dutch-speaking North and the French-speaking South. The bilingualism of Brussels and its 18 surrounding municipalities was formally acknowledged. A German-speaking area was defined in the eastern part of the country. In addition, a Walloon movement demanded political and economic control over the industrial redeployment of Wallonia. In response to that, five constitutional amendments, introduced in 1970, 1980, 1988, 1993 and 2001, gradually changed the political structures that led Belgium to become a federal state.

“Language issues”

In the 19th and early 20th century, the Flemish people did not have the same rights as French-speakers, de facto and de jure. When the country was founded in 1830, only around 1% of the adult population could vote: nobility, haute-bourgeoisie and higher clerics - which were all French speaking. A Flemish movement fought peacefully to gain equal rights. Minor issues exist also between German- and French-speakers.

“Language issues” play an important role in the Belgian history. In the 3rd century AD, Germanic Franks migrated into what is now Belgium. The less populated northern areas became Germanic, while in the southern part, where the Roman presence had been much stronger, Latin persisted despite the migrations of the Franks. This linguistic frontier is more or less valid until today.



The Industrial Revolution (late 18th and the 19th century) further accentuated the North-South division. Francophone Wallonia became an early industrial boom area. Dutch-speaking Flanders remained agricultural, outdistanced economically and politically by Wallonia and Brussels. The elite during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century spoke French. Particularly after the Second World War, Flanders saw an economic flowering - Wallonia became economically stagnant. Flemish people became more educated and better off. As consequence, they sought a fair and equal share of political power, leading to tensions between the two communities.

Linguistic demonstrations in the early 1960s led in 1962 to the establishment of a formal linguistic border and rules were established to protect minorities in linguistically mixed border areas. The Constitution was amended in 1970. Flemish and francophone cultural councils were established with authority in matters relating to language and culture for the two language groups. However, the 1970 constitutional revision did not finally settle the problem.

A controversial amendment declared that Belgium consists of three cultural communities (the Flemish Community, the French(-speaking) Community and the German-speaking Community) and three economic regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels) each to be granted a significant measure of political autonomy. In August 1980, the Belgian Parliament passed a devolution bill and amended the Constitution, establishing:

- A Flemish community legislative assembly (council) and Flemish government;
- A Francophone community legislative council and government competent for cultural, language, and educational matters; and
- Walloon and Flemish regional legislative assemblies and governments competent for regional economic matters.

Immediately, the Flemish part had its regional legislative council and government transfer its competencies to the community legislative council and government.

Since 1984, the German language community of Belgium has had its own legislative assembly and executive, in charge for cultural, language, and educational affairs.

In 1988-89, the Constitution was again amended to give additional responsibilities to the regions and communities. The most impacting change was to devolve nearly all responsibilities for educational matters to the communities. In addition, the regions and communities were provided additional revenue. Brussels got its own legislative assembly and executive.

Another important constitutional reform took place in the summer of 1993. It formally changed Belgium from a unitary to a federal state. It also (modestly) reformed the bicameral parliamentary system and provided for the direct election of the members of the community and regional legislative councils. The bilingual Brabant province was split, whereas in the Brussels-Capital Region most of the elsewhere provincial powers are exercised by the region and the responsibilities of an elsewhere provincial governor towards the federal level, by the Governor of Brussels-Capital. However, the electoral and judicial districts of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde were not split.

The matter is not completely settled and there is still a lot of political tension between French-speakers and Dutch-speakers (and, to a minor degree, between French-speakers and German-speakers).

At the end of the 20th century, it became clear that the main opposition between Flemings and Walloons was not primarily linguistic anymore, but had shifted to major political and demographic differences. Flemish parties appear much more 'Anglo-Saxon' in policy choices, moving away from 'big state' philosophies. French-speaking parties, including their 'right-wing' parties, tend to favour big government and state support for the poor.

Belgium was one of the group of six countries, which, in the early 1950s, established the European Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris, 18 April 1951). It is based on this first action that today's European Union was subsequently created.

Political and economic situation

In Belgium, like all European countries, the importance of the industrial sector has been pushed aside over the past thirty years or be replaced by the service sector.



During the second half of the 1990s, Belgium progressively recovered from a structural adjustment crisis (weak growth, high unemployment, budgetary deficit). The recession reached a peak during the course of the first semester of 1993.

Measures were introduced to create employment, stabilise the national debt and balance social security expenditure.

According to the 2010 report of the Council of Regency of the National Bank of Belgium, Belgium has weathered the recession quite well: "In 2010, it is estimated that Belgium's GDP grew by 2%, regaining its 2007 level, while the euro area's GDP remained 2% below that year's figure. Following a recession, which was less severe than for the euro area, thanks in particular to the moderate private sector debt and the operation of the automatic stabilizers, Belgium enjoyed a slightly stronger recovery. The rebound in foreign demand, which Belgian exporters were able to exploit, provided the initial impetus. Private consumption then took over, despite the virtual stagnation of the real disposable income of households" (2011, pp. 19-20)".

The harmonised unemployment rate stabilised at around 8.4%.

The moves to reduce the country's traditionally very high level of indebtedness (as much as 134.1% of GDP in 1993), could not be prolonged: the level of public indebtedness, which had already risen from 84.2 to 89.8% of GDP in 2008, reached 97.8% in 2009 and 97.5% in 2010. The deficit reached 4.6% of GDP in 2010.

Curriculum Module No. 1.1 – Understanding Europe – HISTORY						
Steps	Content	Objectives	Method/Tools	Learning Outcomes	Required time	Annexes
Belgian History						
1	Milestones in Belgian history and its way to a constitutional parliamentary monarchy	Historical and political orientation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Teacher/trainer input on history • Step 2: Preparing visits to social / cultural institutions, which are dealing with history • Step 3: post processing the visits in the classroom 	common understanding of the societal structure and its functioning in Europe; understanding the underlying principles and values	Has to be tailored to the school type.	
2	The language conflict(s) as a defining element in the political and social development(s).	Historical and political orientation and a depended understanding of how the historic conflict still heavily impact on modern society		common understanding of the societal structure and its functioning in Europe; understanding the underlying principles and values; showing how historical conflicts on language, religion etc. have led to a constitutional parliamentary monarchy and which role the representation of civil society participation plays	Has to be tailored to the school type.	Pool / link list of organisations, institutions etc. to visit

Curriculum Module No. 1.1– “Understanding Europe” – Belgian History

Aims: to provide the teachers with relevant and adequate material concerning the topic(s); to enrich the trainer’s competencies with (new) effective techniques and ideas to teach history a comprehensive manner for diverse groups (in another language!).

Content: The teachers work based on a set of input variables, which allows them to choose between “input”, “group work” and “group discussion”.

- Milestones in Belgian history and its way to a constitutional parliamentary monarchy;
- The language conflict(s) as a one defining element in the political and social development(s).

Content Item:

The main content item is to give an overview on recent Belgian history and its main features like democracy and rule of law. An overview on history should give orientation in the host country, but also familiarise the learners with the main democratic and participatory features of the country and the self-concept and identity of the Belgian citizens. As Belgian identity is a very complex subject, it might be very useful to connect history to examples of everyday life (e.g. like objectives in education, family life).

- Historical and political orientation (the way to the recent constitutional parliamentary democracy).
- Historical and political orientation and a depended understanding of how the historic conflict still heavily affect modern society and in which way the social welfare state is shaped.

The teacher/ trainer will get content and tools to teach the way how Belgium became a constitutional parliamentary democracy and how e.g. the “language issues” (still) play an important role in modern society. The inbuilt “study visits” will give insides to various other important historic landmarks, which influenced society (like colonialism, EU (Brussels!), EU and nationalism, CPAS – OCMW for public welfare matters etc.).

Methods:

In Belgium and specifically in Brussels, many organisations and institutions deal with Belgian history in an elaborated and critical manner, providing various approaches for different target groups. Many organisation have been founded by Belgians with migration backgrounds.

The teachers should focus to deliver the above content in the following way:

- *Step 1:* Teacher/trainer gives input on history.
- *Step 2:* Preparing visits to social / cultural institutions, which are dealing with history:
In Belgium and specifically in Brussels, many organisations and institutions deal with Belgian history in an elaborated and critical manner, providing various approaches for different target groups. Often Belgians with various migration backgrounds have founded those organisations.
Preparation in the classroom:
On a map the learners show where they come from. They are encouraged to speak about their backgrounds, origin etc. and what brought them to Belgium.

In a second step, the learners are encouraged to find similarities in the Belgian history or specific aspects, which are important to them.

From these interests a decision is made, which museum or organisation to visit (prepared visit in collaboration with the staff).

The learners bring story / memory / object they would like to share in the framework of the visit (prepared visit in collaboration with the staff).

Step 3: post processing the visits in the classroom: Exhibition / input and stories / memories / objects are brought together.

Learning outcome:

The pupils will get an overview on Belgium history, with the emphasis on historical development, which led to democracy, rule of law etc. Moreover, they are encouraged to see history as a key to understanding the country they are living in. This can enable to relate better to intercultural challenges on the way of integrating into a new society.

The visits and the “teaming up” with partners (organisations, NGO’s, museums, institutions etc.) outside the school has the advantages of breaking certain front desk lesson routines and gives access to first hand expertise to the topic. It will/can also create a very strong sense of ownership for the migrants, as history is handled in a reflexive and maybe even controversial, participatory setting.

E.g., visiting NGO that work with the topic of colonialism can provide educational modules, but more often also show the means of political participation and the role of the civil society. Visiting the social welfare centres (CPAS-OMCW) can lead to a better understanding of the European social welfare state.

The topics of the visits could/should be tailored to the composition of the migrant pupil group.

Time: Depends on the school curriculum.

Tips for the trainer, if necessary: working with “outside” organisations/institutions/initiatives etc. will most of the time require a permission by the school

Literature/references / Use of IT: Royal Museum for Central Africa / <http://www.africamuseum.be/home> – a comprehensive list of local institutions, originations and initiatives can be put together

Curriculum Module No. 1.2 – Understanding Europe – Institutions in Belgium

The Kingdom of Belgium, a **constitutional parliamentary monarchy**, was a united State at the time of its creation in 1830. The Constitution honors the principle of the separation of powers: the legislative power (consisting of the King, the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate), the executive power (consisting of the King and the Government) and the judicial power.

In the constitutional monarchy, the King acts only in consultation with government ministers. The King also represents Belgium abroad.

The federal state of Belgium consists of **three Communities** (the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community) and **three regions** (the Brussels-Capital Region, the Flemish Region and the Walloon Region).

The four language areas are the Dutch language area, the French language area, the German language area (with specific language facilities for French-speakers) and the Bilingual Brussels-Capital area.

All these entities have geographical boundaries. The language areas have no offices or powers and exist as geographical circumscriptions. The institutional communities are thus equally geographically determined. Belgian Communities do not officially refer directly to groups of people but rather to specific political, linguistic and cultural competencies of the country. There is *no sub-nationality* in Belgium.

All Communities have therefor a precise and legally established area where they can exercise their competencies:

- the Flemish Community has legal authority (for its Community competencies) within the Dutch language area and bilingual Brussels-Capital language area;
- the French-speaking Community has powers only within the French language area of the Walloon Region and in the Brussels-Capital Region, and
- the German Community in the German language area, which is a small part of the province of Liège in the Walloon region, and borders Germany.

The Belgian political system and its institutions are multi-layered and quite complex. In order to get a general understanding, please find an overview on the political system and its institutions:

Level	Legislative			Executive			Judicative
European Union							
EU	European Parliament Council of the EU			European Commission European Council			Court of Justice of the EU
Belgium							
Federation	King						
	Federal Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber of Representatives Senate 			Federal Government			Constitutional Court Court of Cassation Council of State
Communities	Parliament of the German-speaking community	Flemish parliament	Parliament of the French-speaking community	Government of the German-speaking community	Flemish government	Government of the French-speaking community	
Regions	No institutions	Flemish Parliament	Parliament of Wallonia	No institutions	Flemish government	Government of the French-speaking community	
		Parliament of Brussels-Capital Region			Government of the Brussels-Capital Region		
Province	No institutions			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial Council Permanent Deputation Province Gouverneur 			
Community / Municipality	No institutions			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Council Mayer und Jury College 			

The **federal government** and the **federal parliament** are the main federal institutions. The Communities and Regions also have their own legislative and executive bodies. The principal powers of the three Communities in Belgium, which are marked-off on linguistic grounds, relate to education, culture, youth support and certain aspects of health policy.

The three Regions have powers for territorial issues (e.g. public works, agriculture, employment, town and country planning and the environment).

Federal Government

The executive power is held by the Prime Minister and the ministers, who together form the Council of Ministers, and by the secretaries of state, each of whom is deputy to a minister and is part of the federal Government, but does not sit in the Council of Ministers.

The total number of Ministers (excl. the Prime Minister) must not exceed 15. The number of Dutch- and French-speaking ministers must be equal, with the possible exception of the Prime Minister. Ministers head executive departments of the government. The Prime Minister and his ministers administer the government and the various public services and the ministers must defend their policies and performance in person before the Chamber.

Regional and community governments

The regional and community parliaments and governments have jurisdiction over transportation, public works, water policy, cultural matters, education, public health, environment, housing, zoning, and economic and industrial policy. They rely on a system of revenue sharing for funds. They have the authority to levy a very few taxes (mostly surcharges) and to contract loans. Moreover, they have obtained exclusive treaty-making power for those issues coming under their respective jurisdictions. Of total public spending, more than 30% is authorized by the regions and communities (although their financing comes for over 80% from national Belgian budgets); at the same time, the national government controls 100% of social security, and strictly limits the taxation policy by the federalized entities. As a result, Belgian institutions still control over 90% of the effective, global taxation levels on individuals and companies. The federal government exercises all competences not explicitly dedicated to the lesser levels.

Provincial and local government

Flanders and Wallonia are subdivided into five provinces each. The Brussels-Capital Region exists of 19 municipalities. In total, Belgium counts 589 municipalities. Provincial and local government is an exclusive competency of the regions.

In the Brussels region, there is another form of intermediate government, constituted by institutions from each of the two competent communities. Those institutions (COCOF for the French-speakers and VGC for the Flemings) have similar competencies (only COCOF has legislative powers). For Brussels, there is a Common Community Commission.

Legislative

Legislative powers in Belgium are divided between the national, the regional and the community levels. The Belgian Federal Parliament consists of the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. The Chamber has 150 members; the Senate has 60. All 150 representatives are elected directly via a system of proportional representation. The Senate consists of 50 senators elected by the parliaments of the communities and regions, and 10 senators co-opted by the others.

Since the Constitutional reforms of 1993 and 2013, the two Houses of Parliament do not sit on a level of parity: other than, in cases regarding the constitutional, institutional or federal structure or international relation, the consent of the Senate either is not required or can be dispensed of by the House. The Chamber of Representatives is also the only house that votes the confidence to the Government. Each of the five components of the federal system (Flemish Community, French Community, German-speaking Community, Walloon Region and Brussels-Capital Region) have their own, directly elected unicameral council or parliament. They vote decrees (Brussels: ordinances), that have the same value and are on the same juridical level as the federal laws.

Judiciary

The judicial system is based on civil law and originates from the Napoleonic code. It has a judicial review of legislative acts. The Court of Appeals is one level below the Court of Cassation. The Court of Cassation is the most important court in Belgium.

The federal institutions

The Constitution provides for separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. The King and the Federal Parliament, which consists of a Chamber of Representatives and a Senate, exercise legislative power. The King and the government, which is composed of ministers and secretaries of state, exercise executive power. The King

appoints and dismisses ministers, but has no political responsibility. His acts are inoperative unless countersigned by a minister who assumes responsibility for the said act. The law courts exercise judicial power.

The Chamber and the Senate are both composed of a French-speaking group and a Dutch-speaking group.

The special province of the Chamber of Representatives is political control. The Chamber also has sole responsibility for budgetary matters. The Chamber alone formulates the finance bill and votes the budget.

The Senate is composed of 71 senators (40 elected directly, 21 designated by the Parliaments of the Communities, and 10 co-opted) plus the senators by constitutional right, of whom there are currently three. As a rule, bills passed by the Chamber of Representatives pass through the Senate, which may amend them. Nevertheless, since the latest reforms, the primary role of the Senate is increasingly shifting to that of a 'chamber of reflection' handing down rulings on major societal debates, as well as that of a 'chamber of representation' of the federated entities at the national level.

The federal government is the main executive body and administers the State's current affairs, foreign policy, national defense, judicial matters, financial matters, social affairs, etc.

Community and regional institutions

In Belgium, the Communities and Regions are political institutions vested with legislative power exercised by an elected assembly, the Council, and executive power exercised by a government. Prescriptive acts on a community and regional level take the form of decrees that have force of law. Their scope is equivalent to national laws.

The Council of the Walloon Region and the Council of the French Community are separate entities. As regards the Brussels-Capital Region, its internal structures are suited to its role as a dual community and bilingual entity.

Alongside the Flemish Council, there are a Council of the French Community, a Council of the German-Speaking Community, a Council of the Walloon Region, and a Council of the Brussels-Capital Region.

A Court of Arbitration organises the prevention and resolution of conflicts between the laws and decrees issued by the various Councils. It hands down rulings on jurisdictional conflicts and on any law or decree, which violates the articles of the

Constitution. Matters may be referred to it by any authority designated by law, by any jurisdiction, and – on a prejudicial basis – by any citizen.

The Walloon Region has competence in particular for scientific policy, training and employment.

The French Community has competence in particular for cultural affairs and the use of languages, as well as education, childhood, youth, and research. The Government of the French Community has three ministers directly concerned by childcare and education: a Minister for Education and Early Childhood, a Minister for Higher Education, Media and Scientific Research and a Minister for Social Advancement, Youth, Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities. A fourth minister is responsible for the budget, civil service and administrative simplification for the French Community and a fifth minister for training (among other areas) for the Walloon Region.

The provinces and municipalities

Belgium has 10 provinces and 589 municipalities. Each municipality is part of a region. The 19 municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region are officially bilingual. On the periphery of the Brussels-Capital Region, there are several municipalities which are Dutch-speaking, but which offer 'administrative conveniences' for French-speaking inhabitants, who in some cases are in the majority.

Each municipality has a legislative assembly, the Municipal Council, whose members are elected for a term of 6 years. They also have an executive arm, the College of the burgomaster (chief magistrate) and council members, which is responsible for the administration of the municipality. Within the College, chaired by the burgomaster, one of the council members is usually assigned special responsibility for education.

A governor heads each of the ten provinces. The Provincial Council, whose members are elected for a term of six years, exercises legislative power. Executive power is in the hands of a Standing Deputation elected from the members of the Provincial Council. One of the standing deputies is responsible for education.

Since the federalization of the State, provincial responsibilities are being progressively transferred on one side to the Communities and Regions and on the other side to the Municipalities.

Curriculum Module No. 1.2 – Understanding Europe						
Steps	Content	Objectives	Method/Tools	Learning Outcomes	Required time	Annexes
Belgian Institutions						
1	The main content of this chapter are the Belgian institutions.	An overview on the institutions should give orientation in the host country, but also familiarise the learners with the main democratic and participatory features of the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input phase • Group work phase with (model) work sheets: pupils work on topics like law, employment, migration, education questions and topics 	<p>solid and comprehensive overviews on the various horizontal and vertical levels of Belgian institutions;</p> <p>common understanding of the structures and its functioning in Europe; understanding the underlying principles and values and its relevance for different system (judicial, societal, educational)</p>	Has to be tailored to the school type.	Models for work sheets. Link list to Belgian institutions.

Curriculum Module No. 1.2 – “Understanding Europe” – Belgian Institutions

Aims: to provide the teachers with relevant and adequate material concerning the topic(s); to enrich the trainer’s competencies with (new) effective techniques and ideas to teach history a comprehensive manner for diverse groups (in another language!).

Content:

Teaching the multi-layered and complex Belgian political system and its institutions and systems.
The teachers work based on a set of input variables, which allows them to choose between “input”, “group work” and “group discussion”.

Content Item:

The main content of this chapter is the description of the various institutional levels in Belgian, which are very complex and additionally divided / shaped by linguistic issues.
The overview on the institutions should give orientation in the host country, but also familiarise the learners with the main democratic and participatory features of the country.

Methods:

Input phase:

The teacher should work as much as possible with overviews and graphs, as the Belgian system is quite comprehensive. At the end of each institutional level the teacher should have a variety of “real live praxis” example ready, showcasing specific aspect of the institutions, e.g. rule of law, election etc. This allows the teacher, to react / respond to questions of the group.

Group work phase:

The teacher distributes a table (*see example/table below!*) with given parameters. The learners are divided into up to four groups. The table provided asks a question e.g. about law, employment, migration, education question. The learners fill in the table concerning the different institutional levels. The each have a table, but they work together in a group. The teacher can decide beforehand, if additional material has to be distributed (also depending on the language level of the learners).

This kind of table graph allow a large variety to deal with the topic “institutions” and helps to visualize and personalize the issues for almost all situations.

The trainer should relate to the language ability and to the “feel” in the group. Sometimes it is advisable to give and pre-formulate the questions, in order to get the discussion going. Depending on the interest and fields, supplementary information can be provided. Very important is to encourage a personalized approach to the topic (like “trust in institutions” etc.).

Learning outcome:

The institutions reflect the fundamental (political) rules of life in Belgium, but are also a strong reflection on Belgian identity or its struggle for it. The teaching of the content should include solid and comprehensive overviews on the various horizontal and vertical level of Belgian institutions, but also point out what it means / could mean to be living in Belgium (from a native / foreigner point of view).

Time: Depends on the school curriculum.

Tips for the trainer, if necessary: The Belgian political system and its institutions are multi-layered and quite complex. It might be a good idea, to demonstrate the various institutions - after introducing the overall system- in a second go with the example of the city the migrant course is taking place. This will repeat the information on the overall system, but also show the great complexity in detail, which impacts on life in different Belgian cities/regions etc.

Literature/references / Use of IT:

Link list to Belgian institutions (can also be done as homework by the pupils).

Preparation of model for work sheets to be used in class (see example below).

E.g. pool for material on “drop box” (depends also on the IT policy of the school).

For the Belgian educational system, the teacher can e.g. rely on Eurydice: Eurydice is a network whose task is to explain how education systems are organised in Europe and how they work. For Belgium:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Countries>

Methods:

Example for work sheet:

Education in Belgium				
Level: Federation / Community / Regional etc.				
Situation / Questions (the questions should be given by the teacher – but, if there is an interest, questions can also be formulated by the learners) e.g.:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like to follow a vocational training – on community level • 				
	Which institution is in charge?	Are there conflicting issues due to my status?	...	How can I cope personally with the situation?
What kind of VT is available?				
Where can I get information?				
Who will make the final decision?				
Are my skills recognized				

Curriculum Module No. 1.3 – Understanding Europe – Democracy, participation, citizenship in Belgium

Political parties in Belgium

The federal state of Belgium has a multi-party political system, comprising a left-right dimension, a Catholic and anticlerical dimension and a regional/linguistic dimension.

Notably there are no relevant parties existing / acting on a national “Belgian” level. That leads to the general situation of having to collaborate in the form of coalition governments. No party family has a realistic chance of winning enough seats to govern alone, let alone win an outright majority.

Mainly all political parties in Belgium are organized along linguistic groups (Dutch / French / German, see chapter 1.1), with each group in Flanders having a counterpart in Wallonia.

From founding the Belgian state in 1830 and throughout most of the 19th century, the Catholic Party (Church-oriented and conservative) and the Liberal Party (anti-clerical and progressive) dominated politics in Belgium. In the late 19th century, the Labour Party arose to represent the emerging industrial working class. Those three groups are still the most dominant, but have evolved substantially in character.

Following the 2014 elections, a centre-right government consisting of N-VA, CD&V, Open Vld and MR was formed and led by Prime Minister Charles Michel (MR). This government coalition is quite unique: the N-VA participates for the first time, the MR is the only French-speaking party, and the French-speaking Socialist Party is not part of the government for the first time in 25 years.

The three major political alliances are the Christian Social parties, consisting of the Parti Social Chrétien (PSC) and the Christelijke Volkspartij (CVP); the Socialist parties, the Parti Socialiste (PS) and Socialistische Partij (SP); and the Liberal parties, Parti Réformateur et Liberal (PRL) and Flemish Liberal Democrats (VLD). The People's Union (Volksunie, or VU) was the Flemish nationalistic party, the French-speaking Democratic Front (Front Démocratique des Francophones - FDF) affirms the rights of the French-speaking population of Brussels. The Flemish Block (Vlaams Blok - VB) is separatist and antforeigner. The much smaller far-right National Front (Front Nationale - FN) is openly racist and xenophobic. In 2001, the CVP was renamed the Christian Democratic and Flemish Party (CD and V); the SP was renamed the Social

Progressive Alternative Party, or SP.A; and the VU split into the New Flemish Alliance (NVA) and the Spirit Party. Agalev is the Flemish Green Party, and Ecolo represents francophone Greens. The PSC was renamed the Democratic Humanistic Center (CDH) in 2002, and the PRL, FDF, and the MCC or Movement of Citizens for Change (created in 1998 by a former leader of the francophone Christian Democrats), formed a new alliance called the Reform Movement (MR). Despite all these changes, the Belgian political landscape *has not been seriously reorganized*.

Special interest groups

Politics is influenced by lobby groups, such as trade unions and business interests in the form of the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium.

Belgium is highly *unionized*. *Organised labour* has powerful influence on politics. About 53% of all private sector and public service employees are labour union members. Belgian labour unions *stand out* as a movement by taking positions on education, public finance, defense spending, environmental protection, women's rights, abortion, and other issues. In addition, they also provide a range of services, including the administration of unemployment benefits.

The three main trade union organizations are the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC/ACV) (ca. 1,7 Mio. members), the General Federation of Belgian Labour (FGTB/ABVV) (ca. 1,2 Mio. members) and the General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (CGSLB/ACLVB) which has 230,000 members.

Another important influential factor is the “Federation of Belgian Enterprises”.

The aims of the FEB are:

- to work towards creating an optimum entrepreneurial environment;
- to promote the interests of enterprises of all sizes on a Belgian, European and international level;
- to boost the coherence of entrepreneurs' message and actions.

FEB initiatives cover all areas of business activity at national, European and international level. They have grouped these initiatives into [17 broad areas of activity](#) ('Government & politics', 'Pensions & ageing', 'Economy', 'Social security', 'Europe', 'Corporate governance', etc.).

Nationally FEB presents and defends the interests of business not only in dealings with government and trade unions but also to the media, NGOs and the academic world. The organization's practical initiatives and proposals are designed to promote more business-friendly policies. FEB also acts as a social partner. Within the [Group of 10](#), FEB plays an important part in the two-yearly negotiations with the trade unions on a social agreement for the entire private sector in Belgium. FEB also officially represents private sector businesses within a large number of federal bodies such as the Central Economic Council, the National Labour Council, the Council of Regency of the National Bank of Belgium, the joint industrial management of the Social Security (e.g. NSSO, NEO), the Consumer Council, the Belgian Export Credit Agency and Federal Council for Sustainable Development.

To ensure that it has the broadest possible support and is always fully in touch with business concerns, FEB maintains close ties with Belgium's chambers of commerce and industry via the Federation of Belgian Chambers of Commerce.

Elections – voting system

Voting is obligatory. In general, more than 90% of the population participates.

There are **five options** to vote:

- Vote for a list as a whole, thereby showing approval of the order established by the party you vote for;
- Vote for one or more individual candidate(s) belonging to one party, regardless of his or her ranking on the list ("preference vote");
- Vote for one or more of the "alternates (substitutes)";
- Vote for one or more candidate(s), and one or more alternate(s), all of the same party.

Local Belgian elections take place every six years; European, federal and regional elections every five years. The next local elections will take place in 2018; the next European, federal and regional elections will normally take place in 2019.

EU or non-EU-citizens can participate in some elections in Belgium, be it as a voter or as a candidate under certain conditions. The right to vote is limited to certain elections and you will always need to register to vote. Conditions to vote are as follows.

- Be a national of one of the Member States of the EU (for EU citizens). This condition must be fulfilled by 1 March of the election year. Non EU citizens must have an official residence in Belgium since at least five years.
- Live in a Belgian municipality and be registered in the population or aliens register before a certain date (usually three months before election day).
- Be at least 18 years old on Election Day.
- Be registered to vote.
- Not be deprived of your voting rights in your country of origin.

There is an obligation to vote in Belgium, which is valid for all Belgians and foreigners, if they have acquired the right to vote here!

Once registered for voting, citizens will receive an invitation by postal mail, that will explain where, how and when to present yourself for voting. Practically voting stations for all elections are organized on a local level in school buildings or other public administrations or buildings of publically funded organizations. Since the introduction of the concept of European citizenship by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, citizens of the EU living in another member state have the right to vote in elections for the European Parliament in their place of residence. The same applies for local elections. Despite the many information campaigns, the number of non-Belgian voters that use their right to vote in local elections remains limited. Many potential voters are put off by the compulsory voting system.

Different forms of participation (public opinion poll, referendum, citizen's group, parent's associations...)

Binding referendums are not legally possible. Belgium is a representative democracy with almost any form of direct democracy.

One famous referendum was organized in 1950. It asks whether King Leopold III should return to the throne. From the 90s onwards new laws and eventually a constitutional amendment allowed for non-binding referenda on the municipal and provincial level. Regions can organize local referenda (since 2005, after a change in the constitution) – what they rarely do. The sixth Belgian state reform of 2011 foresees a constitutional change to allow for regional referenda as well.

The way to citizenship

Belgium citizenship is regulated by the Code of Belgian Nationality and based on a mixture of the principles of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* (both place of birth and Belgian parentage are relevant for determining whether a person is a Belgian citizen).

After five years of uninterrupted living in Belgium, citizens from the European Union (EU), the European Economic Area (EEA – EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Switzerland acquire permanent residence automatically.

Non-EU/EEA/Swiss citizens are also eligible after five years but must submit an application with their local municipality for permanent residence.

In general, permanent residence (residency card types B, C, D E+ and F+) allows you to stay in Belgium indefinitely, working or otherwise, under similar conditions and enjoying similar rights and benefits as Belgian nationals.

These include:

- open access to employment, conditions of employment and working conditions;
- right to education, recognition of qualifications, grants;
- welfare benefits;
- social assistance;
- freedom of association and union membership.

Citizenship gives you all the above but you can also leave Belgium for periods of time without losing your status, while with permanent residence, if you leave for longer than one/two years, you lose your status. In addition, Belgian citizenship can help you get the sense of belonging to a nation and a community.

Both citizens and permanent residents have the right to vote in different types of elections, as well as those who swear allegiance to the Belgian constitution.

In recent years, however, the citizenship requirements have become stricter with increasing integration and language conditions, therefore fewer people are actually managing to become Belgian citizens.

Curriculum Module No. 1.3– “Understanding Europe” – Democracy, participation, citizenship in Belgium

Aims: to provide the teachers with relevant and adequate material concerning the topic(s); to enrich the trainer’s competencies with (new) effective techniques and ideas to teach “democracy, participation, citizenship” in a comprehensive manner for diverse groups (in another language!).

Content: The main content of this chapter are democracy, participation, citizenship.
The main content item are the description of the various parties and interest groups involved, which constitute a “democratic landscape as well as different forms of participation. Additionally there is information on general question around citizenship.

Content Item:

An overview on democracy, participation and citizenship should give orientation in the host country, but also familiarise the learners with the main democratic and participatory features of the country and the concept of participation of the Belgian citizens. As Belgian identity is a very complex subject, it might be very useful to connect also this content to the matching institutions as well as to examples of everyday life (e.g. like objectives in education, family life).

An overview on the political and democratic landscape should give orientation in the host country, but also familiarise the learners, **HOW** the main democratic and participatory features of the country **ARE PUT IN ACTION**.

This section again reflects the fundamental rules of life in Belgium and how to **PARTICIPATE** in it. The teaching of the content should include also include solid and comprehensive overviews on the various interest groups, which could be interesting for the course participants. It should also be pointed out what it means / could mean to be living in Belgium (from a native / foreigner point of view) with regards to “what the state delivers / what the citizens delivers” in the democratic process(es) in the broadest sense.

Methods (see worksheet example below)

Input phase:

The teacher can work with overviews and compilations, and ask the participants to bring lists/examples (e.g. for the political parties, interest groups in the field of migration etc.) to the class. One or several recent cases (which make e.g. make the news) can be used as “real live praxis” examples (TV, news, events, campaigns etc.) This allows the teacher, to react / respond to questions of the group.

Group work phase:

The teacher distributes a table with given parameters. The learners are divided into up to four groups. The table provided asks a question e.g. about a recent issue, which is discussed in the papers / news (like migration law, election, “me too – women’s rights campaign...”). The learners fill in the table concerning which groups are participating / can participate in the democratic process,

how their roles, tasks and impacts are. They each have a table, but they work together in a group. The teacher can decide beforehand, if additional material has to be distributed (also depending on the language level of the learners).
Learning outcome: The pupils will get an overview on democracy, participation and citizenship, with the emphasis on how those democratic and participatory features are put in action. Moreover, they are encouraged see their chances and to take on responsibility to understanding the country they are living in and adapt to its requirements. Again, this can enable to relate better to intercultural challenges on the way of integrating into a new society.
Time: Depends on the school curriculum.
Tips for the trainer, if necessary: organize accompanying field trips to the organisations/institutions/initiatives etc. which represent the topic
Literature/references / Use of IT: Compile a list of links to the relevant organizations in this field / Use debates shown on television, social media etc.

Methods

Example for work sheet:

"me too – campaign"				
Situation / Questions (the questions should be given by the teacher – but, if there is an interest, questions can also be formulated by the learners) e.g.:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bringing news clips, reactions from interest groups (on various social media) 				
	Which interest groups are acting?	What are the positions of the interest groups and what is there democratic legitimation?	How do they deal with conflicting issues?	How could I participate concerning that topic?
What kind of information is available?				
What kind of methods do the groups use?				
Who will make the final decision?				
...				

The trainer should relate to the language ability and to the "feel" in the group. Sometimes it is advisable to give and pre-formulate the questions, in order to get the discussion going. Depending on the interest and fields, supplementary information should can be provided.

Curriculum Module No. 1.4 – Understanding Europe – Living in in Belgium

Media in Belgium

Due to the linguistic situation, the media landscape is quite diverse/split in Belgium. There is a separation between the French-language media on the one hand and the Dutch-language or Flemish media on the other hand. The main competences in the media field belong –very generally speaking- to the Communities.

Belgian media tend to focus on differences between the Communities, rather than on similarities between them. This is especially the case with political reporting. In addition, a study shows that French-language politicians get very limited airtime on Flemish television news bulletins and the same seems to be true for Dutch-speaking politicians on French-language television news bulletins. In this regard, the split of Belgium's media landscape is closely related to the way its political system is organised.

Radio and television: the French- and Dutch-language public broadcasters are separated entities. RTBF.be, the French-language public broadcaster, is only broadcasting French-language programs, whereas VRT, the Flemish public broadcaster, is only broadcasting Dutch-language programs. The same separation is valid for the non-public broadcasters.

Newspapers: Since 1950, dozens of newspaper titles disappeared in the process of concentration. The number of independent media firms shrank from 34 to only five. In Flanders, three groups control the market: Corelio Media, De Persgroep and Concentra. Two groups dominate the French-language press: Rossel and IPM.

In June 2013, Corelio and Concentra merged into a new entity called 'Het Mediahuis'. Corelio took 62% of the shares, Concentra the remaining 38%. Mediahuis publishes De Standaard, Het Nieuwsblad, Gazet van Antwerpen and Het Belang van Limburg, the job recruitment platform Jobat, the free magazine Jet and classified magazines/folders Gotcha, Zimmo, Vroom and InMemoriam.

In Wallonia, the Rossel Group publishes *Le Soir*, IPM publishes *La Libre Belgique* and the popular *La Dernière Heure*.

The majority of both the French- and Dutch-language media groups are also active in other domains.

Belgian media consumers all over the country seem to prefer the same kind of radio and television programmes and tend to read the same type of newspapers (i.e., mainly popular and regional newspapers). Belgium is a very open society, and the international media market heavily influences its media.

Social media (blogs, Facebook, Twitter etc.): online media do not seem to have a prominent place. Although most media players are active on social media such as Facebook and although journalists often have a Facebook or Twitter account, they do not overwhelmingly use these new media for their reporting. Private media blogs exist, but most of these blogs are initiatives of established journalists.

Housing in Belgium

According to official Belgian statistics, the average prices for residential buildings have again risen in the first quarter of 2017. In comparison with 2016 standard residential houses (ca. 220 920 Euro) became 6, 6%, villa's (ca. 362 829 Euro) 5, 3% and apartments (ca. 225 171 Euro) 1, 7% more expensive.

Brussels is the most expensive region, with Sint-Jans-Molenbeek as cheapest and Elsene/Ixelles as most expensive quartier.

Concerning renting of flats and houses: there are two sorts for rent: private housing and social (or public) housing.

In social housing, rent is calculated according to renters' income. Social housing is run by government authorities. Flats will be assigned based on social and economic criteria. In general, waiting lists are long. In addition, an official procedure must be followed.

Most rental units (flats or houses) are privately owned. The proprietor can set the rent with no restrictions.

Before moving into a rented flat or house, the landlord will usually ask to provide a security deposit. It may not exceed two months of rent (three months if you pay in instalments).

Occasions for private flats or houses to rent are published in newspapers such as *Le Vlan*, free estate agent brochures and websites (e.g. www.immoweb.be

or www.vlan.be). You can register, free of charge, with one or more housing agencies, both private and social. To find the nearest Social Housing Society, contact your municipality. Associations or CPAS may provide support. There are tenants' associations that can provide you with support and advice about your rights as a tenant. Many municipalities also have a housing information and advice office.

Education in Belgium

The three Belgian communities are regulating and financing (for the most part) education. Each of the Flemish, French and German speaking communities have their own, slightly different, system. The federal government is –concerning education– responsible for the determination of the starting and finishing ages for compulsory education, the minimum requirements for diploma conferrals and the community financing issues.

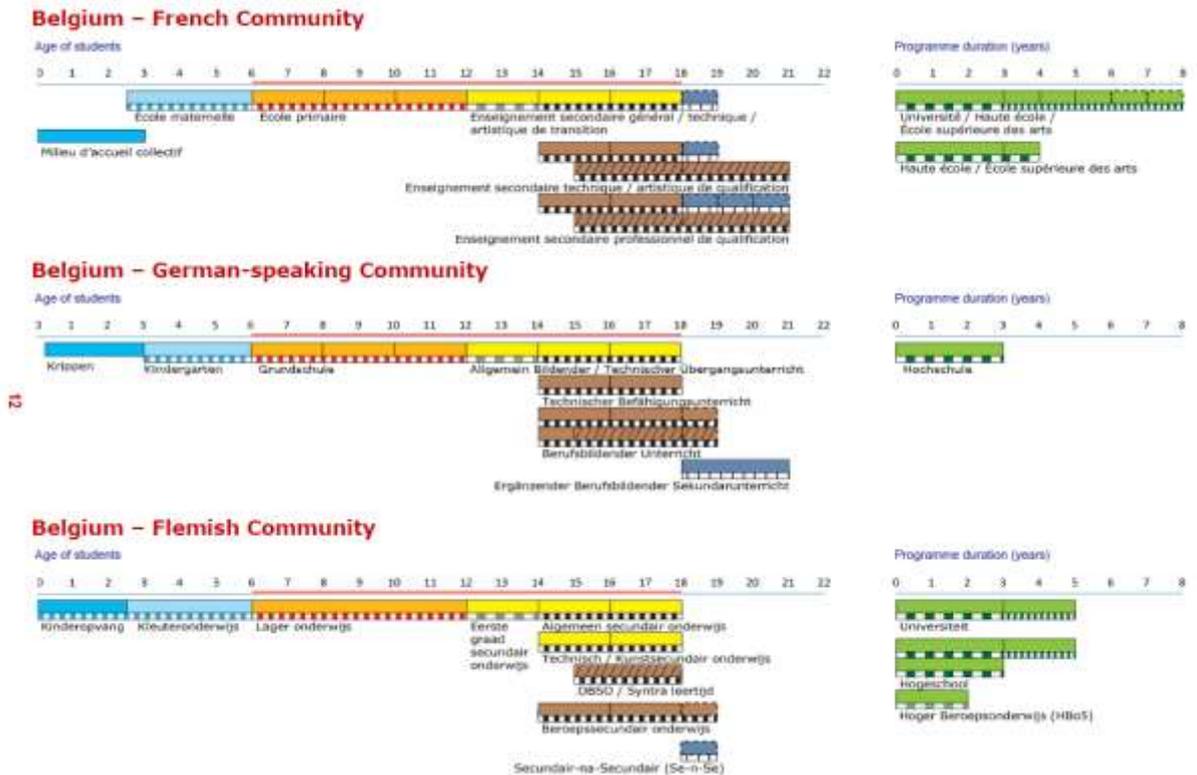
Education in Belgium is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 18 or until one graduates from secondary school.

The schools can be divided in three groups (Dutch: netten; French: réseaux):

1. Schools owned by the communities (GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse gemeenschap; réseau de la Communauté française)
2. Subsidized public schools (officieel gesubsidieerd onderwijs; réseau officiel subventionné), organized by provinces and municipalities
3. Subsidized free schools (vrij gesubsidieerd onderwijs; réseau libre subventionné), mainly organized by an organization affiliated to the Catholic church.

The latter is the largest group, both in number of schools and in number of pupils.

The following diagrams show an overview of the three Belgium communities within the structure of the European education systems 2016/2017, as featured on EURYDICE:



Source: *The Structure of European Education Systems 2016/17, Schematic Diagrams, Eurydice – Facts and Figures, S.12*

The Ministry of Education and Training provides all up-to-date information as well as all links to other relevant institutions and bodies in the educational field: <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/> / <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/en/education-in-flanders> (main articles in Dutch language).

The European portal EURYDICE provides detailed and up-to-date details and overviews on all educational matters in the three Belgian communities:

- Flemish community: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-Flemish-Community:Overview>;
- French community: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-French-Community:Overview>
- German-speaking community: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Belgium-German-Speaking-Community:Overview>

Labour market and economic system in Belgium

Belgium has one of the highest shares of government spending relative to GDP among OECD countries. While government expenditures in 2015 represented 40.9% of GDP on average across OECD countries, the share of expenditures reached 53.9% of GDP in Belgium. The fiscal balance continues to consolidate, as the deficit decreases from 5.4% of GDP in 2009 to 2.5% of GDP in 2015. Furthermore, in 2015 the primary balance, which excludes net interest payments on government debt from the overall balance, was slightly positive, reaching 0.2% of GDP. However, investment spending remained low with a share as 4.4% of total government expenditures. (Source: www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm).

A sound macroeconomic policy framework, high quality education and a combination of market-based policies and a redistributive welfare state have boosted GDP per capita to well above the OECD average. Although growth weakened since the global financial crisis, Belgium ranks among the ten most competitive countries in Europe ([WEF, 2016](#)).

Citizen satisfaction with health care and education systems is among the highest across OECD countries in Belgium. These levels of satisfaction are significantly higher than the OECD averages.

See “Country Fact Sheet Belgium”: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/gov-at-a-glance-2017-belgium.pdf>.

While overall education levels are high, some suffer from poor skills, especially those with a low socio-economic or immigrant background. The labour market performance of immigrants, especially women, and low-skilled and older workers is comparatively weak. Improving the capacity of the educational system to provide disadvantaged students with necessary skills would enhance inclusiveness and improve labour market integration of youth and the children of immigrants. Further efforts to reduce labour costs would help the labour market performance of low-skilled natives and migrants. While recent pension reform will contribute to raise the participation of older people in the labour market, their employment and productivity could be further supported by on-the-job training and increased use of flexitime

Source and further information, see [OECD Economic Surveys, Belgium, June 2017](#).

Sports in Belgium

Sport plays an important role in Belgium. Approximately 13% of the Belgian population is involved in sport. Popular sports are among others football, cycling, tennis, table tennis, athletics, swimming, basketball, badminton, judo, hockey, motocross, auto racing, volleyball and running.

Football, a sport which has been played in Belgium since the end of the 19th century, is the country's most popular sport. Traditionally, the clubs Anderlecht, Club Brugge and Standard Liège are the three most dominant domestic teams, all of them also having played and/or won one or more European Cup final(s).

Cycling is a very popular! Many Belgian cyclists have been successful and are well known. The best Belgian cyclist of all time, Eddy Merckx, has won the Tour de France and Giro d'Italia five times each, won the Vuelta a España once, the UCI Road World Championship three times, had many classic cycle race wins and set the hour record, among other achievements. Belgium has been one of the most successful countries in road cycling since the origins of the sport, with one of the oldest races being held in Belgium, Liège–Bastogne–Liège, which was first held in 1892.

Religion in Belgium

Freedom of religion is granted by the Belgian constitution. Belgian law officially recognizes many religions, including Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism, Islam, Judaism, and Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as non-religious philosophical organizations (vrijzinnige levensbeschouwelijke organisaties / organisations laïques). Buddhism is in the process of being recognized under the secular organization standard.

According to a study published by WIN/Gallup International in 2015, Belgium is one of the least religious countries in the world. According to a 2010 Eurobarometer poll, 37% of the Belgian citizens believe there is a God, 31% believe there is some sort of spirit or life force, 27% do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life force and 5% declined to answer.

58% of the Belgian population identifies as Roman Catholic (although regular church attendance has dropped by more than half since the late 90's. The Catholic Church enjoyed significant political power until the middle of the 20th century, influencing the requirement for religious education in public schools.

27% of the population in Belgium identify as either atheist or agnostic. This percentage makes Belgium one of the least religious countries in the world, on par with other Western European nations. Atheism and Agnosticism are positively correlated to urban living and higher levels of education.

Non-Catholic Christian religions include Orthodox, Protestant, and Restoration practitioners (ca. 7% of the total population). The majority of these individuals are Protestants (incl. Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists, and Presbyterians).

Islam has been increasing within the country. Today 5% of the population identifies as Muslim. The growth of this religion began in the 1960's when Morocco, Turkey, Algeria, and Tunisia signed immigration agreements with Belgium. Brussels has the largest concentration of Muslim practitioners where they make up 20% of the population.

Other religious beliefs in Belgium are practiced by 3% of the population (e.g. Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism). As immigration to this country increases, these religions are also expected to grow in followers. This growth may someday lead to these religions becoming recognized by the government and eligible for subsidies.

Migration policy in Belgium

Over the past decades, Belgium has become a permanent country of settlement for many different types of migration. Belgium is usually not in the focus when it comes to immigration, due to its size and its less known history of immigration. With a population of ca. 11,4 Mio. (July 2016), the net migration rate counts 5.6 migrant(s)/1000 population (2016 est.).

The current federal state is the result of different state reforms. As immigration and asylum are mainly federal competences, political responsibility lies at the level of the federal government.

Again, it needs to be pointed out, that Belgium is a federal state with a complex state structure: the federal level and regional level (Regions and Communities) have their autonomous competences. The federal state is competent in several areas, including foreign policy, national defense, justice, finance, social security and public health and home affairs. The Regions are responsible for 'territorial' issues, among other housing, economy and labour market management, the supervision of the provinces, municipalities and associations of local authorities, as well as economic migration. The Communities are responsible for culture and issues directly related to individuals and

their language (e.g. aid to people, health and education, integration of foreigners and emancipation of ethno-cultural minorities).

Immigration and asylum related issues generally fall under the competence of the federal government. *Integration* is mainly the competence of the Communities. In Wallonia, this item is transferred to the regional level. *Economic migration* has been further regionalized - Brussels-Capital, Flanders and Wallonia and the German-speaking Community are responsible for the development of an economic migration policy tailored to the needs of their labour market and economy. It is worth noting that as long as the Regions and Communities do not adopt new legislation, the federal legislation still applies.

The federal state remains responsible for the entry and the right of foreigners to reside on the Belgian territory, as well as for work permits C (work permits issued to migrants with a temporary residence permit for other reasons than 'employment', such as asylum seekers).

Regarding other aspects of legal migration, the Law of 18 December 2016 introduced a new general residence condition into the Immigration Act: certain foreign nationals will need to provide evidence of their willingness to integrate into society in order to keep their Belgian residence permits. This part of the law entered into force at the beginning of 2017. Another part of the same law (which was much discussed in public debate) implies that certain foreign nationals who apply for a residence permit will need to sign a declaration indicating that they understand the fundamental values and norms of society and will act accordingly (the so-called 'newcomers declaration'). This second part of the new law has not yet entered into force, as an official cooperation agreement still needs to be concluded with the Communities and the Regions. The two new conditions mentioned above are however not applicable to a number of categories of foreign nationals, such as persons applying for international protection or granted international protection, EU citizens, students, and certain family migrants. Minors, sick and protected persons are also exempted.

Furthermore, a new law made it possible for Belgian municipalities to collect a fee when foreign nationals renew, extend, or replace a temporary residence permit, in order to cover the costs related to the processing of the applications.

In 2016, 18 710 asylum applications were lodged in Belgium, including 452 refugees who were resettled to Belgium and 200 asylum applicants who were relocated to Belgium from Italy or Greece. This is an important decrease compared to 2015 (with 44,760 asylum applications).

INTEGRATION: In Belgium, the Communities and the Regions are responsible for the integration and civic integration of foreign nationals. Integration policies remained high on the political agenda in 2016. Additional resources and staff were allocated at different levels and to different organisations, and a wide range of measures were taken to promote the integration of asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.

While Flanders already has a compulsory integration programme for foreign newcomers, the other Regions adopted similar approaches in 2016. Since April 2016, there is a compulsory integration programme in Wallonia and since May 2017 a compulsory integration programme for newcomers in Brussels. The intention is to further apply existing integration programmes. Two 'welcome offices for newcomers' were set up in Brussels (BAPA-BXL and VIA), which are responsible for the organization of the integration programme for newcomers who opt for the French module in Brussels. Furthermore, the German-speaking Community started a pilot project in January 2016 on implementing an integration programme.

Furthermore, developing and improving labour market integration programmes remained a priority in 2016. Asylum-seekers (who have access to the labour market after four months in the asylum procedure), beneficiaries of international protection and highly skilled newcomers were specifically targeted by these measures.

Source: Information quoted from the [2016 Annual Report on Asylum and Migration Policy in Belgium](#) (EMN Belgian Contact Point of the European Migration Network, June 2017)

Arts and culture in Belgium

CUISINE: Belgium is best known for its chocolate, waffles, fries and beer. Fine cuisine and a large variety of beers are considered as a part of Belgian culture. Well known are French fries, carbonade flamande/stoofvlees, speculaas cookies, Brussels

sprouts, endives, asparagus, pralines... Belgian cuisine prefers regional and seasonal ingredients.

COMICS: Belgium is very famous for its cartoonist (e.g. Hergé / The Adventures of Tintin, Peyo / The Smurfs, Franquin / Spirou et Fantasio, Marsupilami, Gaston, Morris / Lucky Luke; Jean Van Hamme / XIII, Largo Winch, Thorgal... .

ART: Art styles in Belgium move from realism to surrealism. In the field of visual arts, artists from Belgium are among the best in Europe. With a wide variety of museums like The Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Belgium boasts of some of the most remarkable collections by artists like Peter Paul Ruben and Anthony Van Dyck. Among the 15th century artists, famous names include Hubert, Jan van Eyck, Quentin Matsys, Hans Memling, and Rogier van der Weyden. James Ensor was the most renowned contemporary artist of Belgium.

MUSIC: Musical genres in Belgium range from the classical to Jazz and from the popular to hip hop. Many famous classical composers like Cesar Franck, Henri Vieuxtemps, Guillaume Lekeu and Wim Mertens were born in Belgium. Other renowned singers include pioneer Bobbejaan Schoepen, Johnny Hallyday, Maurane and Jacques Brel.

The jazz scene in Belgium is particularly lively and in recent years, it has attained international acclaim. The most renowned jazz musicians in Belgium are guitarist Philip Catherine and harmonicist Toots Thielemans.

Gender issues as cross-sectoral theme in Belgium

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) report on Gender Equality, Belgium is number 10, up one place compared to 2013. Leading the ranking is Iceland at number one, followed by Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. At the bottom of the list is Yemen, having only closed 51% of its gender gap, according to the report. Belgium takes 10th place in the list with a score of 78%, which is better than neighbouring countries, Germany (12), the Netherlands (14), France (16), the United Kingdom (26) and Luxembourg (28).

In 2017, Belgium has dropped a few places on the gender equality ranking issued by the World Economic Forum. Belgium is now 31st on the list, coming from 24. Iceland rules, followed by Norway and Finland.

The World Economic Forum first compiled a list in 2006. At that time, Belgium was 20th. Belgium now boasts a better score than 11 years ago, but it turns out that other countries have made more progress since then.

One of the issues in Belgium is politics. Belgium never had a female PM before, and the federal government has very few female members: only 4 out of 18 ministers or state secretaries. For the Flemish government, this is 3 out of 9, while the Brussels is doing much better with 4 out of 8.

The second main problem for Belgium is equal pay. The wage gap for the same work has not increased, but the situation is not really improving, says the report. The difference in earnings is also because more women than men opt for part-time work.

For details in key areas, see [2017 Annual Report on Gender Equality](#), published by the European Commission.

Curriculum Module No. 1.4– “Understanding Europe” – Living in in Belgium

Aims: to provide the teachers with relevant and adequate material concerning the topic(s); to enrich the trainer’s competencies with (new) effective techniques and ideas to teach “democracy, participation, citizenship” in a comprehensive manner for diverse groups (in another language!).

Content: The main content of this chapter are aspects of “living in Belgium”.

The main content item are the description of a choice of the various aspects of daily live, which are relevant to individuals with regards to work, life, well-being and free time etc.

Content Item:

An overview on media, housing, education, labour market and economic system, sports, religion, migration policy, arts and culture should give orientation in the host country, but also familiarise the learners with the main features of the country and the cultural concept of the Belgian citizens. As Belgian identity is a very complex subject, it might be very useful to connect also this content to the matching institutions as well as to examples of everyday life (e.g. sport associations, cultural clubs).

The overview gives orientation, but also familiarise the learners, **HOW** e.g. main educational and employment related features of the country **ARE PUT IN ACTION** and which values are relevant.

This section again reflects the fundamental rules of life in Belgium and how to **PARTICIPATE** in it. The teaching of the content should include also include solid and comprehensive overviews on the stakeholders in the broadest sense, which could be interesting for the course participants. It should also be pointed out what it means / could mean to be living in Belgium (from a native / foreigner point of view) with regards to “what the state delivers / what the citizens delivers” in the democratic process(es) in the broadest sense.

Methods (see worksheet example below)

Input phase:

The teacher can work with overviews and compilations, and ask the participants to bring lists/examples (e.g. for the adult education institution, sports clubs, interest groups in the field of migration etc.) to the class. One are several recent cases (which make e.g. make the news) can be used as “real live praxis” examples (TV, news, events, campaigns etc.) This allows the teacher, to react / respond to questions of the group.

Group work phase:

The teacher distributes a table with given parameters. The learners are divided into up to four groups. The table provided asks a question e.g. about a recent issue, which is discussed in the papers / news. The learners fill in the table concerning which groups are participating / can participate in that process, how their roles, tasks and impacts are. They each have a table, but they work



together in a group. The teacher can decide beforehand, if additional material has to be distributed (also depending on the language level of the learners).

Learning outcome:

The pupils will get an overview on media, housing, education, labour market and economic system, sports, religion, migration policy, arts and culture, with the emphasis on how those features are put in action. Moreover, they are encouraged see their chances and to take on responsibility to understanding the country they are living in and adapt to its requirements. Again, this can enable to relate better to intercultural challenges on the way of integrating into a new society.

Time: Depends on the school curriculum.

Tips for the trainer, if necessary: organize accompanying field trips to the organisations/institutions/initiatives etc. which represent the topic

Literature/references / Use of IT: Compile a list of links to the relevant organizations in this field / Use debates shown on television, social media etc.

Methods

Example for work sheet:

“newcomers declaration” Situation / Questions (the questions should be given by the teacher – but, if there is an interest, questions can also be formulated by the learners) e.g.:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bringing the original text, plus news clips, reactions (on various social media) 				
	What are elements?	What do I need?	What do I fear / is not feasible for me?	How could I participate with regards to that topic?
What is “a willingness to integrate” into society?				
What are the fundamental values and norms in Belgium?				
How can / will I act accordingly?				
...				

The trainer should relate to the language ability and to the “feel” in the group. Sometimes it is advisable to give and pre-formulate the questions, in order to get the discussion going. Depending on the interest and fields, supplementary information should can be provided.

