

4.2 Administration and governance

On this page

1. [Governance](#)
 2. [Cross-sectorial cooperation](#)
-

Governance

The “social affairs” remit is wide-ranging. Numerous organisations and establishments work in this area. Supervision of most of this work lies with the Department for Family and Social Affairs of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community.

Subsidising and inspecting the existing services, contributions by the DG are carried out via the specialist department in the Ministry.

Since the transfer of the supervision of the Public Welfare centres to the German-speaking Community a focus of the work of the Ministry lies in giving legal advice to those responsible for the centres. Added to this are developing of statutory regulations in the social area, improving coordination in social work and expanding and consolidating the socio-psychological support network. For this the DG is integrated into social work at regional, national and international level.

Integration

In Belgium the federal state is responsible for accommodating and distributing refugees and checking asylum applications. The German-speaking Community is only indirectly concerned in this first phase – except schooling for the children and issuing work permits for asylum seekers.

When a refugee obtains a residence permit and decides to settle in one of the nine municipalities, this is when the task of the German-speaking Community in the area of integration officially starts.

Housing

The transfer of the responsibilities for housing, which is currently exercised by the Walloon Region in the German language area, has already been pursued by the German-speaking Community for several years. Housing – and particularly public housebuilding – offers profitable regulatory instruments to prepare the German-speaking Community for the demographic challenges of the future. An active housing policy can encourage young families for example by acceptable rental or land prices to settle in East Belgium or else approach old-age poverty and

the isolation of senior citizens. Social housebuilding in particular complements the already existing social services that are offered and funded in the DG.

Protecting democracy against violent extremism

While security competence within the Belgian government structure lies largely with the federal state, prevention, awareness raising, education, early detection and the social support of radicalised persons falls largely within community responsibilities.

Main actors

Youth sector

Social inclusion of young people and those with fewer possibilities is a key objective of the funding decree for youth work. The youth sector is constantly making efforts in order to include as much as possible a variety of young people. Combating poverty also is an important topic in the Regional Development Concept (REK - [Regionales Entwicklungskonzept](#)) and policy in the German-speaking Community is also focused on social inclusion and the improvement of the living conditions of families. The [youth council](#) participates in the advisory council on family and generation affairs. Usually, the youth council and the youth office also are informed, when there are upcoming projects in the department for social affairs. Mobile youth work for example has a mixed supervisory committee where also people from the social sector and youth aid participate.

Intercultural youth work is one of the main vehicles mentioned in article 5 of the funding decree ([Dekret zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit](#)) to foster intercultural competences and identity finding. Intercultural youth work is almost provided naturally in the German-speaking Community as it is a border region, close to Germany, the French-speaking Community and the Netherlands. Moreover the German-speaking Community is situated quite close to several urban agglomerations, which makes, that pedagogical concepts of youth work and non-formal learning automatically consider the acquiring of intercultural competences.

Also, the [strategic plan](#) of the government established since 2013 takes measures with regard to young people having multiple problems. This also concerns homelessness, housing, financial exclusion and poverty. The strategic plan 2016-2020 "Acting respectful" foresees 11 actions in 4 categories: "Strong against Addiction", "Promoting diversity", "Political education", "Emotions and self-perception". These actions include the development of new approaches for prevention and building awareness on the topic of drug abuse in the German-speaking Community, a cooperation with the council for development cooperation and social inclusion (RESI), promoting projects of social inclusion in the youth field, building awareness against stereotypes/bar room slogans, supporting offers/mechanisms for professional youth workers and social worker and the development of networking in the German-speaking Community.

Public Social Welfare Centres ([ÖSHZ](#))

The Public Social Welfare Centre is an organisation created by the organic [law of 8 July 1976](#) which has existed since then in every municipality. The objective of the ÖSHZ is to support

people from the municipality in question who have got into difficulties. However, a check is carried out first to see whether the person can make any other claims. The help may be in the form of e.g. financial support. The two most important forms of financial help are:

- the integration income;
- other forms of welfare (assistance with doctor's or medication costs, energy costs, rent allowances, etc.)

The provision of help is not limited to the financial aspect. Rather the ÖSHZ social workers have the task of determining together with the applicant the causes of the emergency situation and to develop possible solutions (e.g. by training, professional integration, accommodation, medical treatment, etc.)

In addition advice, support and information for over-indebtedness, problems with household budgeting etc. are provided.

The ÖSHZ must treat all enquiries in confidence.

Each municipality has its own ÖSHZ.

DSBE (Service for Socio-professional Integration)

Every person has a right to social integration, states [Article 2 of the Act of 26 May 2002 on the right to social integration](#). Under the conditions laid down by law, this right may exist in an employment and/or an integration income with or without individualised project on social inclusion.

The Public Social Welfare Centres are charged with ensuring this right. More than 10 years ago this Act on the right to social integration in the form of work and/or integration income gave the Public Social Welfare Centres the starting signal to deal intensively with the socio-professional integration of integration income or equivalent welfare recipients. The Services for Socio-professional Integration (DSBE) were given the statutory task of supporting the integration income or equivalent welfare recipients by individual and targeted funding in their search for training and/or adapted work. Currently all 9 ÖSHZ of the German-speaking Community provide such a service in their municipality. All the services work closely together – across the DG to harmonise the working methods with each other and discuss common subjects. The Service for Socio-professional integration works in the 2nd line. After clarification of the right to integration income or foreigner allowance from the general social services, persons to be supported who in the estimation of the ÖSHZ social workers are ready for socio-professional integration are directed to the DSBE. These persons are to be prepared for the local labour market by intensive support and if applicable specific training and qualifications. For younger people the path to a professional qualification can also be enabled via an apprenticeship or degree programme.

If integration via employment or via a classical training course proves to be difficult, the DSBE can direct the person to a preparation-for-work or integration measure, e.g. in the case of

people with socio-psychological problems, with multiple employment barriers, with a lack of professional skills or with a need for stabilisation of social skills. These measures help people to acquire more self-confidence and a self-assessment of their abilities and weaknesses, to recognise and process psycho-social problems and to gain the motivation to change their situation for the better.

Community meeting places

Community meeting places are associations or public facilities that by community and group work reinforce the social cohesion of people who live within a specific sphere of influence. Between June 2015 and December 2015 community meeting places in the DG were set up. The government recognised them officially or gave them a provisional recognition. The community meeting places are:

- Patchwork in St. Vith
- the [Ephata](#) activity centre in Eupen
- the [Viertelhaus Cardijn](#) in Eupen
- the [Haus der Familie](#) in Kelmis

The basis is the decree of 5 May 2014 on the recognition and promotion of community meeting places in the DG ([Erlass der Regierung zur Ausführung des Dekrets vom 5. Mai. 2014 zur Anerkennung und Förderung von sozialen Treffpunkten](#)).

In their work the recognised community meeting places pursue as a priority the objective of enabling the participation of all in economic, political, social and cultural life, promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience and active citizenship.

This objective is broken down into the following sub-objectives:

- strengthening the diversity of society and the social cohesion of the citizens;
- preventing and reducing isolation;
- making it possible to experience esteem and recognition;
- promoting autonomy and supporting people to identify and articulate their own needs and interests;
- empowering people for self-organisation and self-help.

The provision is intended for all citizens of the DG. However, in the first place they should be aimed at all needs of the citizens who live in the sphere of influence of the community meeting place.

Special attention is paid by the community meeting places to people who are threatened by

social exclusion or live in social exclusion. These persons have a more difficult access to the basic rights such as education, culture or the right to information.

Coordinators work in the community meeting places. They are the contact persons for the visitors, develop services and activities and coordinate them. They are supported by voluntary workers.

DSL (Service for self-determined life)

The **Service for self-determined life** (DSL - [Dienststelle für Selbstbestimmtes Leben](#)) is a public institution for exercising duties in the disabilities area.

Since 1990 the Department of the German-speaking Community for People with Disabilities (DPB) has been responsible for matters for people with disabilities living in the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

The sphere of influence of the department relates to all areas of community life of people with a disability: upbringing, education and employment, housing and leisure, mobility and accessibility, etc.

On these matters the staff of the department provide appropriate information, advice and individual adaptations and service provisions – according to the principle “As normal as possible and only special where necessary”.

The aim of their work is to empower people with disabilities to lead an independent and self-determined life and to also sustainably improve their options for active participation in all areas of society. (“It is normal to be different!”)

The department gives advice and information by phone or by appointment in a personal interview on all assistance and support measures, supervision and therapy options, on entry into professional life or on allowances and discounts for people with disabilities.

The department is under the supervision of the Minister for Social Affairs of the German-speaking Community.

The German-speaking Community Job Centre ([Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft](#))

The job centre provides a range of services with the superordinate objective of contributing to a labour market in the German-speaking Community that functions as well as possible. They apply both to the supply and the demand side of the labour market and are directed in the first instance to jobseekers and employers as well as in the case of vocational guidance also to young people. Furthermore the job centre plays a part in the evaluation and provision of information on all aspects of the labour market.

VHS (Eupen Adult Education Centre)

The [Volkshochschule-Bildungsinstitut NPO](#) is an educational institution of the Christian Labour Movement (CAB) and sees itself as a socio-political educational institution in interaction with regimes, with the powerful in industry and politics. Political education also means guiding those participating towards critical analysis in their socio-political environment to thus create the condition for the capacity to exercise political rights.

Focuses of the VHS:

- Democratisation of education
- Systematic further education of people with different school levels
- Meeting people through education
- Education for the integration of new fellow citizens
- Education and social integration
- Promoting the capacity to exercise political rights
- Promotion of courses in citizenship
- Promotion of life-long learning
- Adult education in the third age
- Networking, exchanging views and cooperation

Frauenliga (Women's League)

As an educational institution for women the [Frauenliga/Vie Féminine NPO](#) in the German-speaking Community (DG) provides a wide range of courses, information, services and activities, organises women's groups of various age ranges and carries out ongoing vocational education and integration projects. The diverse needs of families are also met by the [Haus der Familie](#) Kelmis, Eltern-Kind-Treff (parent and child group), crèche and a customised parent-child course programme. The educational concept of the Frauenliga is intended to target the support of women in their personal development and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men. The provision is guided by the variety of real life situations of women, parents and children.

KAP

Info Integration

Social enterprises and preparation-for-work programmes

Social enterprises pursue not only purely economic aims but also social, environmental and ethical aims. In Belgium the following basic principles apply that set a trend for a social

enterprise:

- priority of work before capital in the distribution of the profits
- autonomy in management
- carrying out services and work in favour of the general public and the members instead of striving for profit.
- democratic decision-making process
- sustainable and eco-friendly development.

In the area of social economy the German-speaking Community supports projects for the social and professional integration of persons who have great difficulties in finding a job on the first labour market.

The social economic initiatives offer their target groups adapted training courses, jobs and intensive social and educational support.

The fields of activity of these projects go from environmental protection to recycling and furniture restoration and organic farming. Others deal with the practice of general trade or artistic skills. And other providers in turn work for their fellow human beings through services in the immediate vicinity. You can download the list of social enterprises in the DG.

In 2007 the restructured socio-professional integration path of the DG was presented. This provides for the possibility of a step by step integration or reintegration into working life for persons who need particular support with their socio-vocational integration. In terms of this there is one recognised “preparation-for-work programme” in the north and one in the south of the DG.

The preparation-for-work programmes aim in the first instance to stabilise the target audience on a psycho-social level and thus prepare them for possible later work. The preparation-for-work programme also serves to teach basic social skills.

The integration projects represent the next stage in this integration path. Here too one project is recognised in the north and one in the Eifel. The participants in an integration project also benefit from job training - practical as well as theoretical.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Networks North and South

Staff of various social enterprises in the south of the DG analyse the social network in the areas of housing, work and mobility. Particular attention is paid to the effects of poverty. The focus is the promotion of the social integration of young people and adults: the network develops solutions for closing the gaps in provision and seeks dialogue with political decision-makers. A network of work is also formed by exchange of information, visit to enterprises in neighbouring countries, etc.

Modelled on the Network South, social enterprises from the north of the DG are conducting dialogue and exchange in the Network North to extend the provision for promoting social integration.