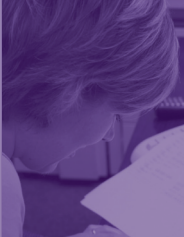


Flemish government



Flemish Ministry
of Education and
Training



The **L-FACTOR** in your company or organisation

working on literacy in the workplace
benefits both employers and employees



The L-factor in the Flemish economy

15% to 18% of adults in Flanders have poor literacy skills. As a result of this, they are unable to function to their maximum capacity and develop themselves further socially and at work. This has far-reaching consequences for the well-being of these people themselves, not to mention for the competitiveness of the companies and organisations where they work.

Much more than reading and writing

Literacy is the ability to process information from texts, documents and statistics, as well as use computers and multimedia. It is about much more than being able to read and write. This makes literacy an essential skill in a knowledge economy like the Flemish economy. In other words, the L-factor is very high in Flemish companies and organisations.

The Flemish economy's strength lies in service provision and a high level of knowledge and technical innovation. In order to be able to maintain its global competitive position, Flanders needs skilled and therefore, literate workers. Flanders stands out at an international level because of its relatively high number of people with poor literacy skills, on the one hand, and its relatively high number of people with excellent literacy skills, on the other hand.

High priority for companies and organisations

Companies and organisation in Flanders therefore show a great interest in making literacy a high priority in the workplace. A recent international survey indicated that, for instance, poor literacy skills cost Dutch society some EUR 500 million every year. In the UK, it was calculated that a company with a workforce of more than a thousand suffers an annual loss of GBP 500,000 because workers have inadequate skills, including literacy skills.

READY FOR INNOVATION

BETTER COOPERATION

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

HIGHER PRODUCT QUALITY

The
L-FACTOR
in your comp
organisa

SAFER WORK ENVIRONMENT

Growing importance of literacy in companies and organisations

The growing interest in literacy is everything to do with developments in the economy. The main focus is the shift from production to service provision. This results in a sharp rise in the number of tasks where workers need to process information.

In addition, our society is moving towards a high-tech society. Digital media are playing an ever-increasing role in the jobs that workers do. This applies to both large and small companies, whether in the private or public sector.

Literacy: the foundation for skills development

Literacy is a basic skill. Workers who have poor literacy skills cannot develop other skills well. They will encounter problems when carrying out tasks, cooperating with other colleagues and solving problems independently. They will not be sufficiently able either to brush up their technical knowledge and keep up to date with developments in their company or organisation. Applying for a position and developing their career can be a problem for them.

Certain groups run a higher risk of having a poor literacy level: older workers, non-native speakers, unqualified school-leavers and people with disabilities. But low literacy levels are not restricted just to these groups. According to estimates, 1 person in 6 or 7 in Flanders is illiterate. It is therefore not inconceivable that poor literacy is an issue for your company or organisation too.

Literacy in your company or organisation

- Are you facing the challenge of an ever-changing market?
- Are you looking for suitable workers for a shortage occupation?
- Do you attach importance to employing the right person in the right job?
- Do you want to take into account the development of older workers?
- Retain valuable workers?
- Promote diversity?
- Be prepared for future developments in a high-tech knowledge economy?

If you do, focusing on literacy, embedded in a broader skills policy, is an important basic condition for this.



More information

You can request a free brochure *The L-factor in your company or organisation. Literacy in the workplace.* from:

Flemish Ministry of Education and Training
Agency for Education Communication
Publications Unit
Koning Albert II-laan 15
1210 Brussels
and/or visit naar www.vlaanderen.be/geletterdheid.

This brochure and the related website offer companies and organisations, whether from the private sector, public sector or social economy, a set of specific tools for improving literacy on a gradual basis:

- Tools for identifying literacy problems in your company or organisation
- Tips on how to set up a literacy training course
- A guide on screening and adapting your corporate communications materials
- A guide for recording your workers' literacy level
- How to promote good literacy practices
- Examples of literacy actions adopted in Flemish companies and organisations
- Information about training bodies in your area

Flanders wants to actively promote literacy in the workplace. The Flemish Government and social partners signed the ambitious Vilvoorde Pact with this in mind. This Pact intends to increase significantly the number of functionally literate people and people with ICT skills in Flanders by 2010.

