



Fabrice Ramsey went to school like any normal child in Belgium. However, due to a combination of factors he was not learning. When he finally completed his education he was 22 years old and became a carpenter who could not read or write properly. Fabrice's story represents one of the most common cases of illiteracy in Belgium.

According to his teacher, Pascale Lassablière, from the centre Lire et Écrire, one in every ten people suffer from the same problem in Belgium. Recent studies show that in major European countries, the percentage of illiteracy is around 10 percent.

### **How did you feel when you could not read or write?**

I felt constantly ashamed of not being able to read or write, because you are always looking for solutions to overcome the problem, whether it is at work or in private life. I was constantly looking for a way to around it and to hide it.

### **Why is it important to know how to read and write?**

It is important because it is a form of improving yourself, of evolving both personally and professionally. Nowadays, work is a lot about filling out reports, documents, etc. If we don't have that capacity we are not able to find a job, we have to stay unemployed.

### **How do you feel now?**

Now I feel very well because a lot of things have changed for the better since I learned how to read and write. I changed professions. My relationship with my daughter also evolved and improved because before I could not read her stories, I could not help her with her homework or with school in general and now she is finishing primary school and I can help her a bit, I do my best to help her.

### **What else has changed in your life?**

Besides all that, now I have fewer problems in finding work, I go to any agency and now they consider me, before they would say, “no thank you, good-bye.” And when I was back in school we did a small project with a TV regional channel from Namur and I got very involved and now I am a cameraman. So after five years since I learned how to read and write I am a cameraman. I even direct and edit my own films. I also run my own personal projects and work with the centre - Lire et écrire. The change in my life was really radical.

Fabrice, Pascale and the centre Lire et Ecrire have built a network of learners in Belgian and a European Network of learners and trainers – Eur-Alpha - that seek to raise awareness of, and contribute to, solving the problem of illiteracy in Europe and the stigma associated with it and resulting social problems.

<http://www.eur-alpha.eu/>

*Fabrice Ramsey, 39 years old, Belgian*