

Economic, Political and Cultural Activities in Belgium | A1 Sample answer

Examine the interaction between economic, political and/or cultural activities in any region you have studied (2013 Q6C)

A European region I have studied is Belgium. Belgium is split into two areas of Wallonia and Flanders. French is spoken in Wallonia and Flemish is spoken in Flanders. There are economic, political and cultural differences between these two regions.

Belgium is divided by its three official languages; French, Flemish and German. Its capital, Brussels, is a bilingual city with both French and Flemish being spoken there. Northern Belgium is called Flanders and they speak Flemish. Southern Belgium is called Wallonia and it speaks French. There are tensions between these two language groups. Each language region is responsible for its own educational, social and cultural affairs. A new federal-style government was introduced, recognising separate language regions. Government officials in Belgium must speak all three languages. If you want to emigrate from Wallonia to Flanders, you must pass an exam in Flemish.

There are economic differences too. Wallonia used to be a core region during the industrial revolution because there were productive coal fields and industries there. However the region began to decline in the 1950s. This was because the coal mines were no longer profitable and it was too costly to extract coal from them when cheaper energy could be sourced elsewhere. Flanders emerged as a core region in the 1960s. Currently, most industries have relocated to places like Antwerp in Flanders where they can get their raw materials easier and Wallonia is still in decline. The Belgian government is currently investing in Wallonia in an attempt to encourage industrialisation once again to generate employment and inward migration. However Wallonia is still an economically challenged region.