

11 Belgium

This country profile presents self-employment and entrepreneurship data for women, youth, seniors and immigrants in Belgium relative to the average for the European Union. It also highlights recent developments in inclusive entrepreneurship policy, including the COVID-19 response.

Conditions for inclusive entrepreneurship

The Belgian context for entrepreneurship has strengths, but some areas could be improved. For example, the regulatory burden on new start-ups is heavier than the EU median. Entrepreneurship policies and programmes are designed and implemented by the federal government, regions and language Communities. This makes for a rich but fragmented support system. However, business start-up support is widely available across the three regions: Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia. This includes general entrepreneurship schemes, as well as a wide range of tailored schemes for different population groups. Youth entrepreneurship support has been prioritised across the three regions in recent years, but support for immigrant and women's entrepreneurship has also been strengthened.

Recent trends

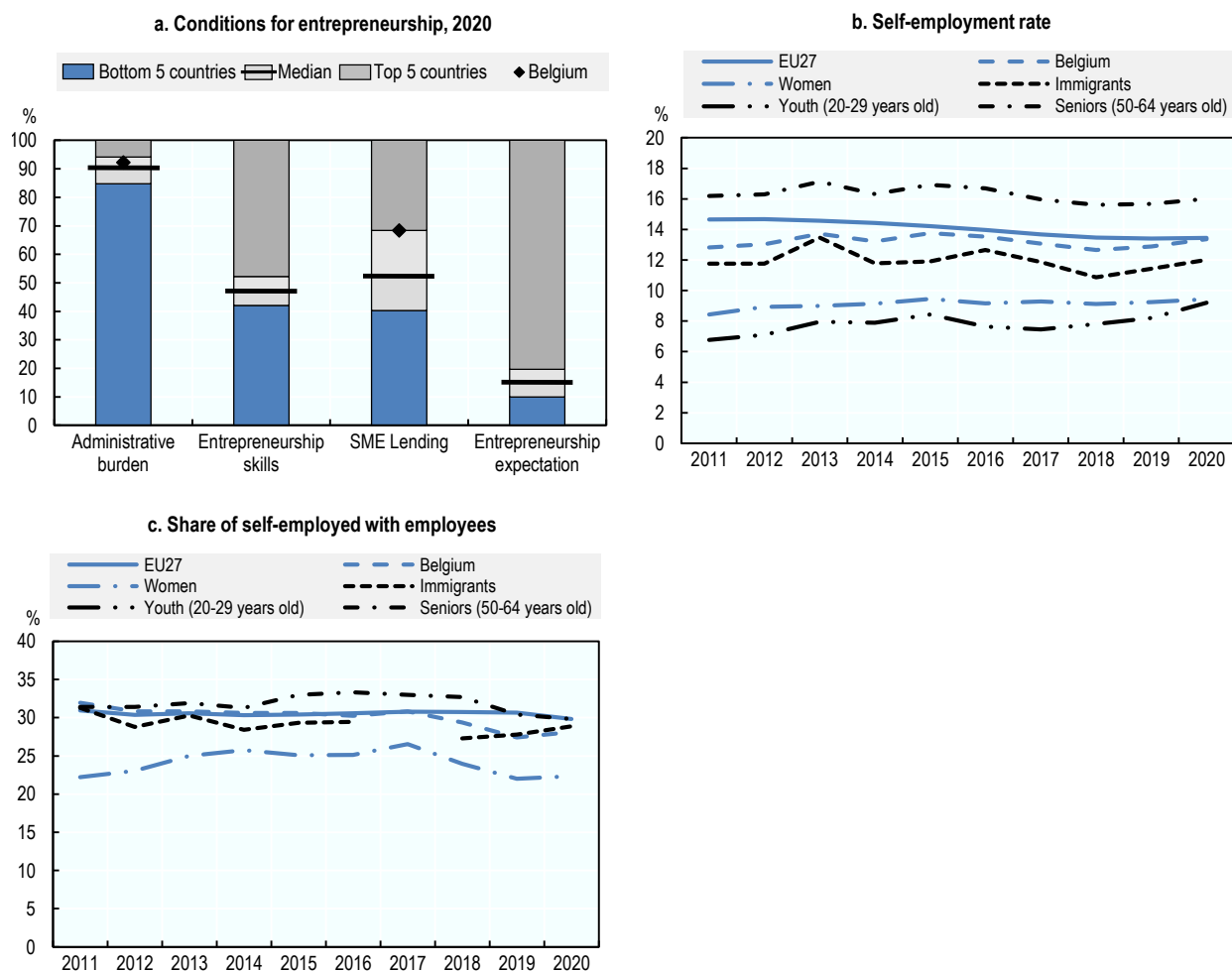
The self-employment rate remained relatively stable over the past decade at about 13%, nearly equalling the EU average in 2020 (14%). However, the shares of women and youth who were self-employed increased since 2011. The share of women increased by 1 percentage point (p.p.), while the share of youth (20-29 years old) increased by nearly 3 p.p. over the last decade. The share of self-employed people with employees decreased slightly in the same period, notably among self-employed immigrants and seniors.

Hot policy issue

Regional and federal governments implemented COVID-19 relief measures for the self-employed. This included a temporary extension of Federal unemployment benefits and the “Corona Bridging Rights”, which offered financial subsidies to impacted full and part-time self-employed workers. These subsidies ranged from EUR 1 292 (for those without family responsibilities) to EUR 1 614 (for those with family responsibilities) and were extended until March 2021. Further, the Brussels-Capital Region provided EUR 2 000 to small companies with significant drops in revenues and EUR 4 000 to those forced to temporarily close. The Flemish regional government provided EUR 3 000 to full-time self-employed workers (EUR 1 500 for self-employed as a secondary occupation) with substantial turnover loss and EUR 4 000 to firms forced to temporarily close. This programme was extended in January 2021 for companies facing a turnover loss of at least 60%. Other supports for the self-employed included temporary access to the Flemish Support Premium (*Vlaamse Ondersteuningspremium, VOP*). The Wallonia Region launched a support fund of EUR 350 million, of which EUR 223 million was designated for lump sum compensation to impacted businesses and self-employed workers experiencing cash flow difficulties.

Inclusive entrepreneurship indicators

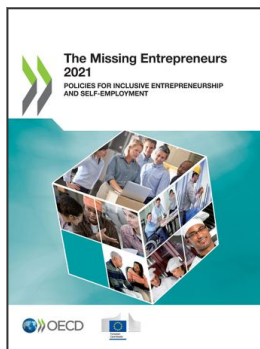
Figure 11.1. Entrepreneurship and self-employment data for Belgium



Note: Please see Chapter 9 for notes on the figures.

Source: Panel a: (World Bank, 2020^[1]; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2021^[2]; OECD, forthcoming^[3]); Panels b-c: (Eurostat, 2021^[4]). Please see Chapter 9 for the full citations.

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