

## **1.9 On-going debates and reforms**

### **Decentralization**

The decentralization of all youth care from the national and the provincial governments to the local authorities, and the transition into a more preventive youth policy, is under constant debate since its start (January 2015). 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. In 2020 the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau) concluded that more empowerment, ownership and self-reliance and more support by 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. [The corona crisis enlarged the pressure on mental health care.](#)

Cabinet prepares a revision of parts of the Child and Youth Act, in which it regulates the long-term cooperation between local authorities and care providers on a supraregional scale that should improve the availability and continuity of specialized youth care, child protection and youth probation. [In April 2021 Cabinet made 1 billion euro extra available for municipalities to solve current bottlenecks in youth care.](#) Cabinet states that fundamental choices need to be made about the scope of the Child and Youth Act and the execution by municipalities and their freedom to make policy choices.

### **Youth care after 18<sup>th</sup> birthday**

The transformation all youth care is challenging for young people in youth care after their 18th birthday. Starting from that age their surroundings change: the involvement of guardians and youth care services end at the age of maturity. Suddenly the youngster is in charge, and has to formulate his or her own help request and solve his or her own problems. The Social Support Act applies from that age and has less possibilities in comparison with the Child and Youth Act. Young people just out of youth care tend to fall between two stools. [Therefore, under certain conditions municipalities have the authority to extend the duration of youth care until young people are 23 years old. Also since 2018 foster care automatically lasts until a foster child's 21st birthday, unless the youngster decides to leave foster care before he or she turns 21.](#)

Read more (in Dutch) about the support of vulnerable [youth in their transition to adulthood and independence.](#)