

FUTURE-PROOFING ADULT LEARNING IN CITIES



TILBURG, The Netherlands

Tackling Functional Illiteracy

Key facts

To overcome challenges with functional illiteracy, the Hart van Brabant region in the Netherlands has set out to motivate their inhabitants to tackle the problem in an accessible way through the programme “Approach functional illiteracy: together we can understand each other” (Aanpak laaggeletterdheid ‘samen begrijpen wij elkaar’). This case is an example of how to provide programmes targeted at groups most in need of training at local level.

Timeframe and funding

The programme runs from 2021-2024 and is evaluated every year and adjusted if necessary. It is funded partly by transfers from national government and partly by city-level budgets.

City population

219,599

Governing body

Tilburg City Council

Link

[lezen en schrijven | \(taalhuismb.nl\) ROC Tilburg | Education and integration](#)

Main objectives

The key objectives of the programme are:

- To improve the basic skills of people who are functionally illiterate in close corporation with a range of partners in the region.

Content and mode of delivery



In the region Hart van Brabant in the Netherlands, a significant number of inhabitants are struggling with functional illiteracy, which means that their reading and writing skills are inadequate to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond basic level. This is the case for both those individuals who have and those individuals who do not have Dutch as their mother tongue. Difficulties with functional illiteracy often creates work and health problems for individuals, including higher unemployment rates, lower income and lower quality jobs, more workplace accidents, reduced access to lifelong learning and low self-esteem, which can lead to isolation.

Therefore, as a part of the programme, students are offered basic skills programmes (reading, writing, and language courses) that take place in small groups, at their own pace, at a place near to them and at different times of the day (both day and evening courses). It is possible to sign up for courses all year round and an intake interview takes place before signing up to make sure that the offer is tailored to the need of the student.

Stakeholders



The regional programme was drawn up based on a request by the national government to all regions. Tilburg is the central municipality in the region of Hart van Brabant and therefore the city has the overall and final responsibility for the implementation of programme in this region. Beyond municipalities, key stakeholders involved are:

- the Central Brabant Library,
- ROC education (a VET provider) and
- a number of civil society organisations.

In this way, there is a broad local support of the programme. In the coming years, it is the objective of the region to involve as many organisations as possible, so that it becomes a widely supported approach.

Key challenges, success factors & transferability



One of the main challenges with regard to the implementation of the programme has been finding and motivating the target group in collaboration with the involved partners. According to the city of Tilburg, this is an issue that must be consistently addressed and the target groups should always be involved in the development of the programme to the extent possible. As stated by the city: nothing about them, without them!

The cooperation between partners and education actors is seen as one of the key factors to success of the programme.