


PRESS RELEASE

4 March 2013

Report to the Flemish Parliament

Adult Education: Staff Financing



The adult education decree of 15 June 2007 aimed for extensive flexibility in and renewal of adult education. The Court of Audit has assessed the extent to which staff framework and regulations for adult education have been tuned to the flexibility and innovation government aimed at, as well as the implementation thereof.

Staff Financing

The government choices for a modular organization and the possibilities of open study centres and long distance courses have added a great deal of flexibility to adult education. However, some of the framework aspects do interfere with flexibility. For instance, the required regular student participation hasn't been optimally tuned to the individual possibilities or needs in attending all lessons. Student drop-outs are plenty and the participation criterion is hazy and can hardly be supervised. Furthermore the choice of government in favour of a past reference period as a base for calculating staff numbers doesn't take annual student fluctuations in the centres fully into account. The formula for calculating staff numbers can be reconsidered, especially divisor numbers. The department calculates staff numbers correctly indeed. However, supervising whether the actual used staff numbers do not exceed the assigned numbers is not without flaws.

Legal status of personnel

Statutory appointments and the corresponding benefits are a major help for adult education centres in attracting staff. The government took a specific measure to prevent adult education centres having to appoint staff in newly started courses too quickly. In doing so it did not take into account that full time statutory appointments in adult education are more difficult. Neither did government take specific measures to ease a run-down of less popular courses.

The government has adjusted personnel regulation for the centres of adult education to the modular organization, including regulation of required performances and qualifications. The centre for adult education teacher's right to a salary however was less adequately adapted to the modular system. To determine this right the calculation goes out from the period of the appointment, not taking into account the period of actual achievements. This can lead up to a violation of the law on pay protection, that requires salaries to be paid immediately after actual achievement. Moreover, government does use the same method to determine the statutory rights of the teacher, without this having been regulated in any of

the legal status decrees. The large turnover of young staff members can jeopardize future personnel attraction.

Although the number of salary scales has not declined, the percentage of mistakes made at determining salaries of management and teaching personnel in centres for adult education has strongly decreased since 2003, when last the Court of Audit conducted a survey. The administration has largely met with the recommendations the Court made to reduce the numbers of mistakes. More mistakes still are being made concerning basic education staff. For these electronic files on staff members are still lacking.

Budget and accounts

Average salary costs for one teacher's hour in centres of adult education added up to 70 euro in 2010-2011. Regarded the number of students in classes, these costs are slightly higher than those in regular full-time secondary education, but still lower than in part-time art education. A student taking one hour of lessons costs government 5,38 euro, enrolment fees excluded. The administration estimates salary budgets accurately, although the methods used can do with some refinement. In 2009 administration has conducted an interim evaluation of adult education financing. Although required by the decree, the Flemish Government did not conduct such an evaluation in 2012.

Reaction by the minister

The minister of education agreed with most of the Court's findings and recommendations. He has furthermore provided background information in order to nuance or complete some of the Court's conclusions. Finally he listed the measures he undertakes.

Information for the press

The Court of Audit exerts an external control on the financial operations of the Federal State, the Communities, the Regions and the provinces. It contributes to improving public governance by transmitting to the parliamentary assemblies, to the managers and to the audited services any useful and reliable information resulting from a contradictory examination. As a collateral body of the Parliament, the Court performs its missions independently of the authorities it controls.

The audit report on *Adult Education: Staff Financing* has been sent to the Flemish Parliament. The full version and this press release can be found on the Court's website: www.courtofaudit.be.