

## **1.3 National youth strategy**

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## **Existence of a National Youth Strategy**

### **Decentralization policy**

Since January 2015, all Dutch municipalities ([352 on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021](#)) are responsible for the whole continuum of welfare, support and care for all citizens, including children, young people and families in need of help. The decentralized responsibilities relate to all types of services, including youth mental health.

Before 2015, responsibilities in welfare and care for all citizens, including children and young people, were divided between local, provincial and national authorities. Services were fragmented, financial streams differed and the system was ineffective. Reforms were needed to better streamline the services and approaches and to adapt them to local needs. The aforementioned decentralization has been a major shift in transforming policies and services towards integrated approaches.

[The transition in the youth care system did not stand alone](#), but was connected to policy, budget cuts and decentralization measures in the fields of long term care, employment and education. In paragraph 1.2 more information is given about the national Child and Youth Act (2015) that provides the legal basis for the decentralization and the accompanying transformation of all support and care for children, youth and families.

## **Scope and contents**

### **Aims of the transformation**

The following transformation goals set in the [Child and Youth Act](#) (2015) are meant to achieve more coherence between the youth and social domains:

- Facilitating ownership, empowerment and self-reliance of all citizens, including young people;
- Creating needs-based services;
- Better approach to prevention and early interventions;
- Support, help and care for all citizens;
- Integrated methods;
- Mental health support and support for disorders;
- Cost effectiveness;
- Care made-to-measure;
- Involving children and families in policies and services.

## **Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy**

### **Ministries involved**

National governmental responsibilities for children and young people belong to 4 different ministries:

- [Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport](#)
  - youth policy and most specialized services for families and children
  - social support towards active citizenship for all
- [Ministry of Justice and Security](#)
  - mandatory child protection measures
  - juvenile justice policy and related institutions, juvenile criminal justice
- [Ministry of Education, Culture and Science](#)
  - all educational matters
- [Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment](#)
  - labor related measures, including the [Childcare Act](#) (2005) for childcare centers and playgroups
  - work and income for according to the [Participation Act](#) (2015)

# Revisions/updates

## First evaluation of the Child and Youth Act

As described in paragraph 1.2, the first [evaluation of the Child and Youth Act](#) in 2018 showed that since the act came into force most changes made could be characterized as transition. In January 2018 the act's transformation goals still had to be achieved for the most part.

## Evaluation leads to action programme

In response to the report and discussions with key stakeholders the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport launched the [action programme Taking Care of Youth](#) in 2018. The programme aims to continually improve youth care, child protection and youth probation to ensure that children, youngsters and their families timely receive adequate care. The programme focuses on better protection for children whose development is at risk, better access to youth care and raising more children at home or, if necessary, in family-like care environments. It also aimed to provide all children with the opportunity for optimal development and to improve support for vulnerable youngsters towards independence. The final focus is investing in the expertise of youth care professionals. The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport and the Minister of Justice and Security together report to parliament about the programme's progress twice a year.

## **Second evaluation**

In 2020 the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau) concluded that five years after a decentralization took place in the fields of social support, youth care and employment support, its expected outcomes had not been fulfilled yet. More empowerment, ownership and self-reliance of citizens and more support by their social networks appeared to be less feasible in practice than assumed. Vulnerable children and youth did not receive the specialized care they needed and municipal expenses surpassed budgets.

More information about the decentralization and the transformation in the Dutch youth care can be found in the publication Children and youth support and care in The Netherlands (2015) of the Netherlands Youth Institute.

The [Netherlands Youth Institute](#) gives information about the Dutch youth policy on [www.nji.nl/en](http://www.nji.nl/en)