

## 1.1 Target population of youth policy

In the Netherlands, the term youth is applied to children and young people from 0 up to the age of 25. In 2015, there are almost 5 million children in this age group: children (0 – 12 years) and young people (12 – 25 years). This is almost one third of the total population of 17 million inhabitants. As in most other industrialized countries, the proportion of youth in the total population is decreasing.

- The age of maturity in Dutch law is 18 years.
- Compulsory education is from 5 to 16 years.
- Primary school starts at the age of 4 and finishes at the age of 12.
- Secondary school starts at 12 years until the age of 16 - 17. If no basic qualification is reached, children are obliged to continue education until 18 years.

Youth policy focusses on preventive and specialized guidance, care, and support for children and young people. Different legal frameworks apply, depending on the age and type of support needed. The two main points of departure are:

- Promoting children and youth participation is the responsibility of local municipalities. It is a part of local active citizenship policies. The national Social Support Act (see par. 1.2) is the legal framework that applies for all citizens, including young people.
- Youth care is for young people until 18 years. This is the responsibility of local municipalities. It is laid down in the Child and Youth Act (see par. 1.2). When continuous care is needed, this belongs to the realm of public health and (mental) health care. This is laid down in the Social Support Act and other Health Care Acts that apply for all citizens.

More information can be found on the [Dutch governmental website](#), in the [Youth monitor](#) or [here](#).