

## 11. Belgium

*This country profile highlights current inclusive entrepreneurship policy issues and recent developments in Belgium. It also presents self-employment and entrepreneurship data for women, youth, seniors and immigrants relative to the average for the European Union.*

### Key trends

The self-employment rate has been approximately equal to the European Union (EU) average over the last decade. In 2018, 12.7% of those in employment were working as self-employed, relative to the EU average of 13.5%. Belgian youth were slightly more likely to be self-employed than the EU average for youth in 2018 (7.8% vs. 6.5%) but they were slightly less likely to have employees (14.2% vs. 15.9%). This proportion has dropped significantly since 2009, when it was 23.8%. One possible factor is that a growing proportion of youth entrepreneurs indicate that they started their business due to a lack of employment opportunities (24.8% over the period 2009-13 vs. 32.7% for 2014-18).

### Hot issue

Structural barriers to entrepreneurship continue to pose an important obstacle to under-represented groups. The federal government is seeking to simplify and modernise company and association law to help make Belgian companies more competitive and to attract investments. The new Code for Companies and Associations came into force on 1 May 2019 and it reduces the number of legal forms that businesses can take, simplifies the business registration requirements, eliminates capital requirements for most legal forms, and permits companies to be created by a single person. In addition to simplifying administrative requirements for businesses, these changes are also expected to open up entrepreneurship to more people.

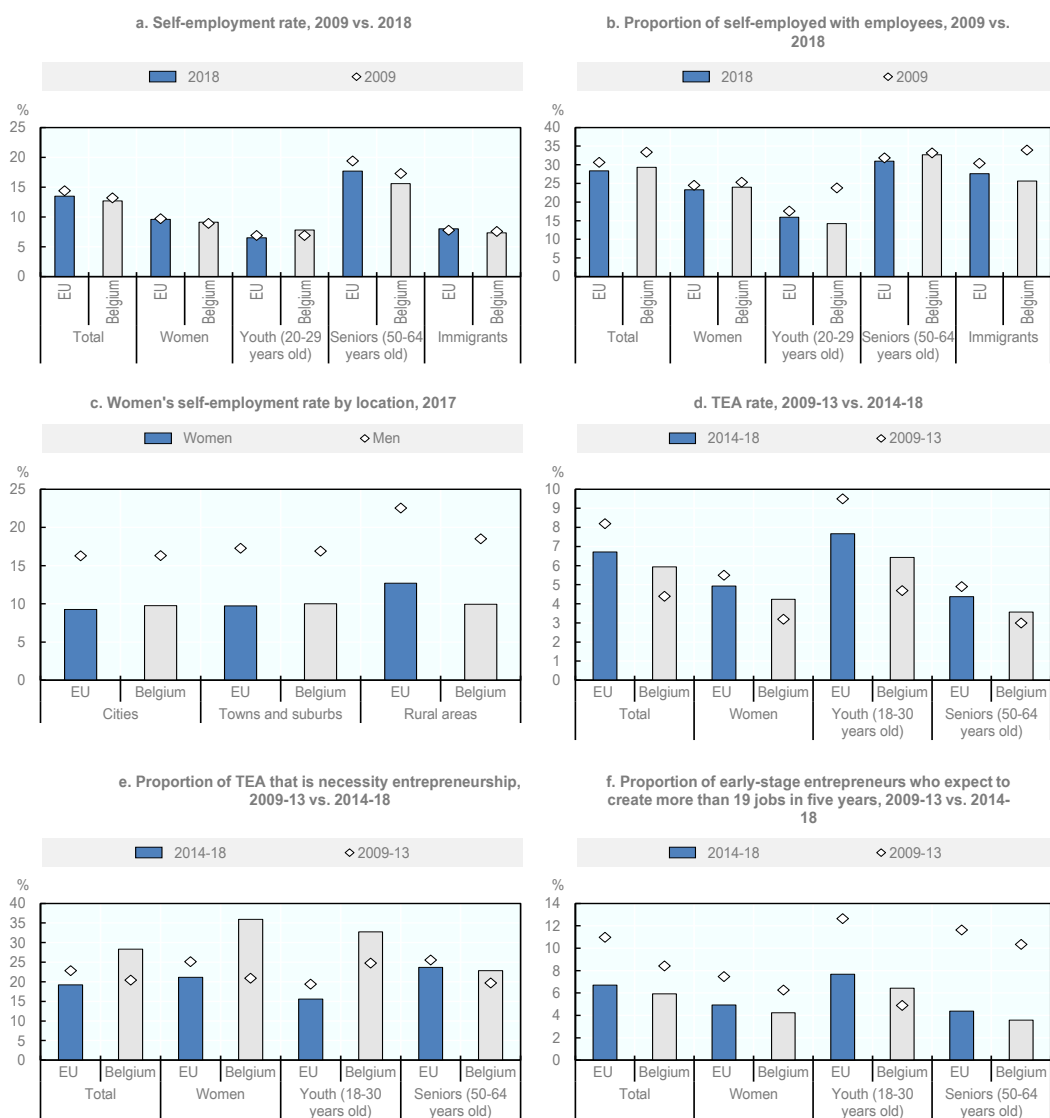
### Recent policy developments

Efforts to support youth entrepreneurs continue to be strengthened. In 2017, a new “student entrepreneur” status came into effect. Young people under 25 years old who are enrolled at a higher education institution in Belgium can receive several benefits including the elimination of social security contributions when annual income is below EUR 6 505.33 and a reduction in the contribution rate (to 20.5%) for income between EUR 6 505.33 and EUR 13 010.66. Further, student entrepreneurs maintain their rights to health care as a dependent if their annual income is less than EUR 6 505.33.

This profile is based on a recent country assessment report, which can be found at: [www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/inclusive-entrepreneurship.htm](http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/inclusive-entrepreneurship.htm).

## Key inclusive entrepreneurship data

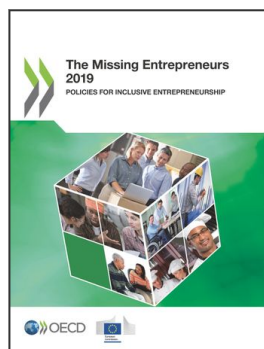
Figure 11.1. Entrepreneurship and self-employment data for Belgium



**Notes:** The self-employment rate is defined as the number of self-employed people (15-64 years old) divided by the number of people in employment. The TEA rate is the proportion of adults (18-64 years old) involved in setting up a business or managing a business that is less than 42 months old. Necessity entrepreneurship is defined as entrepreneurship activities that were launched because there were no other options in the labour market. Early-stage entrepreneurs are those who are in the process of setting up a business or managing a business that is less than 42 months old. The EU average in Panels D-F excludes Czech Republic and Malta for the period 2009-13.

**Sources:** Panels A and B: Eurostat (2019), Labour Force Survey, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>; Panel C: Eurostat (2018), Self-employment, Labour Force Survey ad-hoc module, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>; Panels D-F: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2019), *Special tabulations of the GEM survey 2014-18*.

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