



Mapping of social orientation: the case of Belgium

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January 2018

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I. Legal and institutional framework

1. Legal framework of social orientation

Belgium is a federal state which means that several policy domains are not legislated countrywide at the federal level, but by the regions or communities. Because of this, integration and civic integration policy are characterised by fragmentation. Policies in (Dutch-speaking) Flanders, (French-speaking) Wallonia and (bilingual) Brussels differs from one another. In short, Flanders and Wallonia have their own integration policy and in Brussels, both policies are in place although until today non-compulsory. In this report, information will be provided for Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels, focusing on integration trajectories and social orientation courses in particular.

In Flanders, societal orientation is a component of a wider civic integration policy, which is part of a wider integration policy. Civic integration policy is made up of 5 components: social orientation (MO), Dutch language classes (NT2), counselling towards work, personal general counselling during the process and the obligation to show personal results.¹ In Flanders, courses are **obligatory** for certain newcomers. Others can **voluntarily** participate. Since 29 February 2016, beneficiaries are obliged to obtain certain results whereas before participating in the courses was enough to comply. This asks for a stronger commitment from beneficiaries and certificates are no longer distributed as easily. The current policy is governed by the Decree on Flemish Integration and Civic integration, adopted in 2013.² This was followed by the Implementing Decision in 2016.³ In Flanders, there is **no impact on one's residence status and rights** in case of non-compliance. However, in the process of acquiring Belgian nationality, Flemish civic integration certificates are taken into account as proof of societal integration. In case of non-compliance, obliged beneficiaries receive an administrative fine. These fines vary between €50 and €5000 for each new infringement. The obligation to comply continues to exist. Voluntary beneficiaries who signed the civic integration contract and do not comply can receive a fine of €150. This fine is not administered in the Flemish integration field in Brussels.

In Wallonia, civic integration policy was implemented in 2016 and finds its basis in the Decree of 28 April 2016 of the Walloon Social Action and Health Code⁴ and the Order of the Walloon Government of 8 December 2016.⁵ The programme is compulsory and divided into two phases. First, there is a personal welcome module: a free and individual social assessment, the purpose of which is to determine the individual's personal and professional programme, information on rights and obligations in Belgium, and guidance on social and administrative aspects, depending on the needs identified. Secondly, an agreement is signed between the new migrant and the regional integration centre and assures new migrants of the following, free services: minimally 120 hours of language training (français langue étrangère or FLE), social and professional guidance (minimally 4 hours), and citizenship training (minimally 20 hours).⁶ The

¹ "[Civic integration trajectory](#)", accessed January 3, 2018.

² Flanders / Decreet betreffende het Vlaamse integratie- en inburgeringsbeleid (07.06.2013).

³ Flanders / Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering houdende de uitvoering van het decreet van 7 juni 2013 betreffende het Vlaamse integratie- en inburgeringsbeleid (29.01.2016).

⁴ Wallonia / Décret modifiant le Livre II du Code wallon de l'Action sociale et de la Santé relatif à l'intégration des personnes étrangères ou d'origine étrangère (28.04.2016).

⁵ Wallonia / Arrêté du Gouvernement wallon du 8 décembre 2016 modifiant le livre III du Code réglementaire wallon relatif à l'intégration des personnes étrangères et d'origine étrangère (08.12.2016).

⁶ "Integrating", accessed January 9, 2018, <http://www.belgique-infos.be/integrating-what-does-it-mean/?lang=en#.WISpHK7ibIU>

programme is tailored to each individual and provides guidance in line with the identified needs (language, work, accommodation, family, health, leisure etc.). Certain newcomers are **obliged** to participate in the civic integration programme and others can voluntarily **choose** to do so. This agreement lasts maximally 18 months and the regional integration centre (CRI) is in charge of monitoring and assessment. When it comes to non-compliance, sanctions can apply, but there is **no impact on residence status and rights**. When acquiring the Belgian nationality, the value of the Walloon certificates is still rather unclear. In December 2017, the minister announced that the programme would receive a higher budget in order to increase the number of beneficiaries. Moreover, the courses would intensify by increasing the number of hours of the French and civic orientation courses.⁷

In Brussels, non-nationals are **allowed to choose** between the Flemish and Walloon integration trajectory although participation is **not obligatory**. This way, non-nationals choose a focus on either Dutch or French-speaking integration. This can be a very important choice for them, since not only the language is different but also the way in which the integration trajectories are set up. Flemish government documents mention the intent to develop obligatory civic integration in Brussels, e.g. in the Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019.⁸ The goal is to agree upon this in the years to come.

2. Course/module providers

There are several **federal institutions** dealing with immigration, asylum and matters of integration. Reception of claimants for international protection is arranged on the federal level by Fedasil, the Federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers and the federal Immigration Service administrates the visa and residence permits (Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken/Office des Etrangers). Finally, Belgium has an equality body that functions on the federal level: Unia is an independent public institution that combats discrimination and promotes equal opportunities. They have inter-federal competence, which means that they are active at the federal level as well as the level of the regions and communities.⁹ Myria, the federal migration centre, analyses migration, defends the rights of non-nationals and combats human trafficking. Myria stands up for a government policy that is built on facts and respects fundamental rights. It is an independent public organisation.¹⁰ Due to the federal nature of the Belgian state, matters related to integration and education are regulated on the regional level. On the **regional or municipal level** in Flanders, a governmental Agency called Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering (Agency for Integration and Civic Integration) aims at allowing people of foreign origins to fully participate in society. They cooperate with local authorities, organisations and citizens to deal with challenges related to migration. This agency is active in the entire region of Flanders, except for the cities of Antwerp and Ghent. In Antwerp, Atlas takes up this function, whereas IN-Gent works on integration and civic integration in the city of Ghent. All of these agencies in Flanders offer social orientation classes and guide beneficiaries towards education of the Dutch language elsewhere. **NGOs** do not play an official role in this respect although there are many focussing on integration in a wider perspective. Language education can be provided by **private sector providers**. In Flanders, there are **strict criteria for teaching social orientation** and exams need to be taken in order to qualify. Knowledge of languages is important, since courses are taught in a multitude of languages. Furthermore, people should demonstrate sufficient pedagogic qualities and should speak Dutch. Interestingly, teachers have differing backgrounds. For example, some teachers are newcomers who followed social orientation classes themselves in the past.

In Wallonia, there are 8 *Centres Régionaux d'intégration* (**Regional** integration centres or CRI) that aim at encouraging integration of people of foreign origin. Their role is important since they support other organisations, based in the

⁷ "Press release Alda Greoli", accessed January 24, 2018.

⁸ Flanders / VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2 / (15.07.2016), p. 13.

⁹ "Unia", accessed January 3, 2018.

¹⁰ "Myria", accessed January 25, 2018.

municipalities, that offer the integration trajectories. They aim at harmonising the rather fragmented field of integration education. The DISCRI is a centre that assists the eight regional integration centres in a technical, logistic and pedagogic manner. For example, they offer and regularly update a server for teachers where they can find and download information for their courses. Besides the CRI, municipalities constitute the first contact point for migrants concerning their integration process. The social orientation courses, language courses and socio-professional orientation are (amongst others) provided by several actors: organisations under the heading of Initiatives Locales d'Intégration (accredited organisations focusing on people of foreign origin), official authorities (pouvoir publique), education institutions focusing on social promotion, permanent education institutions, centres of socio-professional integration. These are all represented in a platform guided by a Regional integration centre. These integration centres play an important role in the organisation and harmonisation of the integration courses, they attempt to streamline the rather dispersed initiatives that used to exist before the large policy reform in 2016. Besides **NGOs**, organisations can also be **private sector** providers. Subsidies are available for providing this type of education. Organisations need to be accredited by the Initiatives Locales d'Intégration, or official authorities (pouvoir publique) or recognised by official authorities. Citizenship course providers face **several requirements for teachers**. They should have a teaching degree, minimally three years of experience in adult teaching, a language level of C1 in French and lastly they should have or intend to follow education regarding the integration and interculturality to learn about the themes they should be teaching themselves. This education lasts a few days and is offered by each of the 8 regional integration centres. The DISCRI (the overarching organisation) also offers information days, individual guidance, in-depth education focused on interculturality and andragogy in a multicultural environment. Language teachers have a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) with a specialisation in French or French as a foreign language (FLE), three years of experience in teaching French as a foreign language (or a certificate showing such competences).

The situation in the Brussels Region is rather complex, due to the dual offer of Dutch and French integration schemes there. There are two French speaking new migrant settlement offices: BAPA BXL, established by the city of Brussels and BAPA VIA, established by Molenbeek and Schaarbeek (municipalities in the Brussels Region). Besides these French speaking agencies, Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering is also active for the Dutch speaking community. They organise courses on social orientation and guide beneficiaries towards an offer of schooling in the Dutch language.

II. Audience

1. Coverage of social orientation courses, by category of non-nationals

Statistical information on integration and civic integration on Flanders as a whole is available for 2015, in a report entitled 'Flemish Migration and Integration Monitor' 2015.¹¹ More recent information on integration and civic integration is available but only on the municipal level. This monitor gathers data on municipal level about the size and the social position of non-nationals and people of non-Belgian origin in order to help local governments in the planning and development of their policies.¹² The numbers below are derived from the Flemish Migration and Integration Monitor 2015.

¹¹ Van den Broecke, Sarah et al., *Vlaamse Migratie en Integratie Monitor 2015*, Antwerpen/Brussel: Steunpunt Inburgering en Integratie/ABB, p. 115.

¹² "[Local migration and integration monitor](#)" accessed January 19, 2018.

Beneficiaries who start a civic integration trajectory, sign a contract. Obligated beneficiaries have to do this whereas others voluntarily choose to do so. The table below shows the number of beneficiaries in Flanders and Brussels, focusing on their reason for migration and sex, in 2014. Due to rising numbers of asylum migrants, numbers today would look different.

	Man	Woman	Total	Total
Family reunification with Belgian	1,240	2,143	3,383	19,1%
Labour migrant EU+	1,384	1,152	2,536	14,4%
Family reunification with EU+	691	1,477	2,168	12,3%
Family reunification with TCN	538	1,509	2,092	11,8%
Recognised refugee, subsidiary protection, victim of human trafficking	1,405	654	2,059	11,7%
Regularisation	472	412	844	5,0%
EU+ (reason yet unknown)	277	344	621	3,5%
Asylum seeker	467	187	654	3,7%
Labour migrant (TCN)	213	110	323	1,8%
Seeking work EU+	115	146	261	1,5%
Sufficient means EU+	47	85	132	0,7%
Student EU+	30	54	84	0,5%
Family reunification with EU+/Belgian	37	48	85	0,5%
Belgian newcomer	21	19	40	0,2%
Other reason EU+	5	1	6	0,0%
Other reason TCN	46	85	131	0,7%
Unknown	1,032	1,180	2,212	12,5%
Total	8,065	9,606	17,671	100,0%

For 2016, the only data available showed that 12,753 new beneficiaries started the course on societal orientation (MO). 18,075 new civic integration trajectories have been started, 60% of beneficiaries were entitled to civic integration and 40% were obliged to participate. 8,763 new trajectories were started by (former) asylum migrants.

Since civic integration only recently became obligatory in Wallonia, exact numbers and statistics are not available yet. In a press release of minister Greoli and the Walloon government, it is stated that on a yearly basis, 2500 people participate in the civic integration trajectories.¹³ This number is supposed to rise to 3500 because a higher budget will be allocated in the near future.

2. Categories of non-nationals having access to or the obligation to attend social orientation courses

Rules delineating the target group in Flanders (and those opting for Flemish civic integration in Brussels) are rather complex.¹⁴ People can be entitled to civic integration but also obliged. One can only be obliged to follow civic integration in Flanders, not in Brussels. What will follow is a simplified list of who is either eligible or obliged.

¹³ "Press release Alda Greoli", accessed January 24, 2018.

¹⁴ This simplified list is based on the information on the [website of the Integration and Civic Integration Agency](#). Here, one finds further documentation (in Dutch) concerning further legal delineation of the civic integration target group.

In Flanders and Brussels, those **entitled** to civic integration are registered in the National Register (Rijksregister¹⁵). This entails regularly residing foreigners, unless their residence permit is temporary up to maximally 1 year including prolongation if possible. To provide an example, au pairs are excluded through this rule. Secondly, foreign-born Belgians with at least one foreign-born parent are eligible. Everyone needs to be living in Flanders or Brussels and aged over 18. Excluded are tourists, diplomats, irregular migrants, asylum seekers whose procedure is still in the first four months, and foreigners with a temporary residence status up to 1 year (incl. possible prolongation). Besides being entitled to civic integration one can also be obliged to participate in this trajectory. In Flanders, one can also be **obliged** to follow civic integration courses. A simplified list follows below:

1. Newcomers who register in Belgium for the first time with a permit for longer than 3 months or a decision to receive such a permit are obliged. Among them are:
 - a. Third country family migrants (1) when their Belgian partner has not enjoyed free movement of people within the EU, (2) in case of family reunification with a third country national with a temporary permit in Belgium (exemptions apply) or (3) when family reunification is at stake with someone other than the spouse (unmarried couples, descendants or ascendants).
 - b. Recognised refugees
 - c. People enjoying subsidiary protection
 - d. Victims of human trafficking
 - e. People regularised on the basis of humanitarian or medical reasons and people with discretionary residence permits.
2. In some cases, adult newcomers who registered in Flanders after having been registered in Brussels or Wallonia for less than 5 years;
3. Belgian newcomers born abroad with at least one foreign born parent, having acquired their Belgian nationality abroad;
4. Belgian newcomers who first registered in Brussels or Wallonia for less than 5 years and then moved to Flanders;
5. In some cases, foreign minors who turn 18;
6. Religious servants.

There are exemptions for those over 65 years of age, citizens of EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and their family members. Further excluded are also Belgians and their family members after they enjoyed the free movement of persons within the European Union, third country long-term citizens of EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland who complied with integration demands in that particular country. Labour and student migrants (and their family members) are excluded and those able to demonstrate a Dutch or Belgian diploma or a year of integration classes followed. Furthermore, exceptions apply to severely ill or handicapped people unable to follow civic integration and those who already acquired a certificate of civic integration.

In Wallonia, the Walloon Social Action and Health Code defines the persons who are **obliged** to follow the welcome module of the integration programme and those who are exempt. In principle the programme is **open for everyone**, but the focus is on new migrants. New migrants are defined as: any foreign national who has been living in Belgium for less than three years and who holds a residence permit that is valid for more than three months, with the exception of citizens of one of the Member States of the European Union, the European Economic Area, Switzerland and their family members. Many exemptions exist. The following list is simplified and non-exhaustive. Exempted are those who have already successfully completed an integration trajectory in another region in Belgium, those with a medical exemption, those who already obtained a certificate or diploma of Belgian education, minors and those over 65, migrant workers with a temporary residence permit, embassy personnel, those with a work permit B, personnel of particular international

¹⁵ This includes several registers: bevolkingsregister, vreemdelingenregister and wachtregister.

organisations, independent workers, professional sportsmen and women, and those who stayed in the Schengen area for over a year, student and those from third countries with an association agreement, e.g. Turkey. Family members of all these people are not necessarily exempted. Asylum seekers are not obliged to participate. To determine the length of stay, irregular stays are taken into account when they can be proven. The integration trajectory is also available for people who are not obliged but wish to participate.

3. Initiatives targeted at specific non-national groups

Flanders' wider integration policy focuses on the integration of travellers, minors, highly educated migrants. For travellers, a neighbourhood steward programme has been formed. These stewards form a bridge between the Roma population, municipality and social services.¹⁶ Minors are reached in multiple ways. Programmes exist for mothers of young children who have low literacy. This way, both the mothers and their children benefit. Until the age of 6, learning a new language is relatively easy and that is why toddlers and small children constitute a special target group. Also, migrants aged between 15 and 19 receive special attention since, often they tend to drop out of education and their flow towards other education or work is often problematic. Intensive guidance is crucial. The goal is to streamline their trajectory towards education or work and provide guidance. Currently 400 youngsters are in the programme, of which more than half are unaccompanied minors. A new experimental project @level2work has been developed to guide highly educated migrants to jobs of their own level. The project is still in an experimental phase focuses on MO-classes, civic integration focused on specific sectors in the labour market, joint intakes and voluntary work. This project runs until March 2018.¹⁷

In Wallonia, there are no special initiatives within the field of social orientation for specific groups but as in Flanders, many other initiatives exist that foster integration in wider society.

III. Courses/modules' characteristics

The agency for integration and civic integration (in Flanders and Brussels) organises together with comparable agencies in Antwerp and Ghent basic courses on societal orientation (maatschappelijke oriëntatie or MO) and they consist of **60 hours**. The **format** varies. Courses can be followed during the day but also during evening hours or the weekend. This depends on the school. Courses are offered in **different languages** ranging from Dutch, English and French to Arab and Farsi. The availability of different languages depends on the demand and the language capabilities of teachers. In 2016, 861 courses have been organised in 30 different languages. Beneficiaries follow their courses in a language they understand and sometimes interpreters are used in the classroom. Figures from 2014 show that most beneficiaries opted for an English course (20%), followed by Arab (15%), French (14%) and Dutch (8%).¹⁸ The **content** of the course in Flanders is the result of extensive expert discussions, demanded by the then-minister of civic integration, intending to conclude what common norms and values are and how those are perceived and transferred to newcomers. In 2006, an expert commission of freethinkers, religious people, Belgians and people of foreign descent was formed to deal with such questions (Bossuyt Commission).¹⁹ Their report still forms the basis of the course on social orientation, the so-called MO course.²⁰ Based in this report, (inaccessible to the general public) teaching materials have been formed called "Maatschappelijke Oriëntatie" or "Social Orientation". There are teacher guidelines, a thick student notebook full of exercises, a DVD and a website. Furthermore, extensive amounts of information (focussing on Dutch language training)

¹⁶ Flemish Government, Policy Letter Integration and Civic Integration 2017-2018 (in Dutch), October 27, 2017, p. 17.

¹⁷ Flemish Government, Policy Letter Integration and Civic Integration 2017-2018 (in Dutch), October 27, 2017, p. 21.

¹⁸ Van den Broecke, Sarah et al., Vlaamse Migratie en Integratie Monitor 2015, Antwerpen/Brussel: Steunpunt Inburgering en Integratie/ABB, p. 121.

¹⁹ "Bossuyt Commission" accessed January 19, 2018.

²⁰ Flemish Government, Policy Letter Integration and Civic Integration 2017-2018 (in Dutch), October 27, 2017, p. 6.

are freely available online that assist teachers in preparing their classes with a multicultural audience. This is an example from the Antwerp Agency.²¹ In Flanders, civic integration is **free of charge**. However, some costs might have to be made for study material. There is **no exam** for the social orientation courses but beneficiaries receive a civic integration certificate if they succeed in the social orientation course and their Dutch language classes. Another **certificate** demonstrates their regular attendance. In total, crucial to passing the MO class is regular attendance, active participation, the creation of a personal action plan focused on work, studies or social capabilities and the execution of two actions drawn from this personal action plan. Teachers evaluate beneficiaries both during and at the end of a course. During individual talks, teachers and beneficiaries discuss their progress and show which actions need to be done in order to succeed. In case of non-success in the MO course, beneficiaries get a new chance.²² It turns out that the personal actions beneficiaries have to take, often with success as a result, are experienced as positive and motivating.²³

In Wallonia, language courses take minimally 120 hours, if necessary and the citizenship course takes minimally **20 hours**.²⁴ In the future this number of hours will increase to 60 but the Decree has not been modified yet.²⁵ The orientation towards a socio-professional integration takes at least 4 hours. The **teaching hours** depend on the organisation. Most courses are taught during the day but evenings and Saturdays can be a possibility. There are two types of courses, depending on the language level of the beneficiary. People with a language level above A2 follow “formation d’intégration citoyenne” (course of civic integration). Those with a lower language level follow “Atelier d’Orientation citoyenne” (atelier of civic orientation). So that language is not an obstacle, the services of an interpreter are available; interpreters are provided by a social interpretation service approved by the region of Wallonia. The agreement beneficiaries sign takes up to 18 months with a prolongation of maximally one year. Most of the courses in Wallonia are offered in French. There are some initiatives in other **languages** but they seem to be more informal. Interestingly enough, several teaching materials are available in many more languages than French. Albanian, English, Arab, Armenian, Spanish, Farsi, Mandarin, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Swahili and Turkish material is available. The DISCRI has developed these **extensive teaching materials** (unavailable to the wider public). The goal is to streamline the rather fragmented initiatives that existed before. They provide guidelines as to how teachers can fill in their courses. Besides those teaching materials, the association promoting alphabetisation “lire et écrire” (reading and writing) has developed materials (mostly freely accessible) with the support of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). They developed several ‘briefcases’ each dedicated to a specific topic: living together, housing, health, education, work and social security, daily life, residency statuses and migration, institutions and lastly the newly published ‘you, me and all the others’ about living together in diversity.²⁶ There is **no exam** in the Walloon civic integration trajectory and courses are **free of charge**. Every semester, there is an evaluation of the progress. **Certification** regarding participation is handed over to the beneficiary and at the same time transferred to the municipality in order to keep track of beneficiaries. Course participation should be over 80%.

IV. Content of courses

²¹ [“Dutch teaching materials”](#), accessed January 23, 2018.

²² [“Result”](#) accessed January 3, 2018.

²³ Flemish Government, Policy Letter Integration and Civic Integration 2017-2018 (in Dutch), October 27, 2017, p. 19

²⁴ Discussions are currently ongoing concerning an increase of the number of hours but no concrete modifications of the Decree have been announced yet.

²⁵ [“Press release Alda Greoli”](#), accessed January 24, 2018.

²⁶ [“Lire et écrire”](#), accessed January 23, 2018.

1. Aims of the courses

Civic integration and more specifically social orientation fits in the wider view of Flanders on diversity. Today's main challenge is to deal with the effects of migration, respecting peoples' singularity, within the framework of the norms and values of Flemish society. Equal participation should be sought after. An effective and efficient integration and civic integration policy is necessary for a viable society.²⁷ The general goal is formulated as follows: "Through civic integration, the beneficiaries can function more independently, in a socially responsible manner and in accordance with their own competences and ambitions, and while recognising the norms and values of Belgian society".²⁸ Acquiring skills is central in this respect, knowledge and attitudes are supportive to skills such as information gathering and processing, problem solving, the skill to recognise diversity and the skill to strive to recognising the norms and values of Belgian society. Through learning Dutch, a first introduction to the society, guidance towards work, voluntary activities, education and use of space time, beneficiaries are guided. The starting point here is a custom-made trajectory, aligned with the personal context, the goals and competences of the beneficiary.

In Wallonia, the aim of the settlement programme is to welcome and support new foreign residents, help them acquire basic knowledge on how society functions and the social relations in Belgium and facilitate their integration into the country.²⁹ This entails acquiring the basis of speaking and writing French and a basic knowledge of Walloon society, increasing the opportunities to participate in society, improving living together, finding employment and following up on children's education.

2. Themes covered

As mentioned above, acquiring skills is central to Flemish civic integration policy. The development of 11 'learning environments' offers possible ways to concretise these skills in the courses:

1. City and country;
2. Residence statuses;
3. Family;
4. Work and entrepreneurship;
5. Housing;
6. Health care;
7. Adult education;
8. Public services;
9. Mobility;
10. Consumption;
11. Spare time.

As said in the paragraph dedicated to the development of the content of the policy, norms and values are, besides skills, also central in the course. Within these more practical topics, more conceptual values are also taught. According to the website of the Agency on integration and civic integration they are (implicitly) incorporated in the course. Five main values are key to live in Flanders: freedom, equality, solidarity, respect and citizenship. These five most important values exist within three 'sets of norms and values': democracy, the constitutional state and pluralism. In practice, much emphasis is put on practical issues. Every course is different and teachers depart from the knowledge and the questions of the class. Not every learning environment is treated and teachers are free to make their own pedagogic choices.

²⁷ Flanders / VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2 / (15.07.2016), p. 3

²⁸ Liesbeth Baeten et al., Maatschappelijke oriëntatie – handleiding voor de docent, Brussels: Agentschap voor binnenlands bestuur, 2008.

²⁹ "Integrating" accessed January 9, 2018.

In Wallonia, the citizenship education treats a great variety of topics. Looking at the structure of the “formation d’intégration citoyenne” (language level above A2) we note 6 modules and an interlude:

1. Creating solid foundations for intercultural communication;
2. Being and acting in new political contexts;
3. Being and acting in new professional and education related contexts;
4. Social protection and state finances;
5. Being and acting in new socio-cultural contexts;
6. Daily life;
7. Me and my family.

Each of the topics above is subdivided into several other topics. Not all topics are obligatory but teachers are kindly asked to especially focus on: the general presentation of the state, the federal state of Belgium, voting, political pluralism, constitutional monarchy, separation of powers and the rule of law, neutrality of the state, presentation of social protection, the finances behind state missions (taxes), housing (how to find housing despite negative stereotypes, rights and duties of owner and renter, relations with neighbours), health care and education.

3. Teaching methods

In Flanders (and in Flemish courses in Brussels), most courses are given by teachers who combine lecturing with interactive discussions and group work. The method they adhere to is called CLIMOdiek, and is a form of cooperative teaching in multicultural contexts. Teachers do not simply answer to your questions and needs. Beneficiaries are encouraged to actively participate in the course. They are supposed to work alone or together in dealing with situations one can encounter in Flanders. Self-reliance and the attitudes of beneficiaries are important. Besides class work, extracurricular activities can be undertaken such as city walks, museum visits, a visit to an agency promoting LGBT awareness, ecological living etc.

In Wallonia, the DISCRI assists the teaching organisations in formulating their courses. In the course they provide for the teachers, the intercultural method is put forward. This encourages for example asking beneficiaries to explain what certain situations were like in their respective home countries and to take this as a starting point to compare it to the Belgian situation. Some schools might organise visits but this is not structural.

4. Participation of host society in the courses

In Flanders (and in Flemish courses in Brussels), participation of the host society in the course depends on the schools. In Flanders, we noted that some schools organise round table discussions with beneficiaries and Belgian people. Other schools invite a Belgian in the classroom now and then. It is unclear whether all course providers do this, but it seems that there is some (albeit limited) space for the participation of the host society in the courses.

In Wallonia, it is rather rare that Belgians participate in the classroom since these courses are explicitly set up for non-nationals. Sometimes, teachers might invite speakers to assist them concerning certain topics but most importantly, there are numerous other integration initiatives promoting contact between Belgians and non-nationals.

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