



## **Youth Wiki national description**

# Youth policies in Belgium (Flemish Community)

2017

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>



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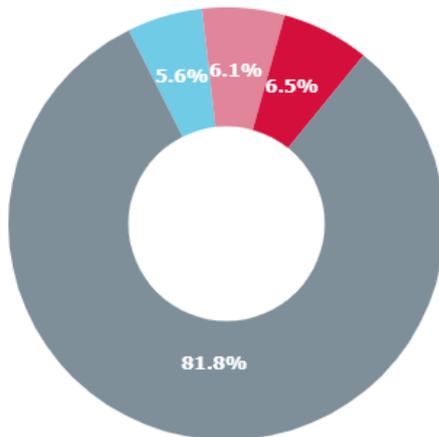
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## Belgium (Flemish Community)

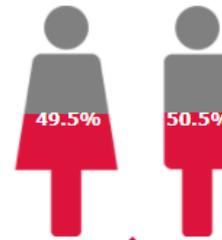
### Young People in Belgium

Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



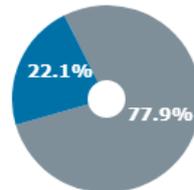
- Age group 15-19
- Age group 20-24
- Age group 25-29
- Other age groups

Total number of young people: 2 057 718



Ratio of men and women in the youth population

Ratio of young immigrants in all immigrants from non-EU countries



- Age group 15-29
- Other age groups

#### References:

Data are for Belgium as a whole, and might not represent the demographic situation in the Belgian Flemish Community.

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_010 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2015): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_070 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

## Youth Policy in Belgium (Flemish Community)

### Belgium: a federal state

Belgium is a federal state, consisting of three communities and three regions.

Communities:

- the Flemish Community,
- the French Community
- and the German-Speaking Community

Regions:

- the Flemish Region,
- the Walloon Region
- and the Brussels Capital Region

There is no hierarchy between the federal, the community and regional levels. This division into communities and regions is an unique characteristic of Belgian federalism. Both entities have their own exclusive competences (source: [Youth policy in the three communities of Belgium](#)).

### **Belgium: three ministers for Youth**

There is no youth policy at the federal level. The federal 'Belgian' level only has limited competence in youth matters, such as some aspects of judicial youth protection.

On Community level, the most explicit youth policy instruments can be found. The three Communities are competent for youth and youth policy. Each Community have a minister responsible for Youth, a parliamentary commission and a number of administrative departments with youth in their title and a large number of specific youth-related budget items.

The current Flemish Minister for youth is Sven Gatz (term: 2014-2019).

### **The Flemish Community**

The tasks of the Flemish public administration are organised on the basis of 13 policy areas. Each policy area is supported by a civil service department and a number of autonomous agencies. The departments support and advice the Government on policy-making, whereas the agencies apply the policy through services to citizens, companies and organisations.

A Flemish ministry was created for each of these policy areas. One of them is the Flemish Ministry for Culture, Youth and Media, which has a department and several agencies. The Division Youth – embedded in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Media- ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights. The Division Youth implements youth policy as a socio-cultural matter.

### **Principles of Flemish Youth policy**

Youth policy and related government measures are based on a **planned, comprehensive and integrated vision** of youth. The various elements in this definition are significant. Youth policy refers to an interrelated body of elements set in a time perspective. It covers elements from every sphere of life deemed important for young people, in a coherent way. Youth policy is embedded in a model of society which expresses the desirable situation for young people (as individuals and in terms of their group development), how they are expected to grow up and develop and the place they have in society.

Youth policy is implemented through explicit measures: the specific actions undertaken by the government focusing on a particular category of the population: 'youth'. For the Flemish Community, this means approximately the age group between 0 and 30 years old, although different definitions are used in specific contexts.

Youth policy is based on the assumption that it is possible to implement a **group policy**. This is not self-evident, because the Flemish government applies a sectorial approach in most other domains.

A group policy is a different way of implementing policy: instead of focusing on one sector, the starting point is young people's lives across the board, their needs and requirements. That is why youth policy permeates almost every other policy sector.

A group-oriented implementation of policy creates a number of policy crossroads, where it encounters sectorial policies. Youth policy is based on an interactive, participatory style of government and a comprehensive or inclusive approach to policy. This makes youth policy a special and supplementary policy. It provides many opportunities for a more democratic and improved governance of policy implementation (source: [Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Flanders \(Belgium\)](#)).

## **1. Youth Policy Governance**

### **Youth Policy Governance**

#### **Special feature**

On Community level, the most explicit youth policy instruments can be found. The three Communities are competent for youth and youth policy. Each Community have a minister responsible for Youth, a parliamentary commission and a number of administrative departments with youth in their title and a large number of specific youth-related budget items.

#### **Highlights**

For the policy period 2015 through 2019 it is the first fully integrated youth and children's rights policy plan. What is new is that this plan includes both the youth policy and the children's rights policy. The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan outlines in one single plan all the concerns regarding children and young people and their rights which the Flemish Ministers will pay heed to in their policies in the coming years.

### **1.1 Target population of youth policy**

The Flemish Community formally defines 'youth' as the group of children and young people up to and including the age of 30. This has also been explicated in the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights.

At the same time, youth policy in Flanders covers several policy areas, which may be concerned with a specific part of this group, see for example:

- Decree concerning the organization of child care for babies and toddlers: focused on children who are not yet attending kindergarten.
- Decree on Integrated Youth Care: focused on minors (youngsters under the age of 18)
- Decree concerning the system of learning and working: focused on youngsters between the ages of 15 and 25

### **1.2 National youth law**

#### **Existence of a National Youth Law**

The federal 'Belgian' level of government has limited competence in youth matters (e.g. some aspects of judicial youth protection), but there is no youth policy at the Belgian level. Person-related matters, such as education, health care, culture and youth are entitled to the Communities. Therefore, the most explicit youth policy and youth policy instruments can be found at this level.

In the Flemish community, on 1 January 2013, the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed youth and children's rights policy entered into force and replaced the initial decree of 18 July 2008 (see revisions/updates).

#### **Scope and contents**

Youth Policy is based on the assumption that it is possible to implement a group policy. This is not self-evident, because the government applies a sectorial approach in most other domains. A group policy is a different way of implementing policy: instead of focusing on one sector, the starting point is young people's lives across the board, their needs and requirements. That is why youth policy permeates almost every other sector.

The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 defines the policy for youth and children's rights as follows: "*the comprehensive and integrated vision and a government's resulting systemic and plan-based measures which aim to have a perceptible effect on youth, with a special focus on children's rights, as moral and legal framework*".

The act serves two major purposes:

1. It describes the basic instruments to implement youth policy. More specifically, five key instruments are mentioned:
  - Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy Plan
  - Impact study of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER)
  - Contact points for the policy on youth and children’s rights in all departments and agencies of the Flemish Authorities and increased coordination
  - A coordinating administration
  - A ‘Youth Progress Report’ to monitor the situation of youth

Furthermore, the act also defines that the Flemish Government provides for the establishment of a Youth Council. Every month, twenty-four individual youngsters and representative of youth organisations gather for the General Assembly. During this meeting, they discuss policy developments relevant to youth and approve advices. With regard to its advisory task, the Flemish Youth Council can give advice at its own discretion or at the request of the Government of Flanders or the Flemish Parliament. As stipulated by law, the Government of Flanders shall request advice when making legislation implementing the Flemish Youth Policy Plan. The Flemish Youth Council shall approve its advices at the General Assembly with a two-third majority of the attendees. Importantly, the Government of Flanders shall explain its decision on the policy advices relating to its competences to the Flemish Youth Council. The Flemish Youth Council can also give policy advices in case its members find it necessary in view of the interests of young people.

2. It specifies the conditions for accreditation and funding of a large number of private organisations and youth-related associations operating at a Flemish level (i.e. not organisations operating at a regional or a local level as these receive funding by the municipalities):
  - Nationally organized youth associations
  - Associations for participation and information
  - Cultural education associations
  - Political youth movements

The Flemish Parliament Act provides the coordination of youth policy as implemented in the different policy domains in Flanders. In an effort to mainstream youth policy, the policy plan is linked to other Ministries (and requires action from them) such as employment, education, welfare, urbanisation and mobility.

The act addresses the youth population as a whole.

## Revisions/updates

### Overview

1. The Flemish Parliament Act of 18 July 2008 on conducting a Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights. *Validity: 1 January 2009 – 31 December 2012*
2. The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights. *Validity: 1 January 2013 – ...*

### Content of main revisions

The Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights replaced the Decree of 18 July 2008. The renewed Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights brings about a number of changes in order to “fine-tune” several conditions of the decree of 2008. Overall, the essentials of the Decree of 18 July 2008 remain unchanged.

The most notable changes include:

- A strengthened integration of youth and children's rights policy
- The equalisation of the legal status of nationally organised youth associations, organisations, associations for cultural education, associations for information and participation
- A separate arrangement for political youth movements  
The restructuring and merging of organisations subsidised by name
- Revision of project grants

### **1.3 National youth strategy**

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

The key instrument of the Flemish Government in the implementation of its youth policy is [the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan](#), which operates on a four-year cycle. It presents, for each policy period and within an overall vision on youth and the youth and children's rights policy, the priority objectives of the Flemish Government and defines the performance indicators.

The Flemish Government has to present the plan to the Flemish Parliament no later than one year after the start of the Governments' term of office.

What is new is that the Flemish children's rights policy has been integrated entirely for the present policy period (2015-2019).

#### **Scope and contents**

##### **Main elements and objectives**

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan describes the way in which the Flemish Government implements the following policy objectives within its competences:

1. to create and guarantee equal opportunities for all children and young people
2. to create and guarantee broad development opportunities for children and young people
3. to create space for children and young people
4. to increase the formal and informal participation of children and young people in society.

In the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan the Flemish Government also describes how it puts into practice the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The current Youth Policy Plan is valid for the period 2015-2019 and includes 12 strategic goals and 34 operational goals. The encompassing themes are (1) poverty; (2) sustainability; (3) being young; (4) mobility; (5) education 1; (6) education 2; (7) participation; (8) space; (9) well-being; (10) housing; (11) employment; (12) cultural education.

##### **Specific intentions**

Although some specific intentions are mentioned with regard to young people in poverty, young people of immigrant origin, young people in special youth care and other disadvantaged groups, the overall focus is on equalising the opportunities of *all youngsters* in Flanders.

##### **Consultation of young people**

The Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan tries to serve as an example of participatory policy with great involvement from children, young people, their organisations and experts.

The process for drawing up the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019 completed several participatory stages. In the spring of 2013, an extensive [environmental analysis](#), the Great Priorities Debate, took place. The environmental

analysis provide an overview of trends, figures, research and the voice of children, youngsters and experts. The analysis was grounded the social and economic action programme 'Flanders in Action' (Vlaanderen in Actie, ViA). In a second stage, working groups composed of young people, youth workers, children's rights actors, civil society, civil servants and researchers worked together intensively for several months around nine selected themes to arrive at strategic and operational objectives on the basis of priority policy challenges. The Great Priorities Debate, several working groups and feedback through an online survey provided the seedbed for a framework of objectives around 12 priority topics.

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

### **National public authorities**

#### FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

The Flemish Government is responsible for implementing the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy plan. Some of its most important tasks regarding youth work and youth policy are:

1. the preparation, execution and evaluation of policy, and following legislation
2. and the regulation and financing of youth work.

The government develops youth policy documents which present the overall vision for youth and children's rights policy. An essential characteristic of Flemish youth policy is implementation through explicit measures such as acts or decrees. The government tends to regulate every specific field of youth policy, as defined by its Youth Policy Plan, with decrees. These decrees define the instruments of youth and children's rights policy and the funding of local and provincial authorities and youth organisations.

For the policy period 2015 through 2019 it is the first fully integrated youth and children's rights policy plan. After two years (in 2017), interim reports with regard to the implementation of the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan are issued. This allows for midterm adjustments to be made. At the end of the Government's term of office (in 2019) a final report will be drawn up. Main results of these reports of the integrated youth and children's rights policy plan aren't available yet.

#### MINISTER IN CHARGE OF YOUTH

The Flemish Government consists of 9 ministers, who are in office for a 5-year term. Minister Sven Gatz (liberal party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels (from 2014 until 2019).

Since 2004, the Flemish Government has allocated the 'coordination of the children's rights policy' and responsibility for 'youth' to the same minister.

#### MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND MEDIA

The 'Division Youth' – embedded in the department of culture, youth and media – ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights. Furthermore, the division implements youth policy as a socio-cultural matter. It stimulates and supports a rich and varied offer of non-commercial socio-cultural activities for young people, mainly through subsidising organisations and local authorities.

In short, the Division Youth has five main tasks:

1. Preparation, follow-up, evaluation and implementation of legislation (e.g. the Flemish Youth Policy Plan)
2. Funding support structures, youth organisations, youth projects, youth hostels and accommodation centers, as well as municipal and provincial youth (work) policy
3. Providing material support for youth work: e.g. the lending service for camping equipment for youth associations
4. Providing information on youth (work) policy (e.g. via website and e-zine)
5. Representing Flanders at international forums

## Other national public bodies directly involved in youth policies

### OTHER MINISTRIES

All the departments and the internal and external independent agencies of the Flemish Authority who were designated for this purpose by the Flemish Government have to appoint an official as the point of contact with regards to policy on the rights of youth and children. The role of these points of contact for the said policy is as follows:

1. To contribute to the creation of future Flemish youth policy plans
2. To provide monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Flemish Youth Policy Plan
3. To estimate the impact on children and young people and their rights of the policy prepared or implemented by their department or agency

### OFFICES

A Parliament Commission in charge of youth issues – The Commission for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media – is in the area of youth responsible for:

1. Youth policy and film classification
2. Continuous education and cultural development
3. Leisure activities, with the exception of tourism
4. Coordination of children's rights policy

### Local public authorities with competences in the youth field

5 provinces and 308 local authorities fall within the administrative supervision of the Flemish Region. Since the Flemish Parliament Act on local and provincial youth (work) policy came into force in 1993, steps were taken towards a decentralized and complementary youth policy.

Most local authorities nowadays have youth services or at least one officer who is responsible for youth matters.

## Revisions/updates

### Integration of youth policy and children's rights policy

The most notable change is the integration of both the youth policy and the children's rights policy in an all-encompassing and long-term municipal policy plan for the entire legislation. The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (for the policy period 2015 through 2019) outlines in one single plan all the concerns regarding children and young people and their rights which the Flemish Ministers will pay heed to in their policies in the coming years. This means that a separate Flemish Children's Rights Action Plan is no longer drawn up.

### Environmental analysis

Former policy plans concerning youth were constructed at the beginning of the next policy period, based on the coalition agreement. What is new is that preparations for the current Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2015-2019) already started in the spring of 2013, based on an extensive environmental analysis, the Great Priorities Debate, several working groups and feedback through online survey. In this respect, these preparations had a potential influence on the coalition agreement.

## 1.4 Youth policy decision-making

### Structure of Decision-making

#### National level

Unlike the French Community and the Walloon Region (which are separate administrative levels), Flemish politicians decided in 1980 to merge the Flemish Community and the

Flemish Region. As a result, Flanders has one Flemish Parliament and one Flemish Government with competence over Community matters as well as over Regional matters.

The Flemish authorities consist of:

- THE FLEMISH PARLIAMENT

The parliament is directly elected by the Flemish population by way of five-yearly elections. The parliament has 124 members.

- THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

The government consists of nine ministers who are in office for a 5-year term. Sven Gatz (liberal party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels. Since 2004, the Flemish Government has allocated the 'coordination of the children's rights policy' and responsibility for 'youth' to the same minister.

- THE FLEMISH ADMINISTRATION

The administration is subdivided into 13 policy areas. Each policy area is composed of a department and several agencies. One of these policy areas is 'Culture, Youth, Sports and Media'. Since the first of April 2015, a department of Culture, Youth and Media is established with different divisions of which the division Youth. In all other departments and in the internal and external independent agencies, an official is appointed as the point of contact with regards to policy on the rights of youth and children. The network of these points of contact as well as the preparation of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights are coordinated by the administration.

### Local level

5 provinces and 308 local authorities fall within the administrative supervision of the Flemish Region. Since the Flemish Parliament Act on local and provincial youth (work) policy came into force in 1993, steps were taken towards a decentralized and complementary youth policy.

Since 2016, the municipalities are no longer granted funding that is specifically meant for youth policy. The funds are integrated in one overarching dotation to local governments (Community fund/Gemeentefonds). The aim was to increase the integration of policy making across different sectors. It also strengthened the autonomous authority of the municipalities concerning youth policy.

### Main Themes

#### What informs the choice of themes

During the Great Priorities Debate, several working groups and feedback through an online survey provided the seedbed for a framework of objectives around different priority topics: (1) Poverty, (2) Sustainability, (3) Being young, (4) Mobility, (5) Education, (6) Participation, (7) Space, (8) Well-being, (9) Housing, (10) Employment, (11) Cultural education. After that, the competent ministers were asked to submit their action plans. Finally, the administrations developed projects, processes and indicators. This whole set of objectives, indicators, projects and processes constitutes the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019.

#### Specific target groups

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan mentions that extra efforts need to be made in order to guarantee an equal realization of the rights of all youngsters. Therefore, special attention has been asked for children and young people with disabilities, with a background of migration, living in poverty... This has also been stipulated by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

## The National Agency for Youth

In the policy area 'Culture, Youth, Sports and Media', a department of Culture, Youth and Media was established on the first of April 2015. This department has several divisions within its remit, including the Division Youth.

The Division Youth ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights. Furthermore, the division implements youth policy as a socio-cultural matter. It stimulates and supports a rich and varied offer of non-commercial socio-cultural activities for young people, mainly through subsidising organisations and local authorities. In short, the Division Youth has five main tasks:

1. Preparation, follow-up, evaluation and implementation of legislation (e.g. the Flemish Youth Policy Plan)
2. Funding support structures, youth organisations, youth projects, youth hostels and accommodation centers, as well as municipal and provincial youth (work) policy
3. Providing material support for youth work: e.g. the lending service for camping equipment for youth associations
4. Providing information on youth (work) policy (e.g. via the website and an e-zine)
5. Representing Flanders at international forums

On the 17th of December 2015, the Flemish parliament approved the budget allocation of 2016. It also contains the budget for 'youth'. The budget allocation of the Division Youth has been changed compared to 2015. The budget allocation in 2016 is approximately 62,8% of the previous fiscal year. This decline isn't due to a decrease of appropriations. The most notable change is the shift of budget allocation from the Act on local and provincial youth (work) policy to the municipalities Fund (Community fund/Gemeentefonds). Since 2016, the budget is directly allocated to the municipalities and they have the autonomous authority concerning youth policy (see also 1.7 Funding Youth policy).

## Policy monitoring and evaluation

### Youth specific monitoring

#### The youth monitor (carried out by Jeugdonderzoekplatform or JOP)

The [Youth Research Platform \(JOP\)](#) was founded in 2003 by the Flemish government in response to the identification of several problems and shortcomings in the state of Flemish youth research. Since 2005 the JOP gathers empirical data on the social life of contemporary Flemish youth on a recurrent basis. Therefore, the Youth Monitor, a standardized questionnaire, has been developed, which monitors the life-conditions and activities of young people. The content of the survey is based on other research instruments and explicitly aims to document several topics relevant to Flemish youth. The first Youth Monitor was conducted in 2005-2006, on a sample of 2503 Flemish 14- to 25- year old respondents. Since the administration of the first monitor in 2005, two new versions of the Youth Monitor have been administered, each also in a random sample of Flemish youth, both times between the ages of 12 and 30. In 2008 and in 2013 respectively 3710 and 3729 Flemish young people filled out a questionnaire. The survey covers topics such as general well-being, school well-being, employment, school achievement, poverty, tolerance towards people from non-Belgian origin, and LGB people ... and relates them to different background indicators (gender, age, educational level, ...).

Next to these general surveys, 3 JOP city-monitors have been administered in the metropolitan cities Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels. These studies aim to bring more insight into the specificity of growing up and living in contemporary urban environments in Flanders. These studies offer a more comprehensive and more nuanced insights in the living conditions, attitudes and behaviour of young people growing up in Flemish cities. Special attention is paid to the social vulnerable groups.

Based on these studies, the JOP has published several books on the living conditions, attitudes and behaviour of young people growing up in Flanders and in Flemish cities. Also it published two books with a specific focus, one on gender differences and one on diversity.

All information on publications of the Youth Research Platform can be found on: <http://www.jeugdonderzoeksplatform.be/nl/publicaties>

### Children's right monitor

A year before the end of the legislature, a report is prepared which incorporates all available material on children's rights. This [report](#) aims at deepening and consistency and to assist in the environmental analysis of the next policy period, the reporting of the youth and children's rights policy and reporting to the UN Committee.

In the monitor data is used of among other the youth monitors, EU-SILC, health survey, and different administrative data (e.g. of the Department of Education, the Department of well-being, ...). The monitor portrays the living conditions of children, as well as the context, processes and structures that have an impact on them. It provides materials to develop new or modify existing policies.

### In depth studies

The Department of Culture, Youth, Media and Sport also commissions in depth studies on specific topics that are less measurable or specific target groups that remain invisible in surveys or registrations. Some examples of these studies are:

- De Pauw, P., Vermeersch, H., Cox, N., Verhaeghe, M. & Stevens, P. (2013). *Jeugdwerk met maatschappelijk kwetsbare kinderen en jongeren. Een onderzoek bij werkingen, begeleiding en deelnemende jongeren. (Youth work with disadvantaged children and young people. A study on youth work, its youth workers and the young people involved)*. Brussels: Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Media en Sport ([report – only in Dutch](#))
- Schraepen, B., Maelstaf, H., Dehertogh, B., Halsberghe, M. & Van de Mosselaer, K. (2016) *Vrije tijd van jongeren in residentiële voorzieningen: persoonlijke ruimte of hulpverleningsruimte? Een onderzoek naar de vrijetijdsbesteding van kinderen en jongeren in de residentiële hulpverlening en de rol die het jeugdwerk daarin speelt. (Leisure of youth in residential facilities: personal space or assistance room? An investigation into the leisure activities of children and young people in residential care and the role of youth work therein)*. Brussels: Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Media en Sport. ([report – only in Dutch](#))
- Schraepen, B., Maelstaf, H. & Halsberghe, M. (2016). *Vrije tijd als handicapsituatie. De rol van het jeugdwerk binnen de vrijetijdsbesteding van kinderen en jongeren met een handicap. Leisure as a handicap situation. The role of youth work in the leisure activities of children and young people with disabilities*. Brussels: Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Media en Sport ([report – only in Dutch](#))

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

Youth policy is a **transversal** policy, which is to include not only the area of 'culture, youth and media' (where the youth policy field sits, inside the 13 policy fields of the Flemish government), but also other policy fields such as social inclusion, employment, health, and housing. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government. Youth policy is based on the **group policy approach**, which permeates almost every other policy sector, focusing on youth as specific group.

Besides the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan, the Act on a renewed Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy envisages three more instruments of youth policy:

- **Impact study** of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER) – this specifies that any draft Act affecting the people under the age of 25 and submitted to the Flemish parliament has to be accompanied by a report regarding its impact on children and youth.
- **Contact points** for youth and children's rights and a coordinating administration – all bodies of the Flemish government have to appoint one staff member as the contact point for the youth policy. These individuals should be involved in the monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Youth Policy Plan and responsible for estimating the impact of the policy of their institution on young people. The Division Youth is the coordinating administration in all these matters.
- **Youth Progress Report** – a scientific report, to be produced every five years, describing the state of the youth in the Flemish community.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

#### Youth Research Platform (JeugdOnderzoeksPlatform, JOP)

[The Youth Research Platform \(JOP\)](#) was created in the spring of 2003 at the initiative of the Flemish Minister for Home Affairs, Culture, Youth and the Civil Service. The JOP has performed policy-oriented research activities since then. JOP is an interdisciplinary and interuniversity partnership of three research groups: (1) Research group Tempus Omnia Revelat (Vrije Universiteit Brussel); (2) Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy (Ghent University); (3) Youth Criminology research group (LINC, KU Leuven).

#### Knowledge Centre for Children's Rights (KeKi)

Furthermore, the Parliament Act of 2012 on Flemish youth and children's rights policy also recognizes a '[Knowledge Centre for Children's Rights](#)' (KeKi). The main objective of this Knowledge Centre is to increase the (scientific) knowledge on children's rights on the national and international level.

#### Thematic research

The Department of Culture, Youth, Media and Sport also commissions in depth studies on specific topics that are less measurable or specific target groups that remain invisible in surveys or registrations. Some examples of these studies are:

- De Pauw, P., Vermeersch, H., Cox, N., Verhaeghe, M. & Stevens, P. (2013). *Jeugdwerk met maatschappelijk kwetsbare kinderen en jongeren. Een onderzoek bij werkingen, begeleiding en deelnemende jongeren. (Youth work with disadvantaged children and young people. A study on youth work, its youth workers and the young people involved)*. Brussels: Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Media en Sport ([report – only in Dutch](#))
- Schraepen, B., Maelstaf, H., Dehertogh, B., Halsberghe, M. & Van de Mosselaer, K. (2016) *Vrije tijd van jongeren in residentiële voorzieningen: persoonlijke ruimte of hulpverleningsruimte? Een onderzoek naar de vrijetijdsbesteding van kinderen en jongeren in de residentiële hulpverlening en de rol die het jeugdwerk daarin speelt. (Leisure of youth in residential facilities: personal space or assistance room? An investigation into the leisure activities of children and young people in residential care and the role of youth work therein)*. Brussels: Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Media en Sport. ([report – only in Dutch](#))
- Schraepen, B., Maelstaf, H. & Halsberghe, M. (2016). *Vrije tijd als handicapsituatie. De rol van het jeugdwerk binnen de vrijetijdsbesteding van kinderen en jongeren met een handicap. Leisure as a handicap situation. The role of youth work in the*

*leisure activities of children and young people with disabilities.* Brussels: Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Media en Sport ([report – only in Dutch](#))

### Cooperation between policy-making and research

Representatives of both JOP and KeKi participate in the 'Research network on children and young people in Flanders'. This assembly was set up in 2011 by the Division Youth of the ministry. It consists of youth policy makers and representatives of all relevant organizations that are involved in research on children, youth and children's rights.

Furthermore, the policy themes of the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2014-2019) are based on an extensive environmental analysis. The environmental analysis is the foundation and gives an overview of relevant trends, figures and scientific research, such as the [Youth Monitor](#).

### National Statistics and available data sources

#### 'Cijferboek'

The Flemish government is mapping the youth (work) policy of the local governments in a '[cijferboek](#)' (book with quantitative figures). 'Cijferboek' will appear every three years. It's a questionnaire, which monitors the policy of local governments concerning youth. This questionnaire results in quantitative figures on the local youth policy, such as political responsibilities, youth councils, presence and support of youth work, infrastructure of youth work, youth space, information for youth and communication and cooperation with other sectors.

#### Youth Monitor (carried out by the Youth Research Platform or JOP)

The [Youth Research Platform \(JOP\)](#) was founded in 2003 by the Flemish government in response to the identification of several problems and shortcomings in the state of Flemish youth research. Since 2005 the JOP gathers empirical data on the social life of contemporary Flemish youth on a recurrent basis. Therefore, the Youth Monitor, a standardized questionnaire, has been developed, which monitors the life-conditions and activities of young people. The content of the survey is based on other research instruments and explicitly aims to document several topics relevant to Flemish youth. The first Youth Monitor was conducted in 2005-2006, on a sample of 2503 Flemish 14- to 25- year old respondents. Since the administration of the first monitor in 2005, two new versions of the Youth Monitor have been administered, each also in a random sample of Flemish youth, both times between the ages of 12 and 30. In 2008 and in 2013 respectively 3710 and 3729 Flemish young people filled out a questionnaire. The survey covers topics such as general well-being, school well-being, employment, school achievement, poverty, tolerance towards people from non-Belgian origin, and LGB people ... and relates them to different background indicators (gender, age, educational level, ...).

Next to these general surveys, 3 JOP city-monitors have been administered in the metropolitan cities Ghent, Antwerp and Brussels. These studies aim to bring more insight into the specificity of growing up and living in contemporary urban environments in Flanders. These studies offer a more comprehensive and more nuanced insights in the living conditions, attitudes and behaviour of young people growing up in Flemish cities. Special attention is paid to the social vulnerable groups.

Based on these studies, the JOP has published several books on the living conditions, attitudes and behaviour of young people growing up in Flanders and in Flemish cities. Also it published two books with a specific focus, one on gender differences and one on diversity.

All information on publications of the Youth Research Platform can be found on: <http://www.jeugdonderzoeksplatform.be/nl/publicaties>

Research, monitoring, data collection are the basis for a knowledge based policy and a better insight of children and young people. Next to the youth Youth Monitor, also other research on specific themes concerning youth is executed ad hoc.

### **JoKER (Kind en Jongereffectenrapport – Child and Youth effects report)**

Since 1997, the Flemish government is obligated by decree to make an impact report on draft decrees directly affecting the interests of children, persons under eighteen. By decree of July 18, 2008 (decree on the conduct of a Flemish youth and children's rights policy the child impact report (KER) has been extended to a child and youth impact report ([JoKER](#)).

Since 2013, the format of the JoKER is fully integrated into the regulatory impact analysis (RIA). RIA is a set of necessary and logical steps in preparing a policy measure. The aim is to ascertain the impact on children and young people under the age of twenty five. The JoKER, assesses the effects of new regulations on children and youth. Whenever a minister submits a draft decree to the Flemish Parliament that directly affects the interests of persons under 25 years, the draft must be accompanied by a JoKER. The Youth Division provides advice on JoKER.

### **Children's rights monitor**

A year before the end of the legislature, a report is prepared which incorporates all available material on children's rights. This [report](#) aims at deepening and consistency and to assist in the environmental analysis of the next policy period, the reporting of the youth and children's rights policy and reporting to the UN Committee. In the monitor data is used of among other the youth monitors, EU-SILC, health survey, and different administrative data (e.g. of the Department of Education, the Department of well-being, ...). The monitor portrays the living conditions of children, as well as the context, processes and structures that have an impact on them. It provides materials to develop new or modify existing policies.

### **Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field**

The Flemish Government allocates funds to the Knowledge Centre for Children's Rights (KeKi) to increase the knowledge on children's rights on the national and international level.

Furthermore, the Division Youth has a line of funding for the Youth Research Platform (JOP) and for research on specific themes concerning children and young people or youth work. This research will be entrusted to an university, college, association or cooperation between an university and association.

The budget allocated to the Act on the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan contains also a budget for evidence based evaluation.

## **1.7 Funding youth policy**

### **How Youth policy is funded**

Every year, the Flemish Government estimates the budget for the next year. This budget allocation will be presented to the Flemish Parliament and will be discussed in parliamentary committees. First, the Flemish Parliament has to accept the budget allocation and then the Flemish Government can use the budget. This budget allocation also contains the means for Youth policy.

### **The budget in 2015**

In 2015, the Division Youth had a budget of 67.500.000 euro to achieve its objectives. Most of the money was allocated to the Act on local and provincial youth policy (18.877.000 euro) and the Act on the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights (32.610.000 euro). Local and regional level have their own budget, next to the subventions of the Flemish Government.

## The budget in 2016

In 2016, the budget allocation of the Division Youth was 42.266.000 euro. There is a decline from the budget allocation of 2015. The budget allocated to the Act on local and provincial youth policy have been reduced compared to the budget allocation of 2015. The remaining budget (1.254.000 euro) will help support youth policy in Brussels and De Rand ('the rim'). In 2016, the budget allocated to the Act on the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights is 32.509.000 euro and has reduced by 21.000 euro.

## What is funded?

Decrees define the instruments of youth and children's rights policy and the funding of local and provincial authorities and youth organisations. The Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy defines instances of youth work and recognises institutions and organisations involved with young people and also children's rights policy, defining at the same time the allocation of finances within the system.

## Recent developments

- A recent Parliament Act on 'the support and stimulation of the municipal youth policy and the determination of provincial youth policy' of 6 July 2012 came partially into force in October 2012 and replaced the former Parliament Act of 2003 in its entirety by the end of 2013. The most notable change is the integration of the former youth policy plans in an all-encompassing and long-term municipal policy plan for the entire legislation (in accordance with a new Parliament Act on the alleviation of regulations concerning local policy planning and reporting (Planlastendecreet)).
- The Flemish Government agreed on 25 June 2010 on the decision on the policy and management cycle ('Beleids- en beheerscyclus' or 'BBC') of the municipalities, the provinces and the public centres for social welfare. It contains a set of rules for the multiannual plan, budget, accounting and the financial statements of the local authorities and provinces. The BBC decision entered into force on 1 January 2014.

## Financial accountability

Youth organisations play an important role in the implementation of Flanders' youth policy. Youth organisations or youth associations usually receive funding based on specific funding regulations or grant schemes. The criteria for types of organisations funded is described in the legislation.

Youth organisations or youth associations receiving an operational grant on the basis of the Flemish Parliament Act of 11 January 2012 on 'conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights' need to submit every year a financial report and a report of an independent auditor, who's a member of the Institute of auditors, to the Flemish administration. The date and formal requirements of the reports will be defined by the Flemish government.

## Use of EU Funds

The Flemish Youth and Children's rights Policy Plan doesn't (directly) use EU funds.

Some youth organisations or youth associations are supported through EU funds. EU funds that have been used are:

- Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU funding programme for education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It runs from 2014 till the end of 2020 with a total budget of 14.7 billion euro. Within Erasmus+ there are different sections: one for education and training, one for sport and one for youth projects. The youth section of Erasmus+ is called Youth in Action. It funds projects for and by young people and youth organisations. It has a separate budget and specific project possibilities. In 2016, the Youth in Action-programme in Flanders has a budget of 2.445.718 euro.

The Flemish government has designated Jint vzw to coordinate and to implement the youth programme in Flanders. Jint vzw is in charge of information and promoting, training, funding and assessment.

- ESF 2014-2010

The Operational Programme for the implementation of the European Social Fund (ESF) in Flanders in the 2014-2020 period supports initiatives that increase employment and improve social cohesion in Flanders. In the years to come, 1 billion euro will be invested. The ESF programme lays down the priorities for the expenditure of 1 billion euro. 600 million euro is financed through the Flemish budget and 400 million euro through the European budget.

## **1.8 Cross-border cooperation**

### **Cooperation with European countries**

#### **Council of Europe**

The Flemish Government gives a yearly contribution to the European Youth Foundation. The representative of the Flemish Government is active in the CDEJ and in different expert groups. The Flemish Government supports 'Perspectives on youth: European Partnership Series'. This series aims to function as an information, discussion, reflection and dialogue forum on European developments in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work. The Flemish Government supports the further exploration and development of the serie 'history on youth work and youth policy in Europe'.

#### **Follow up of the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) on the national level**

The Flemish Youth Policy Plan has a European perspective. It was closely connected to the endeavours of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council and to the 'European Youth Strategy 2010-2018'. After extensive consultations with young people and a series of youth policy stakeholders in the EU member states, eight priority themes were put forward. These themes provided an important framework for the development of the Youth Policy Plan. The Flemish Government will use its international cultural cooperation agreements to collect expertise and exchange approaches on these topics.

The Division Youth is represented in the National Working Group of the Structured Dialogue.

The Division Youth forsees representation in most of the expert groups and peer-learning exercises set up in the framework of the EU Youth Strategy.

### **International cooperation**

#### **Bilateral cooperation**

The Division Youth has a direct bilateral cooperation with Luxembourg, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Catalunya. Seminars and study visits on specific youth topics are organised in the framework of a two- or three year work programme. For example, a study visit to Latvia on increasing participation of all young people in different decision making processes on national level. This study visit is part of the bilateral cooperation with Latvia.

Youth has mostly also a chapter in the cultural agreements the Flemish Government has with different countries.

#### **International cooperation beyond the EU**

Since 1996 the Division Youth has a direct bilateral cooperation with South-Africa. South Africa and the Flemish Government cooperated in the areas of culture, art, sport and youth. The basis of this cooperation are the three year work programmes. Up to 2006 these programmes have focused on two aspects:

- Capacity building of libraries and non-formal adult education

- Capacity building of young South Africans who were designated to elaborate a strong youth policy

Since 2006 the initiatives of cooperation are characterized by a transversal approach. This is reflected in the 'adoption' of four local community centres in the field of Culture, Youth, and Heritage. At the end of the collaboration, the four local community centres have to be an example of an integrated community centre. The selected community centres have to obtain a connection in local culture and youth policy.

## **1.9 Current debates and reforms**

### **Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed youth and children's rights policy**

This decree started in 2012. It allow a better transversal approach in order to respect in a more holistic way young people's life, enhance participation of young people and participation of the youth sector in the design and in the implementation of youth work, allow evaluation on the basis of quality and not only on the basis of quantity, reinforce the participation of the municipalities in design and implementation of youth policy.

#### **Decentralisation (from 2017)**

The Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on 'the support and stimulation of the municipal youth policy and the determination of provincial youth policy' came into place. An all-encompassing municipal policy plan (term = 6 year) will replace the former youth policy plan and other domain-specific plans. Municipalities don't have to submit a youth policy plan to the Flemish Government. All legislation concerning local sectoral support (youth, but also culture, sport, ...) from Flemish level will be eliminated and the budget will be allocated directly to the municipalities. Municipalities have an independent authority in developing youth policy and are responsible for the establishment of a Youth Council.

#### **Provincial tasks limited to a closed list of grounded-tied competences (from 2017)**

The provincial governments will no longer grant 'provincial' funds to youth organisations. In accordance with a general political choice on the management of government, provincial youth policy too, is being confined within limits. Most competences that are person-oriented, such as youth and also culture and education, will be transferred to the regional or the local level.

## **2. Voluntary Activities**

### **Special feature**

The federal 'Belgian' level has limited competence in youth matters. Voluntary work (more specific the legal status of volunteers) is a competence that is regulated at the federal level. It is further promoted on the Flemish level, grants of the Flemish Community are allocated to a number of (semi)public and private organisations that support voluntary activities of young people. The chapter on voluntary activities illustrates measures on Flemish, federal and local level.

### **Highlights**

Since 2016, the Flemish Minister of Youth focuses on an adequate support for (young) volunteers and voluntary work. Since November 2016, there is a Flemish coordinated policy plan on volunteering. This plan had three objectives: a better legislative framework and status, better information and support and fewer rules.

## **2.1 General context**

### **Historical developments**

*Specifically concerning the development of youth voluntary work, little information could be found.*

### **Subsidiary and pillarisation**

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Belgian society was characterised by the principles of subsidiarity and pillarisation.

- The principle of *subsidiarity* means that state intervention was limited to the recognition and encouragement of the actions of essentially private operators, including associations.
- This went hand in hand with a relatively compartmentalised society, or *pillarisation*, based on three major ideological movements: Catholics, Liberals and Socialists. Citizens evolved around these politically marked pillars and all their associations (school establishment, health care funds, workers federations, trade unions, leisure time and so forth), which organised social life according to the same ideology.

As a result, the state tended to delegate a large part of its policies to the pillars, especially concerning youth. Voluntary activities were mainly developed through catholic and socialist movements, in the shape of charitable or philanthropic initiatives.

### **From charity towards self-fulfillment**

Gradually, a shift could be noticed from the altruist initiatives of middle-class citizens (often women) targeted at families in poverty, towards activities that can also contribute to the self-fulfillment of the volunteer. Volunteering became an important way to participate in society and an instrument of social integration. More and more, participation in voluntary work became more important than the ideological message or the connection to one of the pillars.

Public authorities increasingly encouraged voluntary activities, under which voluntary work in the youth sector.

### **A political evolution**

The UN International Year of Volunteers 2001 was an important trigger in Belgium. Public authorities became aware of the interest in voluntary activities and the necessity to think about a legal framework. During this year, the federal level took formal initiatives to improve the social and legal situation of volunteers. In 2005, the Act on the rights of volunteers has been adopted.

### **Main concepts**

There is no specific definition of youth volunteering. However, the law related to volunteer's rights of 3 July 2005 introduced a common definition to be shared by everyone involved in voluntary work. It defines volunteering as follows:

- Volunteering is unpaid;
- it does not involve obligation;
- it is undertaken for others or for society;
- there should be always a distinction between volunteering and professional activities.

## **2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering**

### **Governance**

Voluntary work of young people is not exclusive a youth policy theme (or any other policy area). Youth volunteering is regulated at federal level and further promoted on community-level.

Most relevant policy domains:

At federal level:

- Regulations on the legal status of volunteers ([Federal Public Service for Social Security](#))
- Advice and information voluntary work (The High Council of Volunteers - [Hoge Raad voor Vrijwilligers](#))

At Regional (Flemish) level:

- Funding of voluntary activities and volunteer groups (organised volunteer work) in the welfare and health sectors (Flemish Government)
- Youth volunteer work opportunities through the recognition and funding of youth (work) initiatives (Ministry of Culture, Youth and Media)

In the following we focus at the regional level and describe for each of the domains the relevant responsibilities.

### **Main public bodies at the community-level (Flemish Community)**

#### FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

In the Flemish Community, the Flemish Government is the voluntary work's main funding source. Grants are allocated to a number of (semi)public and private organisations that support voluntary activities. The funding of voluntary activities and volunteer groups (organised volunteer work) in the welfare and health sectors is laid down in Flemish Parliament Acts of the Flemish Community.

#### MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND MEDIA

The Youth Division -embedded in the department of Culture, Youth and Media- helps to create youth volunteer work opportunities through the recognition and funding of youth (work) initiatives.

### **Non-governmental actors promoting volunteering**

#### THE FLEMISH SUPPORT POINT FOR VOLUNTARY WORK

The Flemish Support Point For Voluntary Work (Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk) - established in 1977 as 'Platform voor Voluntariaat' - is the community's central, national volunteer centre. It receives an annual financial backing from the Flemish Ministry. It is flanked by a number of regional volunteer centres and provides support to voluntary activities and initiatives launched by Flemish people.

It aims to obtain favourable legislation and regulations for volunteers from the Belgian Government as well as from the Flemish Community, and to make voluntary work accessible to all. The Centre provides support to voluntary activities and consists of advice, information and training.

In addition, five provincial support centres and one Brussels ('het punt') based support centre coordinate voluntary activities in the Flemish provinces and Brussels. They manage a decentralised database, act as a mediator between organisations and candidate volunteers, get more people involved in volunteering and help organisations enhance the quality of their activities by providing information and training and by setting up certain initiatives. Finally, there are local support centres for volunteering.

#### THE KING BAUDOUIIN FOUNDATION

The King Baudouin Foundation (Koning Boudewijnstichting) was founded in 1976. It is an independent public benefit foundation which is active at the regional, federal and international level. For the King Baudouin Foundation, volunteers as well as the associations and institutions that provide opportunities for volunteering are important target groups. For many years, the Foundation has developed various projects and programmes for stimulating, rewarding and recognising voluntary work.

## CERA

CERA is a cooperative financial group, whose mission is to invest in wealth and prosperity. It supports projects with social objectives and has created tools to support voluntary action in Belgium. CERA also intend to create debate and reflection on the theme of volunteering.

## ORGANISATIONS WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Many organisations with a special focus on young people are commissioned to set up, support and monitor volunteer work within youth work: the '[Ambrassade](#)' (support centre for youth work and youth information, secretariat of the Flemish Youth Council), [JINT](#) (Co-ordination body for International Youth Work), nationally organised youth associations, NGOs in the field of development co-operation,...These Youth organisations or youth associations usually receive funding by the Flemish government and funding is based on specific funding regulations or grant schemes. Voluntary organisations are relatively independently.

Voluntary organisations are relatively autonomous (e.g. concerning their policies on volunteering or the quality of their work), as long as they meet the regulations on the legal status of volunteers.

### Cross-sectoral cooperation

As mentioned in 1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries, youth policy is a transversal policy. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government.

Besides the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan, the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy envisages three more instruments of youth policy:

- Impact study of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER)
- Contact points for youth and children's rights and a coordinating administration
- Youth Progress Report

## 2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

### Existence of a National Strategy

There is no stand-alone national strategy on youth volunteering.

However, in the Flemish Community, volunteering has been mentioned in different policy plans set up by the Flemish Government. For example, in the most recent Policy Paper on Youth (Beleidsnota Jeugd 2014-2019), the Ministry commits itself to maximally support volunteers in the context of youth work.

### Scope and contents

The Policy Paper on Youth (2014-2019) as well as the [Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan](#) (2015-2019) mention an engagement to support volunteering in youth work, mainly through:

- relieving the administrative burden for volunteers and voluntary organisations by trying to cut back on the regulations that prevent young people to take initiative
- strengthening the competences of youth volunteers, for example through training initiatives. A specific attention should be paid to an appropriate training of volunteers working with special target groups
- promoting international youth exchanges and stimulating youth workers to subscribe to the actions of the European Youth in action-programme by the organisation Jint.

## Responsible authority

Flemish authorities campaign for the promotion of volunteer work in Flanders in collaboration with the Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk (Flemish Support Centre for Volunteer Work) and the Provinciale Steunpunten (Provincial Support Centres).

## Revisions/ Updates

18 November 2016, the Flemish Government approved a coordinated policy on volunteering across different policy domains, including youth.

The Flemish Minister of Youth pays attention to (1) the status of volunteers and the legislation for volunteers, (2) the fragmentation of information about and for volunteers and (3) the over-regulation. For youth in particular, the administrative simplification and the problems with volunteer work abroad are important in the coordinated policy plan on volunteer work.

Future developments will be outlined under section 2.9 of this topic.

## 2.4 Laws and regulations on youth volunteering

### Stand-alone law

There is no stand-alone law on youth volunteering.

### Other official documents containing guidelines on youth volunteering

#### Federal level

There exists a general law on volunteering: the Act on the rights of volunteers, which entered into force in August 2006. The last update was on 18 June 2014.

The Act on the rights of volunteers (2005) is a wide ranging law which applies to volunteering throughout Belgium and to volunteering activities abroad that are organized from Belgium.

- It provides a precise legal framework and ensures formal recognition of the status of volunteers;
- It protects individuals from certain abuses, promotes volunteering and gives newly defined responsibilities to volunteering organisations.

More specifically, the law on volunteering regulates the following aspects of voluntary work:

- the legal definition of volunteering
- issues of liability and insurance
- the relation between the law on volunteering and other legal areas
- the reimbursement of expenses
- the access to voluntary work

#### Community level: Flemish Community

In the Flemish Community, also the Act on Voluntary Work of 3 April 2009 dictates some rules concerning organised volunteering in the welfare and health sectors.

#### Regulations on standards of quality

There are no official regulations on standards of quality for voluntary youth work.

However, the five Provincial Support Centres, the Brussels Steunpunt (Support Centre) and the Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk (Flemish Support Centre for Volunteer Work) are responsible for the coordination and support of voluntary work in Flanders. These Support Centres also strive for a broader social – and formal – recognition of volunteer work.

In addition, organisations working with volunteers usually provide a form of training, education or support for volunteers which may or may not lead to the award of a

certificate. Although such certification is not legally recognised, these initiatives give an indication of the basic quality.

### **Target groups**

The Acts do not specify any target groups.

## **2.5 Youth volunteering at national level**

### **National Programme for Youth Volunteering**

There are no national programmes for youth volunteering.

### **Funding**

There is no funding available for national programmes.

### **Characteristics of youth volunteering**

Data from the JOP-monitor 2013 demonstrate that around 40% of the young people between 14 and 30 years old participate in voluntary activities (Male: 37,1%; Female: 43,7%). Concerning their level of participation, there is no significant difference between pupils and youngsters who are no longer going to school.

With regard to the ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds of youth volunteers, little information is available.

### **Support to young volunteers**

#### **Types of support**

Any volunteer can receive a reimbursement for costs made during his/her voluntary activities, provided that the organisation is willing to pay (however, the Law does not provide a legal right to volunteers to receive this reimbursement of costs).

The Act on the rights of volunteers (2005) defines two types of reimbursement to support (young) volunteers:

- The volunteer may either receive a fixed reimbursement (regardless of real costs): in this case, the volunteer can receive a maximum of 30.22 Euro a day, for a maximum of 1,208.72 Euro a year; and
- The organisation can opt for a system of "reimbursement of real costs". In this case, the organisation only pays the expenses that are actually made by the volunteers (use of car, telephone, meals, etc) as proof has to be provided in for each expense.

The Policy Paper Youth (2014-2019) mentions that attention should be paid to the support of volunteers. A type of support is the reimbursement of the registration fee of training courses for youth volunteers.

#### **Social security provisions**

The Act on the rights of volunteers (2005) contains provisions that refer to the legal status and social protection of (young) volunteers. In principle, liability for damage caused to third parties by a volunteer lies with the organisation (= immunity principle). If deceit, gross negligence or recurrent minor faults are involved, the volunteer him/herself can be held accountable.

The Act on Voluntary Work of 3 April 2009 of the Flemish government provides social security to (young) volunteers. Organisations working with volunteers should be covered by insurances on:

- civil liability of the organisation
- civil liability of the volunteer. Volunteers are ensured for damage done to the organisation, volunteers or third parties during their voluntary work.
- accidents and health problems suffered by volunteers during their voluntary work

## Quality Assurance (QA)

There is no system of quality assurance.

The Flemish Government dictates in the Act on Voluntary Work of 3 April 2009 some rules to voluntary organisations in the welfare and health sectors and defines conditions governing recognition and subsidies.

In addition, the Flemish Government defines some rules concerning youth voluntary work organisations at Flemish level in the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012.

## 2.6 Cross-border mobility programmes

### EU programmes

#### Erasmus + and Youth in Action

Erasmus+ is the EU funding programme for education, training, youth and sport. It runs from 2014 till the end of 2020 with a total budget of 14.7 billion euro. Within Erasmus+ there are different sections: one for education and training, one for sport and one for youth projects. The youth section of Erasmus+ is called Youth in Action. It funds projects for and by young people and youth organisations. It has a separate budget and specific project possibilities.

[JINT vzw](#) is the Flemish coordinating body for international youth work and the National Agency for the European Youth in Action Programme in Flanders. This European volunteer work component involves information and promotion, allocation of funds and evaluation.

Research-based analysis and monitoring of the Youth in Action Programme is addressed to the RAY Network. To this end, JINT vzw works together with the European Commission and Youth in Action National agencies in 29 European countries. A report on the evaluation of the Youth in Action Programme mentions that in the period of 2007-2013 there were 1.886 Youth in Action-projects which have a partner organisation in Flanders. 704 projects took place in Flanders and 1.182 took place abroad.

#### Other Programmes

There is the [Bel'J programme](#), supported by the three ministers responsible for youth and implemented by the national agencies, where young people can be supported to do an exchange or volunteering activities in another community of Belgium. Bel' J focuses on young people between the ages of 12 and 30 and gives youngsters of the three communities the opportunity to meet each other. JINT vzw is the coordinating body for the Bel'J programme in Flanders.

#### Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

The Act on the Rights of Volunteers (2005) provides the legal framework for voluntary work in Belgium. With regard to foreign volunteers, the Act stipulates that only people from the European Union and people who are married to a Belgian/European citizen can participate in voluntary work. This will be outlined in section 2.9 of this topic.

## 2.7 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

### Information providers

The promotion of voluntary work is one of the objectives of the Flemish Support Centre for Volunteer Work (Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk).

Also local authorities play an important role in raising awareness about the existing opportunities for (youth) volunteering and in disseminating information.

## Key initiatives

### Community level

- The Week of Volunteers is organised by the Flemish Support Centre for Volunteer Work (Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk). It is an annual, recurring public appreciation campaign and its main objective is the promotion of voluntary work in Flanders. During this week, extra attention is paid to voluntary work and active volunteers (approximately 750.000 active volunteers in Flanders) and seminar is organised on the topic. In 2016, 103 volunteers were present at the seminar.
- The website '[vrijwilligerswerk.be](http://vrijwilligerswerk.be)' promotes voluntary work to potential (young) volunteers. Its main objective is to combine supply and demand of voluntary work. Information is collected at the website, from which various links are made to a number of organisations and informative sites on volunteer work.
- ...

### Local authorities

Municipal have an one-stop-shop for volunteers, where information can be found concerning (the opportunities for) (youth) voluntary work. 'Het vrijwilligersloket' is often accessible online.

- Promotion is done at local level, in particular by the associations themselves, by means of flyers, posters, etc.
- The organisation of courses (training initiatives, workshops) on a specific topic (e.g. EHBO,...) of youth work. The main goal of these courses is to strengthen the competences of (young) volunteers.
- ...

## 2.8 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

The Flemish Government is making efforts to better recognise voluntary activities and to value the social involvement of young volunteers and the skills they have acquired (EVC). The Policy Plan Youth (2014-2019) states that the Flemish Government aims to ensure that voluntary involvement is accredited. The Flemish Government will build on skill recognition in youth work through the support of 'Oscar' and new regulations for 'kadervorming' (a certified training). Also a research will be done to explore other tools who seems appropriate in the context of skill recognition in youth work.

### Existing arrangements

#### Labour market oriented initiatives

- OSCAR

The Government of Flanders will further support the initiative '[Oscar](#)', an online portfolio to recognise the competences of young volunteers. 'Oscar' gives an overview of competences young people can achieve. Young people gain these competences through (voluntary) youth work or a specific training initiative. 'Oscar' allows organisations to award certificates of acquired competences to participants. This tool allows participants to collect and register proof of the competences they acquired in non-formal contexts.

- C-STICK

JES created a [digital portfolio](#) with a personal development plan, a screening and scaling tool and a job application tool. The so-called 'C-stick' also includes a set of techniques for the identification of competences and competence development, with the core elements: observation of competences, feedback, group dynamics, peer learning and experiential learning.

## Organisations' own initiatives

Organisations working with volunteers usually provide a form of training, education or support for volunteers which may or may not lead to the award of a certificate. Although such certification is not legally recognized, these initiatives give an indication of the basic quality.

### Accreditation of experiential learning for management volunteers

The Flemish Support Centre for Volunteer Work (Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk) initiated a project called 'Accreditation of experiential learning for management volunteers' in co-operation with SoCius, the Support Centre for Socio-cultural work (Steunpunt voor Sociaal-cultureel werk).

### 'Kadervormingstraject'

'[Kadervorming](#)' is a certified training explicitly meant for youngsters who (will) have leadership responsibilities in the context of youth work. The main goal is to strengthen their competences. One trajectory consists of a theoretical part, an internship and an evaluation. The training may lead to a certification (animator, chief instructor) delivered by the Division Youth.

### National validation arrangements

The Policy Plan Youth (2014-2019) mention that the Flemish government will explore other tools and how youth work fits into the Flemish structure of qualification and the EVC policy (policy to value competencies acquired elsewhere).

The existing arrangements for skill recognition don't make use of European credit systems.

## 2.9 Current debates and reforms

### Revisions of laws

The law of 2005 on volunteer's rights is currently revised as asked by the Minister of social affairs.

The High Council of Volunteers is currently finalizing the evaluation of the law of 3 July 2005 related to the volunteer's rights. It will be available online at the end of May. This evaluation includes two appendices about youth volunteering. The first one addresses foreign young people volunteering in Belgium and the second one focuses on Belgian volunteers abroad.

About young Belgian volunteers going abroad, the High Council observes the following issues:

- The upholding of family allowances and unemployment benefit while volunteering abroad.
- The terms used in the law about what can be considered as volunteering are confusing and must be clarified.

Regarding the issues about young volunteers coming from abroad, the High Council of volunteers discusses the following points:

- Volunteering doesn't confer the right to get a visa according to the law of 15 December 1980 related to the territory access. Volunteering in Belgium for a period longer than 3 months is then compromised regarding the rules to obtain a visa;
- The hosting organisation provides accommodation to the volunteer and is in charge of his/her daily expenses. In specific programme such as the European Volunteer Programme, the volunteer can also receive a small allowance. Two problems arise in the fields of tax and labour law:
  - If this amount (accommodation, meals) exceeds the yearly maximal sum allowed by the law of 2005, the fees must be justified. This is a tedious process especially when it comes to long-term volunteering.

- The provision in kind can be considered so that it is taxed and the volunteer runs the risk of losing his/her volunteer status. The hosting organisation would then be considered as an employer with all the obligations it involves.
- The law of 2005 must clarify that the provision in kind (accommodation, meals) is included in the volunteering activity and is not compensation.

### **A coordinated policy on volunteering**

On 8 July 2016, the Flemish Government approved a coordinated policy plan on voluntary work. After the consultation of different advisory councils, the Flemish Government definitely approved the Action Plan 'Flemish Coordinated Policy on Voluntary Work' on 18 November 2016 ([Actieplan gecoördineerd Vlaams Vrijwilligersbeleid](#)). This plan aims to install an improved and well-coordinated policy on volunteering across different sectors, including the youth sector. The focus is on three major issues:

The focus is on three major issues:

- the administrative burden for (young) volunteers and voluntary (youth) organisations
- provision of information
- common rules applicable to volunteers

There will be measures on Flemish, federal and local level.

## **3. Employment & Entrepreneurship**

Employment & Entrepreneurship

### **Special feature**

The Belgian federal system involves three Communities and three economic Regions. Regional and Community levels exercise their allocated competencies. At regional level, there are competencies, such as Employment and Active Labour Market policies and at Community level there are Education policies. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates how employment and entrepreneurship for young people can be a joint responsibility of the Minister for Employment, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Youth.

### **Highlights**

Belgium presented a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in December 2013, updated in April 2014. The scheme targets young people under 25 years. The implementation is coordinated by the regional Public Employment Service (in the Flemish Community: VDAB). However, VDAB has already implemented the Youth Employment Plan in 2007. With this plan VDAB want to tailor its standard services better to the needs of young job-seekers aged 18 to 25. Its goal is to stimulate young people to find a job as quickly as possible. In the light of Youth Guarantee, VDAB has decided not to create a new plan, but to strengthen the existing Youth Employment Plan. The plan is further described in the chapter.

### **3.1 General context**

#### **Labour market situation in the country**

##### **Labour market situation**

The labour market in Belgium is the interplay between the supply of and demand for labour. The labour market players are the employers (represented by the employers organisations), the employees and unemployed (represented by the trade unions) and the several governments (represented by the Public Employment Services and National Employment Service). The Flemish Government and the social partners are responsible for labour market policy in the Flemish Region. The trade unions and employers

organisations together form SERV (Socio-Economic Council of Flanders) in which social consultation takes place. The Federal Government is responsible for monitoring employment and unemployment and develops the labour market policy in consultation with the federal social partners.

A specific characteristic of the labour market is social security. The approach to social security in Belgium is distinctive and unusual. It is conducted by the social partners, - the employers and the trade unions - with the Government as an observer. The unions actually pay the allowances to the unemployed while those who are not members of a trade union can go to the neutral government office.

### **Effects of the recent economic crisis**

The global economic and financial crisis that was unleashed at the beginning of 2008 was not without consequences for the labour market in Belgium. The labour market in Belgium has faced additional challenges due to this world and European economic crisis, which initially affected employment in Flanders much more than in Brussels or Wallonia.

Young people within the European Union were badly affected by the economic crisis. Belgium was no exception and youth unemployment rose. Following general indicators, the youth unemployment rate in Flanders increased significantly between 2008 and 2009, from 10.5% to 15.7%. As might be anticipated, the unemployment rate among low-skilled youth was higher than among high-skilled youth, according to labour force statistics in 2010.

Nevertheless, the system of social security in Belgium considered to have been a restraint on the negative impacts of the crisis and as a result, Flanders was hit less than many other countries.

The rise in the number of unemployed job-seekers on an annual basis stopped accelerating in mid-2009, but slowed significantly only in early 2010 and not until October 2010 was the number lower than a year previously. The decline in unemployment rates was most marked in Flanders compared to Brussels and Wallonia. It was also in this region that the impact of the crisis made itself felt the most: in 2009, the number of unemployed there had exceeded the level of the previous year by some 20%.

### **The labour market situation today**

More recently, in 2015, the Flemish labour market reached a turning point, with unemployment figures dropping. The Belgian and Flemish economy experienced modest growth and growth expectations are moderately positive.

The labour market in Flanders is also moving in the desired direction. In 2011, temporarily unemployment rose strong with 109.500 temporarily unemployed. Since 2013, this indicator has sharply declined. In 2015, there were approximately 78.000 temporarily unemployed. Unemployment figures are going down in almost every category, except for those above 60 years of age, in the latter case because the pension age has been raised and people have to work until the age of 65.

### **Youth employment Flanders**

Youth unemployment in Flanders exceeds the total unemployment rate. In 2013, Flanders had an unemployment rate of 17,73% for young people under the age of 25. At the same moment, the overall unemployment rate in Flanders was 7,48%. Approximately 22% of the total number of unemployed jobseekers was younger than 25.

EUROSTAT conducted a survey by the entire population older than 15 year-old. According to the EUROSTAT data, 7,5% of the 18-25 year-olds in the Flemish Community don't have a certificate of secondary education and are not in education.

Furthermore, the situation of low-educated young people and young people with a migration background in particular is not rosy. A successful employment policy starts at

school. Too many young people leave education without a degree or certificate and consequently miss out on labour market opportunities.

The [Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan](#) (2015-2019) mentions the following challenges:

- supporting young people towards sustainable employment
- providing high quality employment to ensure the opportunity to lead a qualitative life

### Main concepts

The Labour Law of 16 March 1971 is regulated at federal level ([Arbeidswet](#)). The Law is wide ranging and consists of individual and collective labour law, labour regulations and regulations covering well-being at work.

The Labour Law defines 'young employees' (younger than 18) as underaged employees who are 15 years or older and no longer in full-time compulsory education.

## 3.2 Administration and Governance

### Governance

Employment and entrepreneurship are regulated at the federal level and further supported by the Flemish Region.

Most relevant policy domains are:

At federal level:

- Labour Law and Social Security legislation ([Federal Public Service for Employment Labour and Social Dialogue](#))
- Employment policy and policy on job creation promotion (High Council for Employment - [Hoge Raad voor de Werkegelegenheid](#))

At Regional (Flemish) level:

- Employment and social economy policy
- Educational policy
- Youth policy

In the following we focus on the regional level and describe for each of the domains the relevant responsibilities.

### Main public bodies

#### FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

The funding of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) and Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training (SYNTRA Flanders) is laid down in Flemish Parliament Acts of the Flemish Region.

The funding for the implementation of the Youth Employment Plan (2008) in the context of the Youth Guarantee Plan is made available from the Government of Flanders.

#### MINISTER IN CHARGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL ECONOMY

The Government of Flanders consists of nine ministers, who are in office for a five-year term. Minister Philippe Muyters (Flemish-Nationalist Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Work, Economy, Innovation and Sport (from 2014 until 2019).

#### MINISTRY OF WORK AND SOCIAL ECONOMY

The Flemish Ministry of Work and Social Economy and the Department of Work and Social Economy within it are responsible for advice, evaluation, follow-up and coordination on policy regarding work and social economy in Flanders, including youth employment/unemployment.

## FLEMISH SERVICE FOR EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING (VDAB)

The public employment services are also organised at regional level and are in charge of counselling, job search assistance, intermediation services and training of (un)employed workers.

The Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding, VDAB) has, as the career director, the mission of creating for all Flemish citizens the space necessary for them to develop themselves and their careers as effectively as possible. The aim is to improve labour market functioning and promote prosperity for all. As a service provider, VDAB helps citizens to develop their careers according to market demand. VDAB cooperates strongly with other service providers and has a special focus on disadvantaged citizens.

As an external autonomous agency VDAB is not directly governed by the Minister of Employment but managed by a governing board. As part of the Flemish authorities, the agency is accountable to the Flemish Government. VDAB is financed by the Government and ministers determine its policy priorities.

The goals and objectives of VDAB for the period 2015-2019 and the accompanying actions for the year 2015 are geared to the European employment strategy, the Flemish Government Agreement 2014-2019, and the Policy Paper on Work, Economics, Science and Innovation 2014-2019. In its annual business plan, which reflects the policy priorities as determined in the annual Policy Brief on Work, VDAB indicates which projects will be elaborated and where the services must be continued, refined and/or adapted.

## FLEMISH AGENCY FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING - SYNTRA FLANDERS

Since 2004 entrepreneurial training in Flanders has been coordinated by the [Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training – SYNTRA Flanders](#).

SYNTRA Flanders collaborates with several entrepreneurial education and training providers in Flanders, in particular with the five regional SYNTRA Training Centres. These deliver apprenticeship programmes for young people aged 15 to 25. Apprenticeship trainees gain practical experience in a work environment (four days a week) under the guidance of a tutor-supervisor and attend classes, including General Knowledge modules, at one of the Training Centres (one day a week) which complement the practical work experience.

SYNTRA Flanders falls under the responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Work. The assignment of the agency is formalised in an annual business plan, which contains the strategic and operational goals of the agency.

## MINISTER IN CHARGE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Minister Hilde Crevits (Christian Democratic Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Education and Training (from 2014 until 2019).

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Department of Education and Training together with the Minister in charge of Education and Training is responsible for the advice, evaluation and follow-up on education policy in Flanders.

## MINISTER IN CHARGE OF YOUTH

Minister Sven Gatz (Liberal Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels (from 2014 until 2019).

He is the coordinating minister for the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan.

## MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND MEDIA

The 'Division Youth' – embedded in the Department of Culture, Youth and Media – ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights

and is responsible for the coordination of a horizontal Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (leisure, education, work, equality, etc.).

### **Main non-public actors**

#### **TRADE UNIONS**

There are three trade union confederations in Belgium, each reflecting a socio-political stream in the country. The two largest are ACV (Algemeen Vakverbond) and ABVV (Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond), affiliating with the Christian and socialist movements respectively, while the smaller ACLVB (Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België) is rooted in liberalism. Each trade union has departments in the Flemish Community.

The several trade unions in Belgium are responsible for:

- the Representing of employees in wage and collective bargaining in companies and economic sectors
- defending the interests of employees
- the payment of unemployment benefits and the integration allowance

ACV, ABVV and ACLVB use the following youth structures. Each confederation has a specific department or section for youth, with union officers working solely on such issues. In the case of ACV and ABVV, there are two national representatives, for the country's Dutch- and French-speaking parts respectively. There is also at least one regional youth representative in every province, working rather independently from the national level. This is different in the liberal trade union, which employs three national representatives, one for Brussels (part-time), one for Flanders (full-time) and one for Wallonia (part-time). Youth representatives at the regional level, in contrast, are mostly volunteers who take up this role on top of their normal functions.

#### **REPRESENTATIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Flemish Youth Council is the official advisory council for the Government of Flanders for all areas concerning children, young people and their organisations in Flanders. The Flemish Youth Council ensures that the voice of children and young people reaches the policy makers and defends the interests of youth work organisations in Flanders and Europe.

Viewpoints and recommendations are prepared in committees, working groups, and during other meetings, and are subsequently passed on to the Annual General Meeting which then gives the final result to the Government of Flanders. In this way, everyone can take the desires and needs of Flemish young people and the interests of youth work into account.

#### **ORGANISATIONS WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON YOUNG PEOPLE**

Many organisations with a special focus on young people are commissioned to set up, support and monitor youth employment and entrepreneurship: the Ambrassade (support centre for youth work and youth information, secretariat of the Flemish Youth Council), nationally organised youth associations, and NGOs in the field of development co-operation.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

In Flanders, youth employment and entrepreneurship are a joint responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Employment, the Flemish Minister of Education and the Flemish Minister of Youth.

As mentioned in other chapters, youth policy is a transversal policy. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government.

Besides the Flemish Policy Plan, the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy envisages three more instruments of youth policy:

- Impact study of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER)
- Contact points for youth and children's rights and a coordinating administration
- Youth Progress Report

### **3.3 Skills Forecasting**

#### **Forecasting system(s)**

##### **VLAMT – competence prognoses**

The Flemish Government aims to have a coordinated and structured collection of information about future competence needs. In 2010, a pilot project has been launched to develop an instrument for the identification of competence needs for the Flemish region. In the European project 'Flemish Labour Market Research of the future' ([VLAMT](#)), funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), a concept was elaborated. The project consists of:

- a quantitative model of changes in the labour market, undertaken by the Policy Research Centre Work and Social Economy, a centre of expertise in policy monitoring and analysis of the labour market, which support the Flemish Government
- 'Competent', a skills database maintained by VDAB
- strategic focus studies on competence needs

The Flemish Government intends to encourage and support focus studies through sectoral education and funds for training.

##### **Job monitor**

The Policy Research Centre Work and Social Economy also provides a Job Monitor ([beroepenmonitor](#)). The Job Monitor is an interactive tool with evolutions of the number employed in several professional classes. The Job Monitor is divided into characteristic such as gender, age and education level. The statistics are calculated on the basis of the Labour Force Questionnaire.

##### **Skills development**

The Policy Paper Employment, Economy, Science and Innovation (2014-2019) states that there will be investment in a strong connection between education and labour market to provide better developed and more agile citizens. In this way, citizens should be able to improve their competences and acquire qualifications.

### **3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling**

#### **Career guidance and counselling services**

VDAB is an external autonomous agency and is established by the Flemish Decree of 7 May 2004, offers career guidance services at its competence centres, for (young) people who wish to take charge of their own career. In these centres, VDAB career guidance counsellors help people with their career choices and provide assistance with drafting a personal development plan. VDAB is financed by the Flemish government. The Ministers of the Flemish Community define the policy priorities through a management agreement between VDAB and the Flemish Government ([beheersovereenkomst](#)). VDAB is part of the policy domain Work and Social Economy.

At the Flemish level, VDAB plays a leading and coordinating role in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Plan. In 2014, the Youth Guarantee scheme started in Flanders. However, in 2008 Flanders had already developed an impressive policy on unemployed youth, the so-called 'Youth Employment Plan' (YEP). VDAB implemented the YEP to tailor its standard services better to the needs of young job-seekers aged 18 to 25. Its goal is to stimulate young people (18-25 years) to find a job (possibly their first) and to provide

them with the training and guidance they needed for long-term employment. VDAB has decided not to create a new plan within the context of the Youth Guarantee scheme, but to optimise and strengthen the existing YEP so that VDAB can offer every young person (i.e. a rate of 100%) either a job or personal counselling within 4 months after registration.

The VDAB chooses the most appropriate method to activate the young people, including:

- vacancy counselling
- guidance
- mediation, training
- work experience
- internship
- apprenticeship
- etc.

The method can be offered by VDAB itself or by a partner (TIBB - Trajecten met Intensieve Begeleiding en Bemiddeling: trajectories with intensive counselling and mediation). In addition, VDAB enters into flexible and wide-ranging partnerships with education institutions, companies and sectors. An example is the 'learning network', which was established in the context of the Youth Guarantee. The partners in the 'learning network' are VDAB, Department of Health, Department of Education and Training, Department of Employment, Department of Youth, the ESF-Agency, the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

VDAB focuses on career guidance for all job-seekers and in particular special target groups, such as young job seekers (who are recently graduated). Young people below the age of 25 are counselled more intensively early on in their spell of unemployment than older job seekers. VDAB also focuses on early school leavers to make them aware of their rights and obligations and of the career guidance service through promotion in schools, payment institutions, media campaigns and e-services for young people.

## Funding

The work of VDAB is largely funded by the Flemish Government and in particular by the Flemish Ministry of Employment and Social Economy. VDAB operates under a management agreement with the Flemish government in this connection. The management agreement defines the policy priorities and the budget allocated to VDAB.

As well as the grant from the Flemish Community, there is also income from the European Union and from the invoicing of employers.

In 2016, the total operating budget was 831.751.000 euro. This budget includes employee costs, operational costs, cooperation with third parties, financial compensation and investments. (source: [Schriftelijke vraag Vlaams Parlement](#)).

## Quality assurance

VDAB is accountable to the Flemish Government. The follow-up, reporting and evaluation of the management agreement is governed by decrees ([Decreet tot oprichting van het publiekrechtelijk vormgegeven extern verzelfstandigd agentschap "Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding"](#)). The Flemish Government is responsible for altering, complementing, replacing or removing the mission, tasks and authorities of the VDAB in accordance of the decree.

In accordance with the decree on 'Better Administrative Policy' ('Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid' or 'BBB'), the VDAB has to provide an annual business plan. All reforms and initiatives concerning (youth) employment are included in the annual business plan of VDAB. This plan is monitored, evaluated and adjusted (qualitatively and quantitatively) quarterly by the Ministry, the board of directors of VDAB and the experts.

The mechanisms in place to monitor and ensure the quality of the services and measures are described in the plan. The main mechanisms are: customer's satisfaction, evaluation

reports and result measurements. Furthermore, there are operational objectives (e.g. 'to guarantee a comprehensive and tailored mediation and counselling offer to all registered job-seekers under 25 years'), objective indicators (e.g. 75% satisfaction rate, 60% of young job-seekers get a job 6 months after registration) and monitoring indicators (e.g. 17.800 IBOs on an annual basis) in the plan.

VDAB is responsible for overall quality assurance in the competence centres.

### **3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships**

#### **Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships**

##### **Federal level**

The Royal Decree of 21 September 2004 concerning the protection of trainees ([Koninklijk Besluit van 21 september 2004 betreffende de bescherming van stagiairs](#)) applies to the employer, the trainee and the educational institution. The Royal Decree includes:

- a risk analysis carried out by the employer of the trainee and the associated prevention measures
- information exchange between the employer, trainee and educational institution
- health monitoring

Under Social security legislation, a Federal responsibility two cases arise. Certain education programmes prescribe traineeship for students to obtain their degree. In addition to this compulsory traineeship, some students and graduates choose to do a traineeship. When the traineeship is not remunerated, a declaration does not have to be made to the Civil Service Social Security. When the traineeship is remunerated or compensation is given, the nature of the working relationship has to be verified. This defines whether or not the provider of the traineeship has to conclude an employment contract and pay social security contributions.

Traineeships and apprenticeships may be organised from the second-grade of secondary education and when the trainee/apprentice is 15 years old or no longer subject to compulsory full-time schooling under national law.

##### **Flemish level**

The Flemish Government describes a system of learning and working ([Stelsel Leren en Werken](#)) which refers to education systems in which trainees or apprentices acquire professional skills in a school environment (educational institution or training centre) and at the workplace. This concerns, in particular, vocational training where trainees are students or young poorly qualified jobseekers. The system of learning and working is a joint responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Work and the Flemish Minister of Education and Training.

The system of learning and working includes:

#### **1. Students who are following a traineeship or apprenticeship in the context of their education:**

- Part-time vocational education (dbso): when a pupil is 15 or 16 years old (s)he may enter a system of alternating learning and working. All youngsters in part-time education are obliged to take part in learning and working for at least 28 hours a week.
- Part-time vocational education is organised in cooperation with a centre for part-time education or a centre for apprenticeships.
- Dual system of learning and working (pilot project): this is in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Employment, VDAB and Syntra Flanders.
- Apprenticeship (leertijd): Apprenticeships form part of the alternating training system within secondary education. In Flanders apprenticeships are organised in

a SYNTRA training centre. The apprenticeship system combines courses at a SYNTRA campus with working in a company under the guidance of an entrepreneur or training supervisor. Young people are only admitted to this system when they have been offered a contract by an employer. There are no alternatives in terms of work experience if the young person becomes unemployed. Most of the training is for three years. Apprenticeships fall under the minister responsible for education. This system runs in cooperation with SYNTRA Flanders.

## 2. Young job-seekers, such as trainees from training centres:

- Individual vocational training (IBO): young people can start work under a training contract with VDAB for IBO, individual vocational training in which VDAB contracts its training assignment out to a company where the job-seeker will be taught his/her chosen vocation on the shop floor. The individual Vocational Training aims at fostering (youth) employment. During this individual training, the employer does not have to pay a wage or social security contributions.
- Traineeship agreement: this is available for (young) people who have formally left school. It comprises a work experience at an enterprise with theoretical entrepreneurial training in a training centre. This is undertaken in cooperation with SYNTRA Flanders.
- Integration traineeship ('instapstage'): traineeship for young people without a secondary diploma. This is undertaken in cooperation with VDAB.

VDAB has decided not to create a new plan regarding the Youth Guarantee Plan, but to optimise and strengthen the existing Youth Employment Plan (see 3.4). The added value of this strengthened approach specifically for traineeship and apprenticeship is the focus on workplace learning (IBO, 'Individuele BeroepsOpleiding' or individual vocational training), internships, apprenticeships, 'instapstages' (federal integration traineeships), etc.), which becomes a standard module in the trajectory of unqualified young people and the cooperation with sectors to create forms of workplace learning.

## Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

### Facilitating the participation of young people and supporting providers of traineeships

The Royal Decree of 1 September 2006 concerning starting and tutoring premiums ([Start- en Stagebonus](#)) is a measure to facilitate the participation of young people and support providers of traineeship and apprenticeships. The Federal Government set up a system of financial rewards to prevent the dropping out of part-time students (who do apprenticeships as part of their alternating education in partial compulsory education) through start premiums and to encourage companies to employ them through internship premiums.

Since 1 September 2015, the starting and tutoring bonuses have been a responsibility of the Flemish Community. Since January 2016, the Department of Employment and Social Economy has been responsible for the payment of the starting and tutoring bonuses.

The Royal Decree of 16 May 2003 concerning the harmonisation and simplification of the regulations regarding the reduction of social security contributions mentions target group reduction for 'mentors'. The cost reduction is a measure to encourage employers to organise training at the workplace.

### Raising awareness about traineeships and apprenticeships

VDAB promotes traineeships and apprenticeships and informs young people and providers. A [list](#) of all possible traineeships and apprenticeships is available on the website of the VDAB:

- individual vocational training,
- apprenticeship,

- starting traineeship,
- work experience agreement.

In addition, the VDAB organised in cooperation with Voka, VRT, UNIZO and Adecco the Experience Works-campaign in 2015 ([Ervaring werkt campagne](#)). Employees of VDAB, together with 1300 young people, visited 700 companies. These companies offers traineeships or apprenticeships. During these campaign, VDAB, Voka, VRT, UNIZO and Adecco also informed many young people and companies about the possibilities of traineeships and apprenticeships.

## Recognition of learning outcomes

The following certificates recognises learning outcomes (under the Decree of 10 July 2008):

- A certificate (attest): if students successfully complete one or more apprenticeship-training years.
- A certificate (certificaat): if the youngster completes his training successfully.
- An apprenticeship certificate (certificaat leertijd): if pupils have successfully completed their entire apprenticeship training programme. A getuigschrift leertijd is not the same as an education diploma, but has a lot of value and fulfils the requirements of business legislation for professional knowledge for most professions.
- A certificate of business administration basics (getuigschrift basiskennis bedrijfsbeheer): if the young person
  - has completed at least four school years in secondary education, apart from the first stage, or in an apprenticeship, and
  - has satisfied the conditions for basic knowledge of business administration.

A 'Flemish Qualifications Framework' is being developed, following the development of the 'European Qualifications Framework'. The Government of Flanders has formulated the intention to implement the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in Flanders.

## Funding

### Flemish Government

The system of learning and working is allocated to the policy domain **Education and Training** of the Flemish Government. In 2017, the budget for the system learning and working is 10,6 million euro. The overall budget of the policy domain Education and Training is 11,3 billion (source: [Vlaamse Begroting in cijfers 2017](#)).

The work of **VDAB** (such as Individual Vocational Training, Integration traineeship...) is largely funded by the Flemish government. VDAB operates under a management agreement with the Flemish Government in this connection. The management agreement defines the policy priorities and the budget allocated to VDAB.

The **SYNTRA** Flanders agency, which provides apprenticeships, is also subsidised by the Flemish Government under its - employment policy area and receives European and Flemish contributions for specific projects. It subsidises the five recognised SYNTRA training centres for the self-employed and small and medium-sized enterprises. The centres receive:

- an operating subsidy for apprenticeships and certified and non-certified programmes. Those programmes that are recognised receive funding on the basis of the number of trainee hours of the trainees that take the exam. This is thus a form of output funding;
- an investment subsidy for the hire, construction or acquisition and owner maintenance of the buildings;
- where applicable, project funding.

Courses are only subsidised if they meet the recognition requirements.

## European Social Fund

The Operational Programme for the implementation of the European Social Fund (ESF) in Flanders in the 2014-2020 period supports initiatives that increase employment and improve social cohesion in Flanders. The ESF programme lays down the priorities for the expenditure of 1 billion euro, of which 600 million euro is financed through the Flemish budget and 400 million euro through the European budget.

One of the priorities of the ESF-programme is investing in sustainable and high quality jobs on the Flemish labour market and in vocational training and lifelong learning. Sixty per cent of the resources have been allocated to this priority. This corresponds with the Flemish career policy, which aims to bring about a more effective labour market. More specifically, Flemish ESF projects will focus on key transition moments in careers, such as the transition from school to work, from unemployment to work and from one job to another.

In the end, the Flemish Operational Programme will assist 250,000 people in finding or keeping a job, in setting up a company, or in participating in vocational training.

## Quality assurance

### Policy Domain Education and Training

The quality assurance system has the following goals:

- to ensure the constant improvement of the quality of education
- to account to the government for the use of public funds
- to provide information to students and parents about the quality of education

### VDAB

All reforms and initiatives are included in the annual business plan of VDAB (beheersovereenkomst). This plan will be monitored, evaluated and adjusted (qualitatively and quantitatively) quarterly by the Ministry, the board of directors of VDAB and the experts.

VDAB is responsible for overall quality assurance in the VDAB centres.

### SYNTRA Flanders

Both the Executive Board of SYNTRA Flanders and the Commission of Practical Training (responsible for apprenticeships) include members appointed by the representative organisations of employers and employees, small and medium-sized enterprises and agriculture that belong to SERV (Socio-Economic Council of Flanders).

SYNTRA Flanders evaluates the five SYNTRAs every three years with respect to how well known the programme is and its market share, customer satisfaction and effectiveness. SYNTRA also uses a self-evaluation tool coupled with an assessment panel consisting of both internal and external members. This panel assesses the self-evaluation, and the action and improvement plans developed by SYNTRAs, and engages in probing discussions with all actors in connection with the organisation of SYNTRA training activities.

SYNTRA Flanders is responsible for overall quality assurance in the centres.

## 3.6 Integration of Young People in the Labour Market

### Youth employment measures

The Flemish Youth- and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2015-2019) and the Policy Paper on Employment, Economy, Science and Innovation (2014-2019) mention the provision of a tailor-made service for all young job-seekers. Every young person is supposed to get a

job or receive personal counselling within four months after registration. This objective includes the following projects and processes:

1. OKOT-VDAB ([Onderwijskwalificerend traject met VDAB Opleiding](#))

An OKOT-VDAB degree trajectory is a programme for young job-seekers who want to increase significantly their chances of getting a job by making one of the designated shortage occupations their job goal, but who do not have the required diploma and competences. Poorly skilled young people can obtain their secondary education diploma through OKOT's second-chance education.

2. WIJ! (Work Experience Programme for Young People)

The Government of Flanders offers a [WIJ!](#)-programme (Work Experience Programme for Young People) to strengthen the work competencies of unqualified young people and to guide them into work. The support provided by this programme leads to work experience or the beginning of qualitative training (vocational training or education).

3. YOUTH GUARANTEE PLAN

With the [Youth Guarantee Plan](#), VDAB aims to guide young people as quickly as possible towards sustainable employment. In this context, the emphasis is on young people with a low or mid-level education.

VDAB has decided not to create a new plan regarding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Plan, but to optimize and strengthen the existing Youth Employment Plan (2008). All young job-seekers under the age of 25 years will be offered a tailored trajectory with competence enhancement actions (technical and non-technical competences (attitude, application skills, etc.) within 4 months after registration as a job-seeker. All unqualified school leavers start by the end of the sixth month after registration on a vocational training and/or work experience. Those NEET young people who do not register with VDAB are tracked down and motivated to be counselled by partners at municipal level. The starting point for the non-registered NEETs is the moment they leave school. Essential administrative data (education, social services, municipalities, etc.) will therefore be combined.

VDAB also disseminates information about job opportunities. VDAB keeps an unemployment register with information (age, education, place of residence, work experience, job preferences, etc.) on people who are currently unemployed. At the same time, the VDAB maintains a database of the job vacancies that are currently available. The databases are regularly compared in order to find suitable matches an unemployed person and a job vacancy.

The Flemish Government also has a measure providing targeted reductions in employers' social security contributions to foster youth employment in the private sector. The target group reduction has been transferred since the sixth state reform of Belgium. The 'Flemish target group reduction for young people' replaces the 'Federal target reduction for young employees', which was suspended 1 July 2016.

The Individual Vocational Training is a training measure aimed at fostering (youth) employment. During this individual training, the employer doesn't have to pay a wage or social security contributions.

### **Flexicurity measures focusing on young people**

At the Flemish level, there are no specific measures to enhance flexibility and security in the labour market to boost youth employment.

The Federal social legislation envisages special assistance for unemployed youth after schooling. They receive so-called waiting allowances ([inschakelingsuitkering](#)), which provide them with the means to live until they secure employment. The waiting allowances are available to every young person of minimum 18 and maximum 25 years old. When a young person receives a waiting allowance, he/she has to be available for

the labour market and he/she should not refuse vocational training or appropriate employment.

The system of learning and working ([Stelsel Leren en Werken](#)) can also be seen as a flexicurity measure. Education in Belgium is compulsory until the age of 18. However, from the age of 15 a pupil can choose to combine part-time vocational schooling with a part-time job. For young people between 18 and 25 years old, specific legislation makes their entry into the labour market easier. Within the Belgian frame, the Government of Flanders pursues a particular labour market policy that aims to 'activate' people. Young people receive counselling and guidance services adapted to their specific situation. The Government of Flanders also supports dialogue between young people and actors in the labour market, in different ways and at different levels.

### **Reconciliation of private and working life for young people**

There is no specific youth-policy measure or initiative supporting the balance between work and family at the Flemish level.

At Federal level, a Royal Decree of 13 June 2001 amending the Royal Decree of 25 November 1991 concerning the unemployment regulation within the scope of youth vacations ([Koninklijk besluit tot wijziging van het koninklijk besluit van 25 november 1991 houdende de werkloosheidsreglementering in het kader van de jeugdvakantie](#)). Young people under the age of 25 are entitled to a youth vacation in the first year in which they were not fully employed. The days of youth vacation are reimbursed through a payment of 65% of their wage by the National Employment Service.

### **Funding of existing schemes/initiatives**

#### **The Flemish Government**

The work of VDAB (such as OKOT-VDAB, Youth Employment Plan...) is largely funded by the Flemish Government. As well as the grant from the Flemish Community, there is also income from the European Union and from invoicing of employers.

For the implementation of the Youth Employment Plan there were already sufficient resources made available from the Flemish Government and Europe. So for the successful implementation of the Youth Guarantee there is no need for extra funding. The amount of funding is not mentioned in the plan.

#### **European Social Fund**

The Operational Programme for the implementation of the ESF in Flanders in the 2014-2020 period supports initiatives that increase employment and improve social cohesion in Flanders. The ESF programme lays down the priorities for the expenditure of 1 billion euro. 600 million euro is financed through the Flemish budget and 400 million euro through the European budget. The programme aims not only to stimulate employment and social inclusion, but also to promote innovation and transnational cooperation. It supports targeted actions for more entrepreneurship and an increased flow from the social economy, as well as better integration and inclusion of unskilled youngsters and Roma.

For example, the project WIJ! (Work Experience Programme for Young People), as mentioned earlier, is financed by the ESF-programme, with a budget allocation in 2015 of 2.226.000 euro.

### **Quality assurance**

All reforms and initiatives concerning (youth) employment are included in the annual business plan of VDAB. This plan is monitored, evaluated and adjusted (qualitatively and quantitatively) quarterly by the Ministry, the board of directors of VDAB and the experts.

In the plan there are operational objectives (e.g. 'to guarantee a comprehensive and tailored mediation and counselling offer to all registered job-seekers under 25 years'), objective indicators (e.g. 75% satisfaction rate, 60% of young job-seekers get a job 6

months after registration) and monitoring indicators (e.g. 17.800 IBOs on an annual basis).

The initiatives in the context of 'Early School Leaving' are also listed in the 'Early School Leaving Action Plan'. This plan is monitored and adjusted by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Work, the technical workforce for early school leaving and the steering committee for early school leaving: every year at least three meetings of the technical workforce, at least one meeting of the steering committee, an annual evaluation rapport (qualitative and quantitative results), and an annual meeting between Ministries, inspectorate education and the educational counselling service take place.

Specifically, the following actions for young people will be registered and will be measured and followed up operationally 1, 4, 6 and 12 months after registration:

- The number of young people labelled for the youth work plan/youth guarantee
- The number of those with a job offer (offer of work):
  - of whom have an open job offer
  - of whom have a change to the vacancy (must go and apply in person)
- The number of those labelled with indicator screening = 'assessment', 'screening' (1) (diagnosis: measuring the distance to the labour market)
- The number of those labelled who have started a counselling or mediation process (trajectory/training course to strengthen competences)
- percentage who have left unemployment via action:
  - of those who started a job o transmission
  - cooperation rejected
  - with changed eurodat
  - not employable
- percentage conclusively reached (reach percentage of number of young people who come under the youth guarantee)
- not conclusive with invitation (percentage of those young people invited to come to the VDAB, but for whom no service provision has taken place)
- not (or not yet) processed (number of young people who fell through the cracks)

This report is evaluated at appropriate times and is intended to serve as a basis for improving the approach towards young people.

### **3.7 Cross-Border Mobility in Employment, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Opportunities**

#### **Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility**

Flemish students in higher education can do their internship in another country. Young people can also do an internship outside Belgium, even if this is not part of any education. There are opportunities to do holiday jobs, but also real jobs beyond the Flemish and Belgian borders. JINT (a coordination body for International Youth Work funded by the Government of Flanders) informs young people about international opportunities and helps young people and youth organisations to make their international plans a reality.

#### **Go Strange**

The website [www.gostrange.be](http://www.gostrange.be) is one of the main instruments for cross-border mobility, as well as the bi-annual information fair 'Go Strange', which in 2011 welcomed 1500 young people.

Go Strange is part of the information network Eurodesk and has partners in 33 countries.

## **VDAB-EURES**

The purpose of VDAB-EURES services is to provide information, advice and recruitment/placement (job-matching) services for the benefit of (young) workers and employers.

VDAB participates in the EURES-network, thus offering job-seekers support in finding a job abroad. VDAB has implemented an action plan for international mobility.

## **Flanders Trainee Programme**

The Government of Flanders provides grants for traineeships in multilateral organisations such as the United Nations, OESO or the Council of Europe.

They are for young people under the age of 35. The traineeships last at least 2 months and maximum 6 months in an international organisation. The Flanders Trainee Programme reimburses travel and accommodation expenses.

## **MOBILE 2 – Mobility in apprenticeships**

Apprentices are able to participate in an European international exchange project ([MOBILE](#)). During a traineeship abroad lasting a fortnight, apprentices can gain insights into a foreign company in the Netherlands, France or Germany. Apprentices receive a grant from the Erasmus+ programme.

## **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs**

[Erasmus for young entrepreneurs](#) is a cross-border exchange programme for entrepreneurs, financed by the European Union. It provides young starting entrepreneurs the opportunity to exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur in another country of the European Union. This European exchange programme lasts one to six months.

## **Legal framework**

There is no specific legal framework for the cross-border mobility of young workers, trainees and entrepreneurs. Most of the legal framework targets the population in general.

However, a legal framework for cross-border mobility of young workers, trainees and entrepreneurs depends on the international juridical context. Flanders (and Belgium in general) have bilateral or multilateral agreements with other countries. The agreements allow Belgian social rights to be exported abroad. The social rights of young workers, trainees and young entrepreneurs who stay in the European Economic Area or Switzerland are determined by European legislation.

## **3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence**

### **Policy Framework**

The first strategy in Flanders dates back to 2007. The second strategy is the 2011-2014 Action Plan for the Promotion of Entrepreneurial Spirit and Entrepreneurship. The Government has confirmed that this strategy is still ongoing, despite being dated to conclude at the end of 2014. The second strategy identifies four priorities:

- supporting the development of the entrepreneurial spirit
- creating opportunities for practical entrepreneurial learning
- increasing people's motivation to become entrepreneurs
- and ensuring that teachers show entrepreneurial spirit and demonstrate a balanced view of entrepreneurship.

Actions address the need for a common vocabulary, support for teachers (including methods, networks and placements in industry), communicating with all partners and ensuring that learning progression takes place across education levels and phases of teacher education.

The Flemish Government launched a third specific strategy, the Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education 2015-2019 ([Actieplan Ondernemend Onderwijs 2015-2019](#)), at the end of 2015. This is a shared initiative between the Minister of Agriculture and Sea Fishing, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Economy, Science, Innovation, Employment, Professional education and Sport. The objective of the Action Plan is to prepare students for self-employment as well as providing teachers with the training needed to help them create positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and self-employment. The Action Plan is also a contribution to the economic growth strategy Flanders in Action 2020.

The Action Plan aims at fostering a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship in young people and adults through regular education. The following groups belong to the Action Plan's target group:

- pupils in nursery and primary education
- pupils in full-time and part-time secondary education, including apprenticeship and Se-n-Se (secondary after secondary education),
- pupils in part-time education in the arts
- students in higher education
- course participants in adult education, with the exception of the training course leading to the business management certificate.

### Formal learning

Entrepreneurship has yet to be included in the curriculum. Nevertheless aspects of entrepreneurship such as creativity and sense of initiative are incorporated as cross-curriculum attainment targets in primary and secondary schools. Further up the educational ladder, business-related VET and higher education courses incorporate entrepreneurship in the attainment targets. Entrepreneurship education schemes are widely available but mainly optional. The extent of provision varies by educational level. Most of the opportunities are concentrated at the general secondary education level. The decision to get involved in enterprise education programmes is often taken at the school or teacher level. Statutory courses on entrepreneurship are only found in some fields of VET and higher education. However, there is a growing awareness of the importance of enterprise education across all levels.

The Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education (2015-2019) mentions that the Flemish Government will seek clarification of the role of entrepreneurial learning in the on-going parliamentary debate on secondary school graduation requirements (eindtermendebat). The Action Plan states further that a professional qualification Entrepreneur will be developed in the framework of the Flemish qualification structure.

Vlajo (Vlaamse Jonge Ondernemingen – Flemish Young Enterprises), a non-profit organisation, builds on its partnerships with education institutes, the Flemish Government and the business community to provide practical experience. Vlajo can be found in one out of two education institutions in Flanders. Vlajo specifically provides practical education projects to stimulate entrepreneurship and works with schools to engage students in mini-enterprises. It provides a framework for the creation and management of small businesses in a few months during the school year. Students (minientrepreneurs) develop skills by taking key positions in human resources, financial, technical, and commercial departments, and by working in management, advertising, marketing, accounting, and sales.

The Policy Paper on Employment, Economy, Science and Innovation 2014-2019 ([Beleidsnota Werk, Economie, Wetenschap en Innovatie 2014-2019](#)) states that young entrepreneurs should develop and maintain their competences. For this reason, SYNTRA Flanders and the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship are the key partners in an integrated approach for the strengthening of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial training.

## Non-formal and informal learning

The Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education 2015-2019 mentions support for youth cooperation. Youth cooperation schemes enable young people to experiment with their entrepreneurial skills in a supportive and safe environment. There are two types of youth cooperation: [ARTEpreneur](#), a cooperation of students, and a youth club cooperation organised by Formaats (federation of youth clubs in the Flemish Community). The cooperative structure enables youth clubs to serve as a breeding ground for entrepreneurial young people.

The Flemish qualification structure is a validation system to recognise and validate education, societal functions and non-formal and informal experiences. In this way, the Government of Flanders plans to work on an integrated EVC-policy (policy to value competencies acquired elsewhere).

In addition, the Government of Flanders supports the development of [Oscar](#), an online tool (portfolio) that allows organisations to award certificates for acquired competences to participants. This tool allows participants to collect and register proof of the competences they acquired in non-formal contexts. Besides that, there are also specific initiatives taken by Flemish youth organisations with the support of the Government of Flanders. JINT, a coordination body for International Youth Work, promotes Youthpass as an outcome of international mobility projects (Erasmus+: Youth in Action). JINT has also published a document that describes the main instruments for the recognition of competences in a European context. It highlights Europass, Youthpass and the European Portfolio for Youth Workers and Youth Leaders.

## Educators support in entrepreneurship education

The Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education 2015-2019 mentions that educators should be able to facilitate entrepreneurship education. Educators should have the space, time, support and training to facilitate entrepreneurship education and the opportunity to share knowledge and experience. Their educational institution should bring in the expertise for support and training through cooperation with external partners.

In addition, educators and lecturers play a key role in providing Entrepreneurial Education. In this context, different types of support are offered: on-line support, face to face support by third parties, provision of a qualitative offer of activities and the creation of teacher placements in industry.

### Online support

The Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education 2015-2019 mentions that [Competento](#), a virtual knowledge centre on entrepreneurial competences, ensures that educators can consult subsidised material and activities on the online platform Klascement. Competento contains more than 500 links to various initiatives, training manuals and guidance documents, all of them focusing on entrepreneurship education at all levels of education. The aim of the portal is to help teachers design courses with embedded entrepreneurship elements. The portal offers access to information on existing initiatives, materials, tools and methodologies that can be used in transferring and developing entrepreneurial competences in the classroom environment and beyond.

### Network

Furthermore, Competento is building a network of contacts in entrepreneurship. In particular, Competento is developing a learning network for teachers and external partners to translate and concretise the teaching of entrepreneurship.

### The placement of teachers in industry

Teachers are also supported by giving them the opportunity to get a sense of entrepreneurship. Teacher placements in industry are an effective means of doing this, especially when the trainee is placed in a smaller enterprise.

## **3.9 Start-up Funding for Young Entrepreneurs**

### **Access to information**

#### **Access to information**

There is no specific measure on access to information for a start-up launched by young entrepreneurs.

The Policy Paper on Employment, Economy, Science and Innovation (2014-2019) states that an integrated contact point for all entrepreneurs will be provided. This objective consists of two operational objectives: a Digital Counter and the establishment of the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

#### **Digital Counter**

The integrated digital counter is a unique front office of the Flemish Government where every (future) entrepreneur can ask their questions about entrepreneurship.

#### **Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

The Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship ([Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen](#)) provides information and makes the experience and knowhow of experts available for (starting) entrepreneurs. The Agency provides information on:

- how to create and start up an enterprise (preparatory work, start-up step by step, coaching and guidance)
- financing and support measures through a data base
- follow-up and acquisition of an enterprise
- energy
- intellectual property
- environment
- design
- international entrepreneurship (access to European Funds)
- ...

The Agency stimulates and supports innovation and entrepreneurship, and creates a favourable environment for business creation.

### **Access to capital**

Most of the public start-up funding in Flanders is available for the population in general. The Flemish Government supports starting entrepreneurs with grants and aid. An overview of these grants and aid are available in the subsidy database of the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

#### **Start-up loan+**

Participation Fund Flanders provides a start-up loan ([Startlening+](#)). It is a subordinated loan for starting entrepreneurs who have not been actively self-employed as their main job for four years. The loan has a maximum budget of 100.000 euro. The loan has a term of three to ten years and the interest rate applicable is set at 3%. Student entrepreneurs also benefits from the Start-up loan+.

#### **Micro-loans of microStart**

microStart finances starting and established entrepreneurs who cannot rely on financial institutes with micro-loans ([microkredieten](#)). A micro-loan can be used for renovation, supply, material, cash resources...A micro-loan is a budget between 500 and 15.000 euro. In addition, microStart provides free services and advice (coaching and education). These services are provided by experienced volunteers.

## EIB and EIF

The [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF) comprise the EIB-group. These European financial institutions provide: direct funding or funding through financial intermediaries.

The European Investment Fund develops, promotes and manages a number of risk capital and debt financing instruments. For example:

- [COSME Loan Guarantee Facility](#): this instrument is part of the European programme COSME. EIF provides, through the Loan Guarantee Facility instrument, guarantees to financial intermediaries who provide loans and leasing to entrepreneurs. In Flanders, Participation Fund Flanders is recognised as the intermediary.
- [EaSI Guarantee Financial Instrument](#): this instrument is funded by the EaSI-programme and focuses on the stimulation of microfinance to vulnerable groups, micro-enterprises and the social economy. It is the successor to European Progress Microfinance, including the financing of microStart in Flanders. Microstart meets the needs of (future) entrepreneurs who cannot rely on financial institutions.
- ...

## 3.10 Promotion of Entrepreneurship Culture

### Special events and activities

#### Campaigns

A day for entrepreneurs ([Dag van de ondernemer](#)) is organised by the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and UNIZO. It is an annual recurring campaign whose main objective is the promotion of entrepreneurship and extra attention is paid to entrepreneurs.

Month of young entrepreneurs (Maand van de jonge ondernemer) is a campaign organised by Young VOKA ([Jong VOKA](#)), a network of young entrepreneurs. During this month, extra attention is paid to young entrepreneurs and professionals.

[Start Academy](#) for young entrepreneurs focuses on students from universities and colleges. It is an academy and contest organised by the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the ING bank and Flemish Young Entrepreneurs. During the year of the contest, several workshops and seminars are organised.

#### **Initiatives to support activities to promote youth entrepreneurship in the field of social entrepreneurship**

A number of youth clubs in Flanders can receive grants for the realisation of a supralocal project ([Bovenlokaal project Ondernemerschap](#)). With these grants, the Flemish Government encourage youth clubs to focus on artistic expression and (social) entrepreneurship among young people.

### Networks and partnerships

#### **Flemish Entrepreneurship-fostering Network (Vlaams Ondernemerschapsbevorderend Netwerk, VON)**

[VON](#) is a Flemish entrepreneurship-fostering network. It is an initiative of the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship to promote entrepreneurship. The objectives of VON are:

- the exchange of knowledge and experience in a network
- stimulating projects for structural cooperation
- financing projects

VON also offers a forum for consultation between the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and other organisations and actors. The forum is accessible for everyone and ideal for starting entrepreneurs.

## **Network Entrepreneurship (Netwerk ondernemen)**

Network Entrepreneurship ([Netwerk Ondernemen](#)) is a network of experienced entrepreneurs who help less experienced entrepreneurs to develop an enterprise. Netwerk Ondernemen is supported by the Flemish Government. The guidance provided includes individual and collective support from experienced entrepreneurs, access to an international network and exchange of experience with other starting entrepreneurs.

### **BRYO**

VOKA is the Flemish Network of Enterprises and applies itself to the advocacy of Flemish enterprises. VOKA has therefore launched several projects. [BRYO](#) (Bright and Young) is an initiative of VOKA and the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and supports young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 36 through a network of young entrepreneurs and individual coaching.

### **3.11 Current Debates and Reforms**

In 2016, the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament are discussing with stakeholders the curriculum for the 21st century and the use of learning outcomes as final objectives, including key competences such as entrepreneurship that are at the centre of this debate supported by scientific research.

## **4. Social Inclusion**

Social Inclusion

### **Special feature**

Measures and initiatives to combat social exclusion (of young people) is streamlined across different policy domains at the federal and the Flemish level. Therefore the chapter on Social inclusion focus at the Flemish level and illustrates the relevant parts of strategies and policy documents pertaining to various policy topics such as youth, education and welfare.

### **Highlights**

Policy makers today show an increased attention to disadvantaged young people. To cater to their specific situation, initiatives are taken to flexible supply of the youth care and to work more contextually and emancipatory. Moreover, partnerships are also being established between policy areas and sectors.

### **4.1 General context**

#### **Main challenges to social inclusion**

In most Flemish policy areas the following groups are referred to in the context of policies on social inclusion:

1. Persons living in poverty
2. Low-skilled people
3. People of non-Belgian origin
4. People with functional limitations (long-term illness, handicap, ...)

Below we give an outline of these groups and a current state of affairs concerning social exclusion within the relevant policy areas. We focus in particular on young people and also describe a number of social changes that entail additional challenges.

Before starting this outline, we would like to place one nuance. Although we discuss below all risk groups separately, all studies and data show that these vulnerabilities cannot be considered separately and that they often co-occur and mutually reinforce each other.

## People living in poverty

Following the Europe 2020 Strategy poverty in Flanders is measured based on three indicators:

### 1. Relative risk of poverty

The relative poverty risk measures the percentage of the population living in a household with a household income below the poverty threshold (60% of equivalent median disposable income).

### 2. A very low work intensity

A very low work intensity (population 0-59 years) occurs when the ratio of the number of months worked by all adult members of the household and the number of months they could have worked is less than 0.2.

### 3. Severe material deprivation

Severe material deprivation means that someone lives in a family that cannot afford at least four items from a list of nine (one week holiday away each year; a meal with fish, meat, chicken or vegetarian alternative every 2 days; a washing machine; a colour TV, a telephone / cell phone, a car, can pay the bills for rent, mortgage, utilities or other purchases, can heat the house properly, can face unexpected financial expenses).

A person is considered poor or socially excluded when he meets one of these three conditions. Measured on the basis of this composite indicator EU2020, 15.4% of the Flemish population lived in families at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2014, and nearly 1% of the Flemish population fulfilled simultaneously all three conditions ([VRIND](#), 2016 own adaptation of the EU-SILC survey). Flanders scores very well in comparison with other European regions and scores also significantly better than the Walloon Region (26% of the population lives in poverty) and the Brussels-Capital Region (38%).

In addition, it is also relevant to look at the individual indicators:

- 11% of the Flemish people lived in 2013 in households with an income below the Belgian poverty threshold. In recent years, the proportion of people below the poverty risk threshold remained stable; limited fluctuations are not statistically significant ([VRIND](#), 2016);
- 9% of the Flemish people live in households with a very low work intensity;
- 3% of the Flemish people live in severe material deprivation family;
- in 2014 13% of the Flemish people live in households that experience (severe) difficulties to meet ends with the disposable income.

[VRIND](#) (2014) also tells that for 25 to 49- year-olds the risk of poverty or social exclusion is the lowest (12.6%), for older age groups (50+) this percentages is the highest. In the youngest age group the figure is 15.1% for the 0 to 15 age group and 14.6% for the 16 to 24 year olds. 15% of the Flemish children (0-17 years) lives in a family that indicates that they have difficulties to meet ends.

Poverty is also closely related to the other indicators of deprivation and social exclusion. For example, the risk of poverty rate is significantly higher among lower-skilled persons and among persons who are chronically ill or who have disabilities. Among the lower skilled (people with a diploma of lower secondary education or less), the risk of poverty rate is in Flanders four times higher when compared to those with a higher education degree. Individuals who suffer from a long-term illness or disability have a risk of poverty rate which is two times higher when compared to people who are not bothered by illness or disability according to [VRIND](#) (2016).

The fight against poverty is a top priority for the Flemish Government. In the context of Europe 2020, the Flemish Government has set as target to reduce poverty and social exclusion by 2020 by 30% and to halve child poverty. The Flemish Government has

refined its objectives on poverty reduction and translated it into action in the Flemish Action Plan for Poverty Reduction 2015-2019.

Financial difficulties are often at the same time cause and consequence of deprivation in terms of i.a. employment, education, housing, health and social participation. In this regard, special attention is paid to youth unemployment. The EU Member States are facing up to this day still the negative impact of the prolonged economic and financial crisis. Young people are particularly hit by this precarious situation (Schepers & Nicaise, 2014). Youth unemployment varies greatly between the Member States. In some Member States, youth unemployment doubled or even tripled since the beginning of the recession, while in other countries the impact is relatively limited.

In Flanders, the youth unemployment rate is considerably lower than the European average, but also in Flanders this rate is strongly sensitive to economic circumstances. As a result of the crisis, the annual mean youth unemployment rate increased from 15,8% in 2012 to 17,7% in 2013 (source: [Arvastat VDAB](#)). The difficult first labour market entry is one of the main reasons for this cyclicity of youth unemployment (Schepers & Nicaise, 2014). Young people are more than other age groups temporarily recruited. The high proportion of temporary contracts and the limited seniority makes it easier and cheaper to fire young people. The problem - youth unemployment - is once again the strongest among unskilled young people.

### **Low-skilled and growing inequalities in education**

Among adults it is invariably found that lower-skilled people face multiple problems. Problems of social exclusion on the basis of education do already appear among young people, even during their school career. To specify this exclusion on the basis of the educational career, it is important to reflect briefly upon a number of educational issues.

According to the EU framework an early school leaver is defined as an 18-24 year old who has a maximum qualification of lower secondary education and who no longer is in education or training. The EU2020 strategy of the European Union wants to decrease the proportion of early school leavers by 2020 below 10%. Flanders has already achieved this goal: in 2015 the percentage of early school leavers was already 7.2%. The Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Government, however, uses a more stringent definition in which young people who have completed compulsory education but left secondary education without adequate qualifications are considered as early school leavers. Target in the Flemish Pact 2020 is to halve the proportion of early school leavers in 2020 compared to the baseline in 2008. In 2008 the percentage of early school leavers was 14%, in 2012-2013 that percentage was already dropped to 11.7% according to [VRIND](#) (2016). Early school leaving is amongst others linked to unemployment, poverty and poor health.

Because early school leaving is associated with social exclusion, it is also important to focus on those factors which are known to be good predictors of early school leaving. Falling behind in school is such a characteristic. It indicates the number of years of delay that a pupil has accumulated compared to the year that he/she would stand if he/she would have followed a normal school path. In the second year of the third stage of secondary education (for the majority of the pupils the final year in secondary education), almost one in ten lays at least two years behind in school. There are considerably more boys than girls falling behind according to [VRIND](#) (2016) and more young people of non-Belgian than of Belgian origin. In addition, the chance that a pupil has fallen behind is strongly related to the educational track one follows. The proportion of pupils that have fallen behind is the highest in vocational secondary education (BSO) and the lowest in general secondary education (ASO). Pupils in technical (TSO) and artistic secondary education (KSO) take a middle position.

At the moment, in the Flemish region, just over 45% of the 25 to 34 age group has a diploma of higher education according to [VRIND](#) (2016).

In sum, Flanders is doing generally well in terms of these indicators and achieves also good average scores in international performance studies (e.g. PISA, TIMSS). However, Flanders is also facing huge social inequalities in education. In Flanders educational mobility is relatively low. The children of parents with a low level of education often end up in the vocational track of secondary education and do not pursue higher education. While among young people with a lower educated mother 41% starts in higher education, no less than 83% of the young people with a higher educated mother initiate higher studies (source: [VRIND, 2016](#)).

In addition, the Flemish education is strongly segregated and this in regard with several risk factors (Keppens & Siongers, 2014). Segregation on the basis of ethnic origin, social background and special needs are the most important. The spread of ethnic minority pupils and pupils with social disadvantaged backgrounds over schools is very uneven in Flanders. Compared with other Western countries, socioeconomic and ethnic school segregation is high in Flanders (Agirdag, Nouwen, Mahieu et al., 2012; Jacobs, Rea, Teney et al., 2009). This high level of school segregation is related to the specific educational policy of free parental choice. This freedom of school choice allows parents to choose or avoid schools with a certain composition. A lot of middleclass parents tend to avoid schools with a high share of working-class and/or immigrant pupils (Agirdag & Van Houtte, 2011).

The Flemish region has in comparison with other European regions, also a relatively large number of pupils with special educational needs. 4.35% of the Flemish pupils follow lessons in special elementary or secondary education. Flanders chooses more than other regions and countries for a solution in separate schools. So, also with regard to special needs pupils, the Flemish school system is strongly segregated. The parliamentary act on pupils with specific educational needs (see below) which became fully operational in September 2015 wants to counteract this segregation.

### **People of non-Belgian origin**

Like other European regions, Flanders is facing a growing degree of ethnic diversity. At the beginning of 2016, the percentage of foreigners (= persons who have at present a foreign nationality) was 8.1%. Over the past 25 years, the proportion of foreigners has risen almost continuously in the Flemish region and in recent years this increase was quite strong according to [VRIND](#) (2016). The Research Centre of the Flemish Government calculated that at the beginning of 2014, about 19% of the inhabitants of the Flemish Region was of foreign origin (Research Centre of the Flemish Government, 2016). However, Flanders has in comparison with other European countries (with the exception of Luxembourg), a higher proportion of EU citizens under its foreign population. Compared to the Brussels and Walloon region the share of inhabitants with foreign roots is also rather low. In 2014, the proportion of residents of foreign origin was in Brussels region no less than 69% and in the Walloon region 31%.

Among young people, this percentage is considerably higher. In the youngest age group (0 to 5 years) even one in three is of foreign origin. Thereof slightly more than the half are coming from outside the European Union (the total population 54% or so just under 10%). In urban and metropolitan regions, this percentage is substantially higher. Looking at the share of residents of non-EU origin in the Flemish region, Antwerp beats all other cities. On January 1, 2013 32% of the inhabitants of Antwerp were of non-EU origin. This increasing diversity represents one of the major social challenges for Flemish youth policy.

The above numbers do not take account asylum seekers and persons who reside illegally in Belgium/Flanders. At the start of 2015, the number of asylum seekers in procedure (registered and on the waiting list) who are domiciled in the Flemish Region reached almost 14000. In [VRIND](#) (2016), there are no Flemish data available on the people without legal residence permit. A particular focus is currently the spectacular rising number of unaccompanied minor youth among the refugees. In 2015, 3099 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in Belgium while in 2014 only 486 minors

applied for asylum (the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Asylum statistics – separate numbers for the Flemish region are not available).

Not only does the proportion of inhabitants of foreign origin increases, also the diversity among the "foreign people" increases. Indeed, we can hardly speak of 'the' foreigner today. The traditional dichotomy between 'natives' and 'foreigners', which was dominant during the past decades does less justice to the current complex reality characterized by a strong variety of ethnic and national origins (Cops, Pleysier, Put & De Boeck, 2015).

Administrative data and research (e.g. data from the Youth Research Platform and the Knowledge Centre on Cultural and Media Participation, the Flemish poverty monitor, ...) show that young people of non-Belgian origin are socially deprived in various domains. Young people of non-Belgian origin have, for example, a much higher probability of leaving education without qualifications, of having higher truancy rates etc. In addition, recent research indicates that young people of non-Western origin significantly less attend cultural performances, engage less in cultural activities and participate less in socio-cultural associations, including youth work (Elchardus & Smits, 2012; Lievens, Siongers & Beunen, 2015; Van der Eecken, Kemper, Derluyn & Bradt, 2015).

Therefore, in the most recent policy documents (legislative term 2014-2019), a lot of attention is paid to the challenges of this growing diversity in terms of participation in society and to social inclusion. Flemish Minister for Youth, Sven Gatz, stated for instance in his policy note 2014-2019 that youth work must reach all young people, including those of foreign backgrounds. He also expands to other socially vulnerable groups. Youth work should not remain a story of the white middle class, minister Gatz stated.

Due to the recent terrorist attacks in which young people living in Brussels took part, a lot of attention is also paid to the prevention of radicalization of young people. The Flemish government funded eight projects about positive identity in this regard and an Action Plan radicalization has been prepared (see below).

### **People with disabilities**

To date, there exists only limited statistics on the number of persons with disabilities in Flanders. Nor are there any concrete data on people with disabilities divided by type of disability (Intellectual, visual, auditive, physical or mental). Many researchers use different sources on which they base their estimates and consequently arrive at different figures and numbers. One of the reasons is the use of different definitions to describe this group. An often used definition is the one used by the VAPH (Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een Handicap) which defines a handicap as *"any long-term and significant participation problem experienced by a person and attributable to a combination of functional disorders of a mental, psychic, physical or sensory nature, limitations in the performance of activities, and personal and external factors"*.

Based on the socio-economic survey of 2001 ([NIS](#), this survey is the most reliable, since it was administered among 10% of the population) and other scientific surveys, the percentage of people with a disability or long-term health problems are estimated at 16% to 23% in Flanders, and to 10% to 15% when it is straitened to persons who experience constraints in daily live (e.g. Verbelen, Samoy & Van Geel, 2005; Pelfrene, 2013). But this concerns only Flemish people in the age group 15 to 64 years.

It is even more difficult to obtain exact figures on the number of children with disabilities in Flanders. Again, much depends on the definition used, source or applied parameter (Schraepen, Maelstaf & Halsberghe, 2016). In the school year 2015-2016, respectively 25.578 and 20.333 pupils attended school in special primary and secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2016). However not all children and young people with a disability go to special education, and not all children in special education have a disability that effects their participation in social live. Of the 15-24 year olds in Flanders, about 9,6% reports a long-term illness or a long-term disability or handicap (WIVISP, 2014). The annual review of the social security reported 14.428 Dutch-language applications, which have led to an increased family allowances (FPS Social Security, 2013). Based on the

health survey, the estimated percentage among Flemish young adults (age between 15 and 30 years) with restrictions in mobility is 1.5% .

More information on the effects of living with disabilities can be found in [VRIND](#) (2016). For instance, research indicates that persons with disabilities are in comparison with people without disabilities less educated (47% vs. 29%) and are often in the lowest income quintile in Flanders (26% versus 18%). Also in terms of social participation, people with disabilities are less active than people without disabilities. They participate less in culture, sport less and are less often an active member of a voluntary association. Internet use is also significantly lower in this group, and the same applies for the number of social contacts with neighbours and/or family (Moons, Pauwels & Noppe, 2014; VRIND, 2016). Finally, also their participation rate in political life is a lot lower when compared to people without disabilities. This lower participation rate in socio-economic and socio-cultural life is partly due to the fact that the share of persons with disabilities is higher among the oldest age groups. However, even after taking into account age differences, the participation of people with disabilities remains significantly lower (Moons, Pauwels & Noppe, 2014; VRIND, 2016).

### Summary

Statistical data shows that young people in poverty, less educated youth and handicapped and disabled young people find harder their way to youth work or other forms of participation. One of the major challenges to social inclusion of young people, therefore, is to make youth work and other participation opportunities more accessible to disadvantaged young people and young people of foreign origin. A similar challenge is found in the policy for culture that is deployed on the participation in broader associations. Many of these groups are also concentrated in the metropolitan areas. The (big) city can be seen in this sense as the 'laboratory' of society, in which many social trends and developments occur first or more intensively (also the gap between rich and poor is larger in metropolitan areas).

### Main concepts

Flanders has no singular or unifying definition of social inclusion.

In Flanders, social inclusion is often associated with the term social vulnerability. Socially vulnerable is the person or population group who in its contacts with the social institutions (including schools, employment, justice, etc.) especially and repeatedly is confronted with the negative aspects and who less benefits from the positive services. In Flanders, the term 'social vulnerability' is based on the theory of social vulnerability as developed by youth criminologist Nicole Vettenburg and her colleagues (e.g. Vettenburg, Walgrave & Van Kerckvoorde, 1984; Vettenburg, 1988). "Social vulnerability" refers here to the fact that some young people are more than other "hurt" by the public services and institutions. While social services and institutions give their peers access to information, education, support and/or assistance, vulnerable youth are repeatedly confronted with normative, sanctioning and monitoring mechanisms in social institutions.

*In general, policy documents on social inclusion or exclusion refer to certain groups that are defined as groups who are at risk for social exclusion. The definition of such vulnerable groups can vary over policy domains, but in general the following groups are considered to have a high risk on social exclusion:*

- *Young people who live in poverty*
- *Young people with no or limited educational qualifications*
- *Young people coming from lower cultural backgrounds (e.g. with lower educated parents)*
- *Young people with functional disabilities: poor health, long term illness, physical disabilities, ...*
- *Young people with a foreign origin*

Within equal opportunities policy, also the following groups are considered to be at risk:

- Girls / Women
- LGBT people

## **4.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Social inclusion of vulnerable young people is not exclusive a youth policy theme (or any other policy area). To combat social exclusion, the Flemish government works via both horizontal and vertical consultation and planning.

Most relevant policy domains are:

At federal level:

- Employment policy ([Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue](#))
- Social security policy ([Federal Public Service Social Security](#))
- Social Integration, Poverty & Social Economy policy ([Federal Public Planning Service Social Integration, Fight against Poverty and Social Economy](#))

At regional (Flemish) level:

- Youth Policy and the wider [policy domain of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media](#)
- [Educational policy](#)
- [Welfare, public health & family policy](#)

In the following we focus at the regional level and describe for each of the domains the relevant legislation.

Youth

### **Participation Decree**

The Participation Decree ([Participatiebeleid](#)) entered into force on the 1 January 2008. Through subsidisation in the participation decree, the Flemish government wishes to promote the active participation of vulnerable groups in culture, youth and sports. The decree focus inter alia on children and young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, newcomers and (minor) refugees, people with an ethnic-cultural diversified background, disadvantaged groups in the youth care, (young) people with disabilities and families with children.

This Decree offers:

- policy instruments to stimulate the participation of the various groups;
- subsidies for projects that encourage participation. This particularly concerns initiatives related to socio-cultural work, communication, circulation and dissemination of artworks, financial obstacles, and physical access; and
- grants for large scale cultural events.

### **Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on supporting and promoting local youth policy and the determination of provincial youth work policy**

The Parliament Act on the support and encouragement of the local youth policy and the determination of the provincial youth policy ([Decreet van 6 juli 2012 houdende de ondersteuning en stimulering van het lokaal jeugdbeleid en de bepaling van het provinciaal jeugdbeleid](#)) was ratified on July 6, 2012 by the Flemish Government. This Decree has come into force, depending on the article, on October 30, 2012, January 1, 2013 and January 1, 2014.

For the period 2014-2019, there are three priorities for youth policy, for the benefit of youth work, defined:

- supporting youth work in general
- the promotion of participation in youth work of children and youth in socially vulnerable situations

- pursuing a policy to increase the focus on youth culture

The financing of youth work for special target groups is still monitored by the provinces, particularly with regard to children and young people with disabilities. Consequent on the downsizing of the provinces Flanders takes over this task. In 2017 the Minister of Youth will submit a draft Act to the Flemish Parliament which provides support for youth work for this group. In addition, the Act will provide resources for the funding of youth work with disadvantaged children and young people.

### **Flemish Parliament Act on Youth and Children's rights renewed policy**

The Flemish government has the child and youth policy enshrined in legislation at different levels and domains. As from 1 January 2013 the Flemish Parliament Act of 11 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights ([Decreet van 20 januari 2012 houdende een vernieuwd jeugd- en kinderrechtenbeleid](#)) has come into force. This is the core act for organizations in the Flemish youth and children's right landscape. The new Act replaces the Act of July 18, 2008, of which a thorough evaluation revealed that it needed some changes.

Education

### **Flemish parliamentary act on pupils with special educational needs**

Due to the parliamentary act on pupils with specific educational needs (see below), pupils with special needs can choose between special and mainstream education.

Special education is divided into different types according to the nature and scope of the disability or learning difficulty. Within mainstream education children with special needs are cared for by

- Integrated education (geïntegreerd onderwijs, GON) in all school levels. Pupils receive guidance from staff members from special education in order to reach the same learning goals as an average regular pupil
- Inclusive education (inclusief onderwijs, ION) is geared towards the guidance of pupils with a moderate to severe mental disability who are enrolled in mainstream primary education. The goal to reach the same final objectives does not apply here, the inclusion pupil can follow its own learning path
- The Equal Educational Opportunities Policy (gelijkeonderwijskansenbeleid, GOK) provides additional staff in elementary and secondary schools with a large number of pupils with special educational needs (SEN-pupils)

Specific provisions for migrant pupils:

- **Reception classes for non-Dutch speaking newcomers** (onthaalonderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers OKAN) are organized in primary and secondary education
- **The Brussels Curriculum** provides extra support for the language of instruction in the 1<sup>st</sup> stage of Dutch speaking secondary education in Brussels
- Additional measures support the Dutch speaking elementary schools and the integration of not-Dutch speaking children in the Brussels peripheral municipalities, in the municipalities along the language border and the neighbouring municipalities

On 1 September 2015 the [parliamentary act on pupils with specific educational needs](#) (SEN-pupils), also called M-decree, became fully operational. Since that date every child in Flanders has the right to enroll in a school for mainstream education, on the condition that reasonable adaptations are made. Inclusive education is now the first option. The aim is that more pupils with special needs can enroll in mainstream education and that less pupils are referred to special schools. The implementation of the parliamentary act also allows to maintain a high quality special needs education for those pupils for whom no reasonable adaptations are possible within a mainstream school. This includes amongst others the new type 9 for pupils with autism and normal intelligence, which was approved by the Flemish Government on 6 February 2015. This type of special needs education will be organised from school year 2015-2016 onwards. Also on 1 September 2015 a new type called 'basic offer' was introduced, which replaces the older types 1 and

8 in special needs education. This new type accommodates children and youngsters with specific educational needs for whom no reasonable adaptations are possible in mainstream education.

### **Education Decree XXIV**

New regulations on synchronous internet education were integrated in [Education Decree XXIV](#), which was approved by the Flemish Government on 23 April 2014. The parliamentary act determines that from September 2015 on internet education becomes a right for all ill children. Since 2007-2008 distance learning for ill children is organised by [Bednet](#). The NGO offers synchronous internet education to long term or chronically ill children in Dutch speaking schools in Flanders and Brussels. It allows pupils to keep up with the subject material and avoids social isolation as a result of their illness. The services offered by the NGO are free of charge for both the children and the schools.

### **The Parliamentary Act of 28 June 2002 on equal educational opportunities**

[The Parliamentary Act on Equal Educational Opportunities](#) (Decreet Gelijke OnderwijsKansen GOK) guarantees the principle right for enrolment in a school of choice, independent of colour of skin, national or ethnic origin, religion or gender, unless of course if the school is full, if the pupil was expelled in a previous year or if the parents do not accept the pedagogical project and school regulations. Local Consultation Platforms watch over the implementation of the equal opportunities policy at the local level.

### **Welfare, public health & family**

#### **Act on Poverty Reduction (2003)**

Within the Flemish Government the fight against child poverty is a top priority within the general fight against poverty. It is the priority focus of the Flemish Action Plan for Poverty Reduction 2015-2019 (see below). In this fight against child poverty, also a strong emphasis is laid on young adults as they are crucial agents as (future) young parents.

In the [Act on Poverty Reduction \(2003\)](#) a permanent poverty consultation (permanent armoedeoverleg - PAO) is created to ensure the participation of people in poverty reduction policies in all sectors. This permanent poverty consultation consists of a horizontal and a vertical component. The horizontal consultations ensure an integrated approach. In the horizontal consultations the representatives of the various policy areas collaborate with employees of the [Flemish network of associations against poverty](#) (Vlaams Netwerk waar Armen het Woord Nemen), [The Link](#) and [the inter-federal department for combating poverty, insecurity and social exclusion](#). The vertical consultations are organized per policy domain. Main objectives of these vertical consultations are the testing of specific policy initiatives of the policy domain among people in poverty and the proposal of adjustments. The organization of these meetings is the responsibility of every Flemish minister in consultation with the Flemish Network of Associations against Poverty. The vertical consultation takes place at least twice a year for each policy domain.

#### **Flemish Parliament Integrated Youth Care Act**

On March 1, 2014 the [Integrated Youth Care Act](#) came into force. This act entails a far-reaching cooperation between all anchors sectors involved in youth. The main objective is that every young person with a problem finds as quick as possible the appropriate help. By intervening in the organization and functioning principles of the existing youth care, the new landscape will be much clearer. The new act puts the young central. The inherent strength of children and young people and their immediate surroundings are considered the main source of assistance. The act anchors this principle and translates it into practical assistance to all amenities. They are also encouraged to cooperate across sectors and action is taken to ensure that there are 'no gaps' in youth care. When first aid is insufficient, social workers always point the way to more specialized or more

substantial help. Therefore the Act installs the intersectoral gateway for "non-directly accessible help". In total there are six sectors involved:

- Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities (VAPH)
- Youth Welfare
- Child and Family (K & G)
- General Welfare Work (AWW) with the
- Centres for Integral Family Care (CIG)
- Mental Health Centres (CGG)
- Centres for Educational Guidance (CLB)life situation, but goes all children and young people in Flanders and Brussels.

Top level authorities

### Youth

- Minister in charge of youth: Flemish Minister of Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels, Sven Gatz (term: 2014-2019)
- Commission on Youth, Culture and Media
- Administration: Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media and more in particular the Division Youth

The Division Youth aims to be a knowledge centre from which scientific research concerning (the life worlds and meaning-making of) children and young people in society can be stimulated, supported and brought together. In this respect, they also explicitly focus on research concerning children and young people in vulnerable situations. The 'Division Youth' also ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights.

### Education

- Flemish Minister of education, Hilde Crevits (term: 2014-2019)
- Commission on education in the Flemish government
- Administration: Department of Education and Training

### Welfare, public health & family

- Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health & Family, Jo Vandeurzen (term: 2014-2019)
- Commission on Welfare, Public Health & Family
- Department of Welfare, Public Health & Family

Main non-public actors taking part in the regulation and implementation of social inclusion of young people

### Youth organisations

#### Flemish Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner

The **Flemish Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner** detects (warning) signs from children, young people, their immediate environment and professionals. It mediates, investigates complaints and provides policy advice - always with a view to compliance with and the application of children's rights in Flanders. The Children's Rights Commissioner is appointed by the Flemish Parliament. A consultative and advisory board provides support to the Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner in the performance of its duties. It is composed of representatives of the political groups in the Flemish Parliament and representatives of civil society and the scientific world. The Children's Rights Commissioner performs his duties together with a multidisciplinary team and translates these into a policy plan.

The Flemish Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner consults children and young people by means of a Complaint Line for children and young people and by means of advisory work for the Flemish Parliament, the Government of Flanders, administrations and agencies, international or foreign authorities. The Complaint Line of the Office of the

Children's Rights Commissioner is available to young people under 18 and those defending their interests. Adults can file complaints as long as these concern the rights of an under 18.

The Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner translates the structural problems into dossiers, advice, opinions and reports on bottlenecks for the Flemish Parliament. It studies certain issues related to children's rights and the underlying problems in depth in order to provide information and advice to the Flemish Parliament. It also indicates possible ways to translate these into Flemish regulations. It tests policy initiatives, such as draft Acts and proposals, against the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They for instance formulated advice and reports on:

- Children on the move (Kinderen op de vlucht: van crisis naar nieuwe toekomst) (2015-2016/01)
- [Report on children's rights for specific groups in Flanders](#)
- Advice '[With\(out\) a home. Homelessness from a child's perspective](#)'
- [Advice on the Flemish action plan against poverty](#)
- School leaving advice ([Schooluitval Advies](#) 2015-2016/07)
- ...

### **The Flemish Youth Council (see chapter 5 and also 4.2.3 for more information on the Flemish Youth Council)**

The Flemish Youth Council is the **official advisory body** of the Flemish Government. It advises on all matters concerning children and young people.

### **The Youth work Commission ([Commissie jeugdwerk](#))**

**The Knowledge Centre on Children's Rights ([Kenniscentrum Kinderrechten](#))** aims to increase knowledge of children's rights at national and international level. The Knowledge Centre on Children's Rights takes an interdisciplinary approach to children's rights based on scientific research.

**The Children's Right Coalition ([Kinderrechtencoalitie](#))** is an umbrella organisation of non-governmental organisations for the preparation, editing and distribution of a report on the way in which Flanders puts children's rights into practice.

**Uit De Marge** - Flemish Centre for youth work with disadvantaged children and young people. [Uit De Marge](#) actively contributes to the realisation of the rights and equal opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people in Flanders. They focus on building a high quality youth work with disadvantaged children and young people and guide and support local and regional youth initiatives that (among others) work with disadvantaged children and young people. Uit De Marge also supports youth work in general in his efforts towards socially vulnerable children and young people and other social sectors in their relation to socially vulnerable children and young people.

### **Flemish Pupil's Umbrella Organisation ([Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel](#))**

### **Flemish Association of Students ([Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten](#))**

### **Other NGO's (non-governmental organisations)**

A brief selection of some of the most important NGO's in Flanders working with social inclusion (including substantial focus and work with children, youth and young people):

The Flemish network of associations against poverty ([Vlaams netwerk waar armen het woord nemen](#))

In the Flemish Network against Poverty 59 associations work together with the ultimate aim of eradicating poverty and social exclusion. In the participating associations people living in poverty have a central role. They incorporate the word at all levels. For their functioning these associations can rely on the support of the Network team. The mutual exchange of experiences, visions, success stories and learning between the organizations is an important task for the Network. Based on the experiences and opinions of the

people the associations and the Network construct dossiers on and communicate them to the government, the relevant departments, the broad society and public opinion. The Network Against Poverty is also working to improve the image of people in poverty and the elimination of prejudice.

Up until 2010, issues related to youth, such as youth care, family, youth unemployment, youth work, education ... followed by the respective consultative groups within the Network Against Poverty. These consultative groups composed exclusively of adult people in poverty who participate in associations to the theme groups. The result was that the positions of the Anti-Poverty Network on youth-related themes were determined primarily by adults (parents) and not by young people themselves. Within the 59 associations where the poor take the floor there are now 10 associations with a specific youth working ([jongerenwerkingen voor jongeren in armoede](#)). These young people work on different fundamental rights.

### **De Link**

The [Link](#) provides training to become an expert by experience in poverty and social exclusion, with the support of the Welfare and Society Division.

### **The inter-federal department for combating poverty, insecurity and social exclusion** (Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service )

The [Service](#) aims to keep the eradication of poverty as a priority on the political agenda. It was established by the Federal Government, the Regions and Communities as an instrument in the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion. In consultation with associations where the poor have a chance to speak, Public Centres for Social Welfare, trade unions, professionals from different sectors, administrations, etc., the Service produces analyses and recommendations for policy makers in Belgium and Flanders.

### **Minorities Forum**

The Minorities Forum ([Minderhedenforum](#)) represents ethno-cultural associations in Flanders and Brussels and provides people with a migration background a voice. Within the Minderhedenforum specific actions are set up, e.g.: actions with the ethno-cultural associations in Brussels, contacts with the local consultative platforms and actions around the target Travellers and Roma. The Minorities Forum works also on a number of projects on specific subjects: "Work Up", poverty, culture, youth and sports.

### **Démos**

[Démos](#) is a non-partisan public research and advocacy organization. Démos' role has been embedded in the wider cultural field of Flanders by the Participation Decree. They focus on social and policy developments in culture, youth work and sports. Within this focus they:

- publish books and a magazine, organise symposia, work shops, cafés and other gatherings.
- do research and advise organisations and governments
- contribute to the development of policy and practices that focus mainly on groups and practices that are under-represented and underexposed in our society.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

In Flanders, social inclusion are a joint responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Health, Public Health and Family, the Flemish Minister of Education and Training and the Flemish Minister of Youth and its administration and agencies.

As mentioned in 1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries, youth policy is a transversal policy. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government.

Besides the Flemish Policy Plan, the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy envisages three more instruments of youth policy:

- Impact study of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER)
- Contact points for youth and children's rights and a coordinating administration
- Youth Progress Report

### **4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people**

#### **Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion**

Flanders has no separate strategy plan on the social inclusion of youth but several separate strategies all catering towards social inclusion and children/youth. Below, we describe some of the strategies at the regional level (Flemish level).

#### **Scope and contents**

##### **Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019**

The [Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019 \(summary in English\)](#) outlines all the concerns regarding children and young people and their rights which the Flemish Ministers will pay attention to in their policies during the policy period 2015-2019. It is the fourth time that the Government of Flanders presents a youth policy plan to parliament. As decreed by Flemish Parliament Act, this must be done one year after the start of the Government's term of office. What is new is that the Flemish children's rights policy has been integrated entirely for the present policy period.

The plan pursues four large societal objectives:

1. equal opportunities,
2. broad development,
3. space and
4. formal and informal participation in society for all children and young people.

There are ten selected themes to arrive at strategic and operational objectives on the basis of priority policy challenges. These themes are: poverty, ecology, being young, mobility, education, space, well-being, housing, employment and youth culture.

The youth and children's rights policy plan is an example of participatory policy with a strong involvement of children, young people, their organisations and experts. Preparations started in the spring of 2013. An extensive environmental analysis, the Great Priorities Debate, several working groups and feedback through an online survey provided the seedbed for a framework of objectives around 12 priority topics. After that, the competent Ministers were asked to submit their action plans. Finally, the administrations developed projects, processes and indicators.

##### **Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan or VAPA (Vlaams actieplan armoedebestrijding 2015-2019)**

The poverty decree (art. 5) and the implementing act (art. 2 and 5) determine the legal basis of the Flemish Action Plan on Poverty Reduction ([Vlaamse actieplan armoedebestrijding 2015-2019](#)).

The Flemish poverty reduction policy is an inclusive policy. This means that every Flemish Minister, also the Minister of Youth, has the responsibility to devote attention within their policy area to reducing poverty. One Minister in the Government of Flanders is responsible for coordinating the poverty policy. The Welfare and Society Division supports the coordinating minister and the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family, each for their competence in the area of poverty reduction.

The Flemish Action Plan on Poverty Reduction (VAPA) provides an overview of the efforts of the various Flemish ministers to fight poverty. The action plan includes specific

objectives formulated for each of the fundamental social rights (participation, social services, income, family, education, leisure, work, housing and health).

The VAPA is based on four pillars: increasing participation in society of families with young children living in poverty, access to quality services for families with young children, improve the income situation of those families and making children, young people and parents stronger. So, focus is in particular on families with young children.

### **Action Plan 'Prevention of processes of radicalisation which may result in extremism and terrorism'**

On 16 January 2015 the Flemish Government approved a [concept note on radicalisation](#), followed by the [Action Plan 'Prevention of processes of radicalisation which may result in extremism and terrorism'](#), which was approved on 3 April 2015 by the Government. The note and action plan contain twelve concrete policy priorities which are applicable to many (local) Flemish actors: youth work, community sports, assistance, Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency, education, community development, welfare, Integrated Youth Support and integration. These actors must prevent, detect and remedy radicalisation. The note assigns an important role to local governments in their cooperation with local actors.

With the concept note and action plan the Flemish Government aims amongst others at centralising and disseminating the expertise which exists in a number of Flemish cities, at developing training packages for people on the ground such as youth workers, imams and teachers, and at filling the gaps which exist in the study of radicalisation. For education the aim was set to decrease the number of early school leavers. Parents who notice first signs of radicalisation may turn to the pupil guidance centre for answers to their questions. These centres must also be an important partner for the teachers: when they notice signals of radicalisation, they can refer a pupil to the pupil guidance centre.

### **Action plan 'together against school drop-out'**

On 26 June 2015 the Flemish Minister of Education presented, together with her colleagues from Welfare and Work, the [concept note 'Together against school drop-out'](#) to the Flemish Government. The concept note contains a comprehensive plan with more than 50 action points. The goals of the note are to reduce the number of early school leavers, to push back truancy, and to guarantee study entitlement. A focus is put on prevention, together with actions against pupils playing truant.

With this concept note Flanders responds to the European recommendation to address in an integrated manner the problems of early school leaving and truancy by use of the European frame of reference. For this reason measures are elaborated within the four domains of monitoring, prevention, intervention and compensation.

### **Responsible authority**

Responsible authorities are mentioned in section above where the contents and scope are described:

- Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019: Flemish Minister of Youth and Division Youth
- Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan or VAPA (Vlaams actieplan armoedebestrijding 2015-2019): Flemish Minister on Poverty Reduction and the Department for Health, Public Health and Family
- Action Plan 'Prevention of processes of radicalisation which may result in extremism and terrorism': Flemish Minister of Local Government, Integration, Housing, Equal Opportunities and Poverty Reduction and many Flemish actors
- Action plan 'together against school drop-out': Flemish Minister of Education and Training, Flemish Minister of Welfare, Flemish Minister of Work and their departments

## Revisions/Updates

The strategies on social inclusion of young people have no major revisions/updates. Minor updates of the separate strategies are mentioned in the section above where the contents and scope are described.

## 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

### Programmes for vulnerable young people

The education system

There are a number of top-level programmes aimed at vulnerable young people:

- The [parliamentary act on pupils with specific educational needs](#) states that every child in Flanders has the right to enrol in a school for mainstream education, on the condition that reasonable adaptations are made. Inclusive education is now the first option. For more information see 4.2)
- **Reception classes for non-Dutch speaking newcomers** (onthaalonderwijs voor anderstalige nieuwkomers OKAN) are organised in primary and secondary education
- The Flemish government provides **school grants and scholarships** to help to pay the school costs. The amounts are different for children, pupils and students.

The youth sector

Flemish minister of youth Sven Gatz announced on 19.12.2016 that he invests 750,000 euros in projects that stimulate diversity in youth work in Flanders and Brussels. The minister wants to encourage organisations in this way to work together, to know each other better and broaden the offer for all young people.

This is a result of the recommendations of the Citizen's Cabinet Youth and the Flemish Youth Council. They called for greater effort for local initiatives such as 'Bridge builders' in Flanders and Brussels and 'Street citizens' in Brussels to reach young people. These Bridge builders and key figures can lead young people to (youth) organisations.

In Flanders, the Minister of Youth is aiming at giving new impulses to Bridge builders within and at youth work with the call for projects of 'Bridge builders' ([Projectoproep Bruggenbouwers](#)). The main goal is the realisation of youth work for children and young people in vulnerable situations. The projects should build a bridge between the existing youth work and/or other organisations who reach children and young people in their broad diversity.

On 3.05.2017, the Flemish Minister of Youth announced that he selected 12 projects of 'Bridge builders'. These projects focus very strong on children and young people in vulnerable situations and the bridge to youth work:

- Circusplaneet (Ghent): 24.162 euros for their Caravan project
- JES vzw (Antwerp): 45.825 euros for their project J100
- VOC Opstap (Tielt): 48.161 euros for Bounding and Bridging
- PIN vzw (Beersel): 46.352 euros for Youth Ambassadors
- JES vzw (Brussels): 39.395 euros for Compagnons
- Culthureghem vzw (Anderlecht, Brussels, province of Flemish Brabant): 48.161 euros for KETMET AND KOOKMET
- LiSS vzw (Riemst, Opglabbeek, Bree, Tongeren, Bilzen): 10.595 euros for the project Positive imaging of loitering youth
- JOC Ieper (Ieper): 48.161 euros for 'No bridge too far'
- JNM vzw (Sint-Jans-Molenbeek): 44.780 euros for the project Nature experience in cooperation with VMJ-district academy
- Koraal vzw (Antwerp): 48.086 euros for Inclusive playgrounds
- J@M vzw (Mechelen): 48.161 euros for Color in youth work
- Jong vzw (Ghent): 48.161 euros for the project Formalise relation with self-organisations in Ghent.

This call for projects is situated in the regulation of the Flemish Parliament of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights ([decreet houdende vernieuwd jeugd en kinderrechtenbeleid](#)). The main mechanisms in place to **monitor and ensure the quality** of the programme implemented is that the Flemish Government defines the rules of every call for projects.

#### European Social Funds

The [Flemish ESF operational programme](#) will complement national and regional measures aimed at boosting employment and improving social inclusion. The programme aims to complement the existing Flemish employment and social inclusion initiatives and encourage innovative social measures and transnational cooperation. The programme – which is worth over EUR 1 billion in total – will also support a number of focused actions that target entrepreneurship, the social economy, poorly-skilled young people and Roma.

Priorities for the Flemish programme with relevance to youth are e.g.:

- Promoting projects for sustainable, high-quality jobs and worker mobility; and investing in education, training and lifelong learning. These areas complement the Flemish career management policy which seeks a more effective labour market.
- Some funding will support social inclusion, equality and anti-poverty projects. Projects will target the pathways into work and society for the most at-risk groups, such as Roma.

In 2015, ESF Flanders ([ESF Vlaanderen](#)) approved projects addressing the support of:

- Unqualified youth – the WIJ-project (Work Experience Programme for Young People)
- Persons of the Roma Community - The Flemish Community is implementing specific measures for Roma that offer pathways towards work and better social integration.

#### Funding

##### The education system

The Flemish government provides, as mentioned above, school grants and scholarships to help to pay the school costs. The amounts the Flemish Government gives to children, pupils and students are different:

- For children there is a flat fee of 93.21 euros.
- For students in primary and secondary allowance varies between 104.86 and 1152.99 euros.
- For a student in higher education allowance varies between 256.33 and 3966.88 euros.

##### The youth sector

Flemish minister of youth Sven Gatz announced that he invests 750,000 euros in projects that stimulate diversity in youth work in Flanders and Brussels. In Flanders, 500,000 euros of the budget will go to the call for projects 'Bridge builders'.

##### European social funds

The Flemish ESF operational programme is worth over 1 billion euros in total:

- 60% of total funding goes to projects for sustainable, high-quality jobs and worker mobility; and projects investing in education, training and lifelong learning.
- Some 20% of funding will support social inclusion, equality and anti-poverty projects.

#### Quality assurance

Quality assurance mechanisms are described where the programme / intervention is mentioned above.

## **4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness**

### **Intercultural awareness**

#### **Cross-curricular themes in Education**

Most initiatives for promoting intercultural awareness among young people take place in formal education. Intercultural awareness is included in the cross-curricular themes, more specific within the context of the objectives concerning the socio-cultural society (see chapter 5.7 for more information).

#### **Day of Diversity**

The Day of Diversity ([Dag van Diversiteit](#)) focuses on diversity in youth work for children and young people one reaches difficult within the normal youth work and tries to approach them in a different way, but also wants to encourage youth organisations to make the transition to young people and children they generally do not reach.

#### **Call for projects 2016 "Bridges between sport and / or youth work and children in poverty" by Flemish Minister for Poverty Reduction**

Flemish Minister for Poverty Reduction, Liesbeth Homans, has launched a call for projects ([Bruggen tussen sport, jeugdwerk en kinderen in armoede](#)) to build bridges between sport organisations, youth work organisations and initiatives reaching children and young people in poverty.

The most marked problems in accessibility of leisure activities for young people (and children) in poverty are located in three areas:

1. durable participation of vulnerable children and young people,
2. financial assistance to enable participation and
3. skills and training of workers / volunteers / organizations to open up to (the environment and needs of) vulnerable children and young people.

Therefore, the Flemish Minister for Poverty Reduction, Liesbeth Homans (term 2014-2019), launched the call for projects. In total 100 project applications were submitted. From this, 19 projects were selected for a total amount of 860 432 euros.

#### **Call for projects that stimulate diversity in youth work in Flanders and Brussels**

Flemish minister of youth and Brussels Sven Gatz (term 2014-2019) announced on 19.12.2016 that he invests 750,000 euros in **projects that stimulate diversity in youth work in Flanders and Brussels** ([projectoproep diversiteit in jeugdsector](#)). The minister wants to encourage organisations in this way to work together, to get to know each other better and broaden the offer for all young people.

#### **UITPaS**

The [Uitpas](#) is a Flemish leisure card with a savings and benefits programme, providing both opportunities for residents and organisations and local governments. It is a non-stigmatizing pass which helps to lower barriers, not least financial threshold for people in poverty. It is also a strong incentive for local governments to establish an integrated participatory policy on track.

### **Young people's rights**

#### **Cross-curricular themes in Education**

Again, most initiatives take place in formal education by means of cross-curricular themes, more specific within the context of the objectives concerning the political-judicial society (see chapter 5.7 for more information on cross-curricular themes).

### **Vormen vzw - expertisecentrum mensenrechten- en kinderrechteneducatie Vlaanderen (Centre of expertise on human rights and children's rights education Flanders)**

As a center of expertise on human rights education, with a particular focus on children's education, [Vormen vzw](#) develops non-profit educational material. The association also coaches workshops with pupils and organizes trainings for teachers.

### **Unicef Belgium**

The website of [Unicef Belgium](#) provides teaching resources (lesson plans, educational videos, information on children's websites, brochures, ...) for teachers on children and young people's rights. They also organize workshops and trainings for teachers.

### **Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism**

In July 2015, the Flemish Government launched a call for projects on "Positive identity development among young people in the context of the prevention of radicalization" ([Positieve identiteitsontwikkeling bij jongeren in het kader van de preventie van radicalisering](#)). In December 2015, Flemish Minister for Integration Liesbeth Homans and Flemish Minister for Youth Sven Gatz approved the support of eight projects.

These [projects](#) are:

1. **Center for Islamic Education the Futures association (Centrum voor Islamitische Educatie de Toekomst vzw (CIET)): Training provision on identity development of Muslim youth**

In this project, a training process is developed that focuses on identity development of Muslim youth. More specifically, this project provides the necessary framework for young people in their search for "identity" and supports teachers, social workers and youth workers helping young people thereby.

2. **Partage en couleurs association: "Understanding to respond better" (Partage en couleurs vzw: 'Verstaan om beter te reageren')**

In this project, dialogue tables are organised in which young people try to answer questions about radicalisation and identity development. By means of an accompanying photo exhibition and a documentary the results of this project will also be further communicated to a wider audience. Both will also be part of an educational package, which allows schools and organizations to work on this topic.

3. **MSC Ahlan vzw: "Meeting Points of identity to prevent radicalization" (local project in Antwerp)**

The organised meeting points of [MSC Ahlan vzw](#) give young people a chance to break taboos and silences in a safe environment, but also to overcome misunderstandings and to inform young people. To realise this, people with expert knowledge are invited to discuss the questions and views of young people. By discussing the subject from different perspectives, they want to give young people more insight into the problem of radicalisation and want to give them handles that enables them to reconsider their positions.

4. **Group Intro vzw: "YOU Plus Leisure" (local project in Anderlecht – Brussels)**

The project "YOU Plus Leisure" of [Group Intro vzw](#) wants to use youth workers to look for boys and girls in and around the mosque workings and self-help organisations. This way one wants to guide those young people to leisure organisations (such as sports clubs), to youth work (as a participant) or to volunteer work (active as a facilitator or organizer).

### 5. **Victoria Deluxe vzw: “Faith in the City” (local project in Ghent)**

From the perspective and the lifeworld of young Muslims, this project wants to illustrate that identity and religious practice are not at odds with integration. Victoria Deluxe chooses to develop a counter-narrative that is associated with the spontaneous and positive (self-)emancipation of Muslim youth. With audiovisual means they will let young Muslims talk about the different stages in their identity development. These testimonies, which should lead to positive identification opportunities, will actively be spread through social media. As a finale comes a documentary that should portray the working process that the association has made with a very diverse group of Muslim youth.

### 6. **Arktos vzw: “Resilient Geel” (local project in Geel)**

Together with a youth welfare worker [Arktos](#) wants to make contact with young people who are difficult to reach through other services and agencies. By contacting the young people in their own environment, the youth worker tries to teach them as much as possible. In this way, the association wants to give young people more opportunities to break the downward spiral of social vulnerability and to develop optimally their relationship with society. This project makes use of individual support, but also of group work and support of front line workers and parents.

### 7. **No Hands association: “Henchmen” (Zonder handen vzw: “Handlangers”, local project in Molenbeek – Brussels)**

The Henchmen is a group of young people that consist on the one hand of young people (both privileged and vulnerable youth) who are already for several years active participants in Circus Without Hands ([Circus Zonder Handen](#)) and on the other hand new neighbourhood youth with an interest in circus education. A year long they will work intensively with this mixed group on group formation, mentor attitudes, commitment, leadership and technical circus skills. The youngsters will be closely supervised and monitored during group times and in individual courses and coaching moments. After one year, these young people are ready to take up an engagement as an assistant in the circus school or other youth organization in the district. The inclusive nature of this project leads to interesting cross-fertilization: young people living in vulnerable districts exchange experiences with other young people in Brussels and teachers at the circus school. Themes such as religion, gender, position in society are discussed, each with circus as a strong binder.

### 8. **Youth Clubs association: “Bridge Builders” (Jeugdclubs vzw: “Bruggenbouwers”, local project in Lokeren)**

With the Bridge Builders project, meetings are organised between various groups of young people who otherwise hardly come into contact with each other. This diverse group sets up activities starting from the similarities between the various subgroups. The project is aimed at the broadening of their social environment, personal development and positive identity development of young people. The organisation enables also discussions on more in depth topics (via meeting points where the young people go in dialogue with young people from other cities on themes linked to identity development).

## **4.6 Access to quality services**

### **Housing**

The Government of Flanders acknowledges the right to decent housing of all children and young people. It wants to make progress in this field by extending the range of housing concepts, continuing to invest in social housing and increasingly publicising existing instruments.

In 2015, the Flemish Youth Council published a point of view on youth living in poverty ([Advies Wonen in armoede](#)). Based on this, the youth associations of the Network against Poverty, Uit De Marge/CMGJ and the Flemish Youth Council organised an action moment on this issue in October 2015.

Furthermore, the sixth state reform provides the regionalisation of the major pillars of housing policy: housing bonus and legislation on rents. The Flemish coalition agreement and the policy paper on housing conducted by Minister Homans ([Beleidsnota Wonen](#)) also contains opportunities to give young people in poverty a better perspective on the housing market.

### Social services

Since January 2008, a **youth work plan** is operative in Flanders. Through an alert and individualised support for young jobseekers (-25) the [VDAB](#) (Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling - Flemish Public Employment Service) wants to tackle youth unemployment. In concrete terms this means that support for young jobseekers will take place in a faster and more individualised approach with direct mediation in which the job choices are automatically linked to the available vacancies. Among young people of which the VDAB considers that mediation alone is not enough for a quick integration into the labour market, a thorough intake and screening is conducted. Those young people move on to an intensive supervision including job hunting and job coaching.

For more information on the integration of young people in the labour market, see 3.6.

Furthermore, based on federal legislation:

- The Federal Law of 26 May 2002 on the right to Social Integration ([Recht op maatschappelijke integratiewet van 26 mei 2002](#)) states that every person has a right to social integration. This right can be given in the form of employment and/or social security allowance, possibly accompanied by an individualised project for social integration. Only people who do not have sufficient resources to draw financial rights from, can ask for a social security allowance. The law differentiates between people between age 18 and 25 and people above age 25. These two groups are supported in different ways. In addition, this law specifically recognises students as target group among the people below age 25.
- People also have the right to social services as stated in the Federal Law of 8 July 1976 on the Public Centres of Social Welfare ([OCMW wet](#)). Social services can be provided in the form of financial help (e.g. contribution in moving expenses) or in material form (e.g. food packages). It also includes social counselling and advice. The Public Centres of Social Welfare provide the most suitable care.

### Health care

In Flanders, youth health is mainly observed in the various Centres for Educational Guidance ([CLB's](#)). The doctors and paramedical workers (nurses) of the CLB carry out a number of free medical investigations during the school hours. Afterwards, the centres inform the parents of the results of medical examinations. The CLB conducts two types of consultations:

- General consultations address the general health of the pupils
- Targeted consultations are less extensive and focus - depending on the age- on certain health issues (growth and weight, visual function, color perception, eye separation, teeth ...).

Furthermore, based on federal legislation:

- (young) people who receive a social security allowance have the right to a **higher compensation in their health care** costs (e.g. for primary care they only have to pay 10% of the co-payment). Additionally, when the costs of medical care are still too high, some people can appeal to the system of the maximum invoice. This means that the costs, above a certain limit, are paid back in full.

See also 4.2.1 [Integrated Youth Care Act](#).

## Financial services

The Flemish government is aware of and pays attention to the debt position of a large group of young people, but the financial services offered to young people remain largely limited to offering information and raising awareness.

The Flemish Centre for Indebtedness ([Vlaams Centrum voor Schuldenlast](#), abbreviated VCS) is for instance a knowledge and expertise centre on debt themes subsidised by the Flemish government. On the basis of preventive actions the VCS aims to contribute to the raising awareness on debt accumulation. Since 2008, the VCS has initiated projects directed towards young people, and later also to (secondary) education. In march 2016, the Flemish Centre Indebtedness (VCS) has for instance launched the website [allesovercenten.be](#) (all about money), directed specifically at young people. In addition, the VCS is working on numerous other prevention initiatives in cooperation with various partners.

## Quality assurance

### Social services

VDAB is responsible for overall **quality assurances** of the VDAB services. See also 3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling.

### Health care

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the **monitoring and quality** of the services by doing quality evaluations of the CLB services for schools.

### Financial services

The Flemish Centre for Indebtedness have to submit annually a activity and financial report to the Flemish Government, according to the [Flemish Parliament Act of 24 July concerning the regulation for the recognition and subsidisation of institutes for debt mediation and the subsidisation of the Flemish Centre for Indebtedness](#). The Flemish Government defines the content and form of the report.

## 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

### Policy/legal framework

In Flanders, youth work with socially vulnerable children and young people has a great variety, both in the public targeted, in method as in activities offered. These initiatives align their leisure activities as much as possible with the situation of socially vulnerable youth. In addition, the broader youth work sector also invests in accessibility and diversity.

Below the relevant structural subsidised youth work organisations are listed.

### Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

#### Akindo

[Akindo](#) organises vacations for children, youth and families. They focus mainly on people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and guidance homes in Flanders.

#### Arktos

[Arktos](#) is a Flemish expertise centre for children and adolescents aged 6 to 25 years for whom the connection to school, work and society appears less evident.

#### Bizon vzw

[Bizon](#) is an association that organises leisure activities for social disadvantaged children and young people. Their main focus is the organisation of holiday camps, but via its actions Bizon also pursues to contribute to a better understanding of and tolerance towards social vulnerability.

### **Bouworde vzw**

[Bouworde](#) (Construction Order) aims at developing young people and making them aware of the social realities. They pursue this goal by giving them the opportunity to express their solidarity by contributing to improvement projects. So, Bouworde is a youth organization that is trying to fight poverty and insecurity by providing assistance in the area of housing with the help of young volunteers. It does this through the organization of social, technical and ecological construction camps for young people between 18 and 30 years. Construction camps take place in Flanders, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

### **Groep Intro vzw**

Intro group ([Groep Intro](#)) is a training organisation dedicated to social disadvantaged young people, with particular attention to low-skilled youth. The organisation wants to provide resources to encourage these young people's personal development and to increase their participation and integration in society, through an education-oriented approach. Its main tasks are: sensitization, information, guidance and training of youth (assists) leaders and intermediates.

### **Habbekrats vzw**

[Habbekrats](#) is a training service for young people of marginalized groups aged 12 to 25 years. The service is a forum for different projects. Each project has a low threshold and works integrally. The actions of Habbekrats focuses mainly on a preventive level.

### **Jong-KVG vzw**

[Jong-KVG](#) is an organisation of young people (6-30 years) with and without disabilities. Under the name 'n Other Holiday Jong-KVG organises holidays and international group exchanges at home and abroad. For young people without disabilities and young people with a purely physical disability, there are training courses (animator, head trainer). Jong-KVG also has a dozen local centers, which offer leisure activities for young people with and without disabilities.

### **KAJ vzw**

[KAJ](#) is a youth movement which defends and works for, by and with all school-aged, unemployed and young workers between 12 and 30 years, with a specific focus on young people in vocational, technical and special needs education (educational tracks TSO, BSO & BUSO) and social vulnerable young people. By means of training and action KAJ guides young people in their growth to consciousness, individual and collective responsibility aimed at a democratic, grassroots-oriented and just society.

### **Lejo vzw**

[Lejo](#) provides young people with a low level of education opportunities to develop their personality. The aim is that they can participate as good as possible in what is happening around them, both in their own environment and in broader society. Moreover Lejo defends their interests and acts as their spokesperson.

### **PAJ vzw**

[PAJ](#) (Platform Allochtone Jeugdwerkingen- Platform Migrant Youth Work) is an umbrella organisation of immigrant youth organisations. She offers immigrant youth the opportunity to learn and experiment with forms of youth work in order to become socially critical and conscious citizens.

### **Tumult vzw**

[Tumult](#) (formerly Youth and Peace) is a youth service working on peace education from different angles. Tumult gives training to youth and youth workers and organises educational activities for children and youth such as camps, peace travels, intercultural walks, immersion travels ...

In addition Tumult develops a wide range of playful, often interactive products that reinforce peace education with children and young people. The association operates on the following themes: cultural respect, prevention of bullying, sustainability, dealing with conflicts and learning from war.

### **Wel Jong Niet Hetero vzw**

[Wel Jong Niet Hetero](#) (WJNH) regroups and guides local gay youth groups, organises national initiatives such as the gay camp, meetings days, forum meetings, minus-19 (school activity), gay parties. WJNH also gives management training for LGBT youth workers. Furthermore WJNH is the contact point regarding LGBT youth themes in Flanders.

### **Youth for Understanding vzw**

The purpose of [YFU](#) is to prepare young people over the world for their responsibilities and opportunities in a changing society in which people from different countries and cultures are becoming more interdependent.

### **Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people**

Same organisations as mentioned in section above.

### **Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes**

Most training covers the general development of youth workers, but some workshops and trainings for youth workers focus in particular on social inclusion. Some examples:

#### **Bizon vzw**

In addition to the leisure activities that [Bizon](#) organises for vulnerable young people (see above), the organisation also puts heavy emphasis on the training of youth workers, volunteers or supervisors who come into contact with disadvantaged children and young people.

#### **Motief vzw**

The association [Motief](#) develops and organises training at the intersection of religion/ideology and society. At the moment (2016) they organise (in cooperation with 'Uit de Marge') a training called "Young people, Islam and identity". In this training youth workers develop a professional approach towards ideological identity and learn more about identity development of Muslim youth and the role of their organization in working met Muslim youth.

#### **Tumult vzw**

For information on the organisation, see section "[main inclusive youth-work programmes](#)". Tumult, for instance, organises a training on refugee children and how to reach, motivate and involve them in youth work.

#### **Uit De Marge/CMGJ**

[Uit De Marge/CMGJ](#) is The Flemish Network for youth work with disadvantaged children and young people. Their training is aimed primarily at youth workers who work with these groups, but their trainings are also open to members of youth services and other sectors who work with vulnerable children and young people in a voluntary setting. They offer both general trainings for youth workers who work with disadvantaged groups, but also thematic trainings. Examples of thematic trainings are:

- Positive identity formation: what's in a name?
- Discussing questions about sexuality and relationships with children and young people with a migration background
- Youth work and refugee children

## **Wel Jong Niet Hetero vzw**

[Wel Jong Niet Hetero](#) (WJNH) regroups and guides local gay youth groups, organises national initiatives such as the gay camp, meetings days, forum meetings, minus-19 (school activity), gay parties. WJNH also gives management training for LGBT youth workers. Furthermore WJNH is the contact point regarding LGBT youth themes in Flanders.

### **Financial support**

All the organisations mentioned above are structural subsidised associations. They qualify for structural funding and project funding of the Flemish Government ([Subsidies](#)). They receive an annual grant of 80,000 euros and can request additional variable subsidies. See also chapter 5.6 for more information.

### **Quality assurance**

Each structural subsidized youth association must submit an annual progress report which entails among others a financial report and an activity report.

## **4.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **Modernisation of secondary education**

As mentioned in the general context section, Flemish pupils score generally high in international comparative research, but Flemish education also scores low on social inclusion and social mobility in education: The waterfall system, high school dropout, too many repeaters, inequality in educational opportunities...

At the end of May 2016 the Flemish Government approved two concept notes ([conceptnota's Mei 2016](#)) containing the key ideas for the modernization of Flemish secondary education. A first concept note comprises measures for primary education and the first stage (year 1 and 2) of secondary education, while a second one addresses the second and third stage of secondary education (year 3 to 6/7). In the first stage of secondary education general education is strengthened. In addition to the general education there will be an optional component to explore new subjects or to deepen others. In the second and third stages eight study areas will be offered instead of the current 29 areas. Both concept notes concretise the Master Plan on Secondary Education ([Masterplan Hervorming Secundair Onderwijs](#)). That master plan includes 71 measures for strengthening education. Many of these measures have already been implemented in the meantime (STEM action plan, including education for children with special learning needs, an action plan for school dropout,...).

In January 2017, the Flemish Government approved the concept notes ([conceptnota Januari 2017](#)).

## **5. Participation**

### **Special feature**

The Flemish Community has youth councils at every level of policy-making. In these youth councils youth organisations and young people meet to advise on policy matters. The Flemish Youth Council regularly organises participation projects and ad hoc youth surveys to get to know the opinions of young people about specific topics.

### **Highlights**

The Youth and Children's Rights policy plan focuses on policy participation. It is about what is very close to the hearts of children and young people, but most definitely also about themes in all policy areas affecting them. The Flemish Government wants to help

create preconditions which will make a permanent participatory attitude the logical standard.

## **5.1 General context**

### **Main concepts**

Definitions according to the decree of January 20, 2012 on the renewed youth and children's rights ([Decreet houdende een vernieuwd jeugd- en kinderrechtenbeleid](#)) :

- **youth work**: socio-cultural work based on non-commercial purposes by or for young people of three to thirty years, during leisure time, with educational guidance and to promote the general and integral development of the young people who participate in it on a voluntarily basis
- **A political youth movement** is a membership association of persons up to thirty years old, which encourages young people to take up active citizenship and that sensitizes and develops young people in view of their participation in political decision-making, in the operation of a particular political party and in public debate.
- **A political party** is defined as the association of persons participating in the elections for the Flemish Parliament, the House of Representatives, or the European Parliament.

In Flanders, political participation in elections is regulated in accordance with the Belgian legislation. All other forms of democratic and civic participation are specific for the Flemish community and region.

### **Institutions of representative democracy**

#### **Constitutional structure**

Belgium is a constitutional parliamentary monarchy. It is a federal State composed of Communities and Regions. The country comprises three Communities (the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-speaking Community) and three Regions (the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels Region). The power to make decisions is divided over different institutions, who independently exercise their authority within their domains. Each entity has its specific area of responsibility.

The concept of 'Community' refers to persons that make up a community and the bond that unifies them, namely their language and culture. The Communities have powers for culture (theatre, libraries, audiovisual media, etc.), education, the use of languages and matters relating to the individual which concern on the one hand health policy (curative and preventive medicine) and on the other hand assistance to individuals (protection of youth, social welfare, aid to families, immigrant assistance services, etc.). They also have powers in the field of scientific research in relation to their powers and international relations associated with their powers.

The regions, which aspired to more economic autonomy, is responsible for these interests. Regions have powers in fields that are connected with their region or territory in the widest meaning of the term. So the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region have powers relating to the economy, employment, agriculture, water policy, housing, public works, energy, transport (except Belgian Railways), the environment, town and country planning, nature conservation, credit, foreign trade, supervision of the provinces, communes and intercommunal utility companies. They also have authority relating to scientific research and international relations in those fields.

Broadly speaking, the powers of the Federal State cover everything connected with interests of common state. In the general interest of all Belgians, the Federal State manages the public finances, the army, the judicial system, social security, foreign affairs as well as substantial parts of public health and home affairs. The Federal Government's powers also cover everything that does not expressly come under the Communities or

Regions. The Federal State also has powers for exemptions and restrictions on the powers of the Communities and the Regions.

### Main representative institutions

In Belgium, elections are held at five different levels (see below). They are organised for legislative bodies only, and not for executive functions. Belgium has a multi-party system, with several political parties (with an electoral threshold of 5% since the parliamentary elections of 2003). Voting is compulsory and all elections use proportional representation which in general requires coalition governments.

The elections that are held in Belgium are:

- European elections (every 5 years)
- Federal elections (every 5 years)
  - the House of Representatives ([de Kamer](#)), which is composed of 150 members that are elected for five years. Based on the results of the elections of May 25, 2014 the House counts in this legislature 87 members of the Dutch language group and 63 members of the French language group.
- Regional elections for the legislative bodies of the communities and regions (every 5 years)
  - the Flemish Parliament ([Vlaams Parlement](#)): Unlike the French Community and the Walloon Region (which are separate administrative levels), Flemish politicians decided in 1980 to merge the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region. As a result, Flanders has one Flemish Parliament and one Flemish Government with competence over Community matters as well as over Regional matters. The Flemish Parliament consists of 124 Flemish representatives that are elected for a period of 5 years.
  - The [Walloon Parliament](#)
  - The [Parliament of the French Community](#)
  - The [Brussels regional Parliament](#)
- Provincial elections for the provincial councils (every 6 years)
- Municipal elections for the municipal councils (every 6 years)

The last elections for the European, federal and regional level took place on Sunday, May 25th, 2014. After the coinciding elections of May 25, 2014 federal elections will take place every 5 years instead of 4 years. The last elections of the provincial and municipal councils took place on Sunday, October 14th, 2012. The next elections will be those for the provincial and municipal councils and will be held on Sunday, October 14th, 2018.

Voting in Belgium is done by paper voting or electronic voting on a computer depending on the place of voting. Belgian voters are given five options when voting. They may:

- Vote for a list as a whole, thereby showing approval of the order established by the party they vote for
- Vote for one or more individual candidate(s) belonging to the same party. This is a "preference vote"
- Vote for one or more of the "alternates (substitutes)"
- Vote for one or more candidates, and one or more alternates, all of the same party
- Vote invalid or blank so no one receives the vote

In certain circumstances, people have the possibility to vote by proxy (see 5.2).

Binding referendums in Belgium are not legally possible because of the constitutional principle that the country's powers are exercised by the nation and not by the people. Consequently, Belgium is a representative democracy, (almost) without any form of direct democracy.

## **5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy**

### **Young people as voters**

#### **Voting age limit**

Since 1981, every Belgian from 18 years of age has the right to vote at all levels, including for the – European Parliament elections. Belgium is one of the few countries where voting is compulsory. Belgian citizens are automatically registered in the electoral polls. However, the Belgian citizens are not required to cast a vote on a list or a candidate. Belgians can vote blank or invalid.

On February 20, 2004 the House of Representatives decided to also give voting rights to non-EU citizens in municipal elections. Migrants residing 5 years or more in Belgium, are eligible to vote in municipal elections.

#### **Imminent plans to lower the voting age limit**

At this moment, the lowering of the voting age is strongly debated in Flanders (See 5.10 Current Debates).

#### **Special provisions for young people**

There are no special provisions for young people in particular, but there exist a general legislation for persons who cannot attend the elections. For instance, in the following situations persons can vote by a proxy:

- students for study reasons (e.g. because of exams or studies abroad)
- voters who are unable to go to the elections because of illness or disabilities
- persons who are abroad for professional or official business or who have to work at the moment of elections
- persons who are staying in jail or in a closed institution at the time of elections
- voters who for reasons relating to their belief are not able to go to the elections

Proxy voting is a form of [voting](#) whereby a member of a decision-making body may delegate his or her voting power to a representative, to enable a vote in absence. Anyone who wishes to vote by proxy for the above reasons must prove the need with a written proof or authorisation from an accredited body.

#### **The turnout of young people**

About 90 percent of the population takes part in the elections. In the elections of 2014, 92,67% of the (automatically) registered voters took part in the regional elections (Flemish parliament) and 91,38% in the European elections (Flemish districts). The voter turnout for the House of Representatives was a little lower: 89,64% (voter turnout Dutch speaking voters). Age-specific information about voter turnout is not available.

Since voting is compulsory, it makes however not so much sense to look at voter turnout in Belgium since it cannot be interpreted as an expression of political interest (Vanhouette, 2009). The intention to cast a valid vote is often used instead, since people are not obliged to actually cast a vote, they can also decide not to vote, by voting blank or invalid. Because the ballots are anonymous, the proportion of valid votes according to age can only be measured by means of surveys.

A post-electoral study on the Flemish population about their voting behaviour in the elections for the House of representatives in 2014 indicated that invalid voting behaviour (not attending the elections, vote blanco or invalid) is the lowest among the youngest age groups (Abts, Swyngedouw & Meuleman, 2015). Invalid voting behaviour is significantly lower in the age group 18 to 24 year old: while in general 13,7% over the Flemish population at voting age casts an invalid vote, this is only 5,8% among the 18 to 24 year olds (percentages for the other age groups: 14,6% for age group 25-34; 19,4% for age group 35-44; 16,0% for age group 45-54; 17% for age group 55-64; 27,1% for age 65-100).

In a representative survey of young people (age 14-30, n=3039) in Flanders, called the Youth Monitor, carried out by the Youth Research Platform ([www.jeugdonderzoeksplatform.be](http://www.jeugdonderzoeksplatform.be); analyses on political behaviour are also reported in Spruyt & Van Droogenbroeck, 2014) in 2013 61,3% of the respondents indicated that they would vote if voting would not be compulsory. The intention to vote in case of non-mandatory voting increases by age (Spruyt & Van Droogenbroeck, 2014): 49,6% of the adolescents who are 14-15 year old would cast a vote, when young people reach the voting age (age group 18 to 19 year old) this is already 56,5% and the intention to vote augments further until the age of 24-25 where not less than 70,8% of the respondents indicate that they would vote even if voting wouldn't be compulsory. When asked for which party they would cast a vote if there were be elections for the House of Representatives the next day (own analyses on data of the youth monitor), 78,2% would bring out a valid vote, 8,8% would vote blanco, 3,1% would vote invalid and 9,9% indicates that they would not go to vote (although it is compulsory). Again there are strong differences according to age. The youngest age group (14-17) who are not yet at voting age indicate significantly more than the other age groups that they would not vote (20,5%) or vote blanco (8,8%) or invalid (5%). When only the adolescents and young adults at voting age are selected, 6,6% would not go to the elections, 7,3% would vote blanco and 2,5% would vote invalid.

## Young people as political representatives

### Young people as members of political parties

The most recent survey data indicate that the membership of political parties in Flanders fluctuates around 5% (Bral et al., 2011). This survey data can be compared with the member numbers reported by the parties themselves. In 2014, the Flemish political parties counted together nearly 236.000 members (Hooghe & Boonen, 2014). Disposed relative to the population this is about 4% of the respondents aged 18 and older. The self-reported member numbers clearly indicate a decrease in the number of party members in Flanders since the late 1980s: Approximately 373,000 members in 1987 to 214,000 in 2008 (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2010), but -due to the success of the Flemish nationalist party N-VA- this number has increased slightly the last years (Hooghe & Boonen, 2014).

Membership of political parties (including youth divisions) increases with age. A representative [survey on participation](#) which was carried out in 2014 among 3965 Flemish people aged 14 to 85, indicates that 4,7% of the Flemish population is a member of a political party. Among the youngest age group 14 to 18 only 0,4% is a member of a political party. Among the young who have already reached the voting age (19 to 30 year olds) 3,1% is member of a political party or a political youth organisation.

### Young people as candidates in federal/national, regional, local and European elections

For the Belgian and Flemish elections, the age limits for standing as a candidate are lower than for the [European elections](#); To be able to stand as a candidate one has to have reached the following ages at the day of the elections:

- European Parliament : 21
- House of representatives (Belgium): 18
- Regional, provincial and municipal elections in Flanders: 18

There are no quota of seats reserved for young people and there exist no special provisions to facilitate young people to stand as political candidate.

### Young people as elected candidates

The average age of the Flemish elected representatives for the **House of Representatives** at the time of the elections in 2014 was 45.2 years (Put, Smulders & Maddens, 2015). The male elected representatives are on average 2.7 years older than their female colleagues. Groen, the green party, is by far the youngest Flemish faction in

the House of Representatives with an average age of 39 years. The average age of the Flemish elected representatives dropped over the past 27 years by 1,9 years (Put, Smulders & Maddens, 2015). In 1987 the average elected was 47 years old. Especially between 1995 and 2007 there was a clear trend for rejuvenation, but since 2007 this trend seems to stagnate. This gradual decline in the age can be fully attributed to the elected females. There is a striking curvilinear pattern in the age of female elected representatives: between 1995 and 2007, a thorough rejuvenation took place, but in 2010 and 2014 the group of female elected became gradually older.

In the **Flemish Parliament**, 6,5% (or 8 of the 124 elected) of the parliamentarians were younger than 31 years old at the moment of the elections in 2014. With regard to the European Parliament (elected Flemish people) 1 of the 21 elected European parliamentarians was younger than 31 years old at the elections in 2014.

### **5.3 Youth representation bodies**

#### **Youth parliament**

Flanders hasn't a real youth parliament. However, in the autumn of 2013, 2015 and 2016 a simulation of the Flemish Parliament for and by young people was organised in the parliamentary benches. More information on this project can be found in 5.7.

#### **Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards**

##### **Youth Council**

Already before the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy, Flanders had Youth Councils (Jeugdraden) at every level of policy-making (apart from the inter-municipality level), in which youth organisations and young people meet to give advice on policy matters.

##### LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVEL

In the Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on supporting and promoting local youth policy and youth work policy ([decreet houdende de ondersteuning en stimulering vna het lokaal jeugdbeleid en de bepaling van het provinciaal jeugdbeleid](#)) it is stated that a local youth council should be established and recognised in view of the organisation of the consultation and the participation of children and young people in the preparation and implementation of youth policy. The youth council advises on all matters relating to youth policy, and in drawing up the multiannual plan.

The following persons are members of the municipal youth council:

- the representative of the interested local youth initiatives which can prove an active functioning or recruitment with regard to children and young people from the municipality;
- interested children and young people from the municipality, co-opted by the youth council

Political representatives cannot be members of the youth council. But, in addition to the members with voting rights there may also observers take part in the youth council. The Alderman of Youth, the municipal councillors or other political representatives and external experts can sit as observers in the youth council, and also the youth counsellor or other municipal officials may take part as observers of the youth council. On average, a local youth council counts 22 members with voting rights.

On average, the general meeting of the youth councils in the municipalities of the Flemish Region takes place 7 times a year. In 62% of the municipalities the youth council works with an executive board. In two third of the municipalities the Youth Council has a memorandum agreement with the municipal administration (n = 273) (Afdeling Jeugd - Departement Jeugd, Cultuur, Sport en Media, 2015)

## NATIONAL LEVEL

The [Flemish Youth Council](#) is laid down in the Parliament Act on a renewed Youth and Children's rights policy ([decreet houdende een vernieuwd jeugd- en kinderrechtenbeleidsplan](#)). The Flemish Youth Council is the **official advisory body** of the Flemish Government on all matters concerning children and young people. This means that all Flemish Ministers have to ask the Flemish Youth Council for advice whenever they want to make a decision that will have consequences for children and young people. It also means that the Flemish Youth Council may give advice of its own accord, if policy makers forget to ask for advice or when they deem it necessary.

Every three years the Flemish Youth Council elects a new Assembly, existing of individual young people and representatives of youth organizations. All young people aged 12 to 30 can vote online. The last election took place at the end of 2014. The Youth Council must be composed of at least 16 and at most 24 members, at least one third of them has to be younger than 25 at the start of the mandate. Maximum two thirds of the members can have the same gender.

Every month, these twenty-four individual young persons and representatives of youth organizations gather for the General Assembly. During this meeting, they discuss policy developments relevant to youth and approve advices. With regard to its advisory task, the Flemish Youth Council can give advice at its own discretion or at the request of the Government of Flanders or the Flemish Parliament. As stipulated by law, the Government of Flanders shall request advice when making legislation implementing the Flemish Youth Policy Plan. The Flemish Youth Council shall approve its advices at the General Assembly with a two-third majority of the attendees. Importantly, the Government of Flanders shall explain its decision on the policy advices relating to its competences to the Flemish Youth Council. The Flemish Youth Council can also give policy advices in case its members find it necessary in view of the interests of young people.

The Flemish Youth Council regularly organizes participation projects and ad hoc youth surveys to explore the opinions of (other) young people about specific topics and to link new youth policy plans to the life world of young people. The Flemish Youth Council consults young people through website surveys, Facebook, twitter... The Flemish Youth Council is the leading partner in the National Working Group for the EU Structured Dialogue.

The Flemish Youth Council is supported in its work by the Youth Work Commission. It is a monthly meeting place for youth work organisations of Flanders. The meeting can be attended by youth workers from any organisation funded by the Flemish Parliament Act of 2012 on Flemish youth and children's rights policy. This Commission carries out work in support of the youth council. They follow up youth work policies and prepare policy proposals, in which the interests of youth work organizations are reflected, for the General Assembly of the Flemish Youth Council

At the Council of Europe level, the Flemish Youth Council has been actively engaged for many years. This because of the relevance of these European decisions for youth and youth work in Flanders. The Flemish Youth Council has been participating through the decision-making structures of the co-management system of the Council of Europe. Its representatives have sat down with officials to agree on priorities of young people and the youth sector.

The Youth Councils of the three communities meet at a regular base in the J'Club to discuss matters that concern them all (Belgian, European level).

### [Higher education student union\(s\)](#)

#### **Flemish Association of Students (Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten)**

The non-profit organisation Flemish Association of Students (VVS) is the umbrella organization of student councils of the Flemish universities and colleges and defends the interests of the students in Flanders and Brussels. The VVS defends students' rights in a

broader context of democratization of education. This means that for VVS everyone, whatever their socio-cultural background (e.g. language delay, age, education, disability, ..) has the right barrier to follow the teachings of his or her choice and talents.

The Flemish Association of Students (VVS) has a dual role. On the one hand they represent the student voice in meetings of advisory bodies, working groups of the Ministry and various other places. This takes place at the Flemish, federal and European level. On the other hand, the VVS supports the student councils, by guiding them through difficulties and questions and providing tools.

Each college or university has his own student council and can join in Flanders the Flemish Association of Students. Dependent on their size, student councils have a number of votes in the General Assembly which meets at least monthly during the academic year. The General Assembly (GA) elects the Executive Board (EB), which in turn is assisted by a number of executives.

Funding: grants from the Flemish Government. These revenues are however declining for some years due to savings of the Flemish government.

### **School student union(s)**

#### **Flemish Pupil's Umbrella Organisation (Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel)**

The Flemish Pupil's Umbrella Organisation or 'VSK' is an association by and for students. It supports pupil councils at secondary schools and represents them in Education Policy making. Together with the Flemish Pupils' Umbrella Organisation, the Flemish Government evaluated the [Flemish Parliament Act on participation in education](#). Based on this evaluation, a Flemish Parliament Act on the 'legal position of students in education' is being developed. In 2016, the VSK also held a consultation process with and by students about the contents of education.

The VSK exists of 30 pupils who govern the organisation, seven young people in the Board, 150 active students who regularly give their opinion on education, more than 750 student councils that are members of VSK. The VSK orients his working to all students of secondary education in Flanders and Brussels. A team of nine staff members supports their work.

The VSK is recognised and financed by the Flemish Government and is financially accountable to the Flemish Government.

### **Other bodies**

#### **The Division Youth (Afdeling Jeugd)**

The [Division Youth](#) is not a body that is composed solely of young people.

However, Division Youth aims to be a knowledge centre from which scientific research concerning (the life worlds and meaning-making of) children and young people in society can be stimulated, supported and brought together. In this respect, they also explicitly wish to focus on research concerning children and young people in vulnerable situations.

The Division Youth is not composed of young people, but endeavours **participative working methods**. They have, for instance, organised the participative project the Citizen Cabinet and the participatory processes that preceded the youth and children's right plan and the project "Young in the City". With regard to "Young in the City", the Division Youth organized for example a conference on youth policy in the city (march 2013). For this conference they interviewed 100 very diverse adolescents about their vision on the city. Their insights and the problems, opportunities and wishes that these adolescents formulated, gave shape to the conference.

## Non-profit organisations supported by the Flemish Government

The Flemish Government also funds non-profit organisations and provincial authorities to help develop mechanisms for youth participation and opportunities for debate between public institutions and young people.

- The '[Ambrassade](#)' embedded in the Flemish Parliament Act of 2012, is responsible for the coordination and development of 'youth information' initiatives.
- 'Association of Flemish Youth Services' ([VVJ](#)) is an umbrella organisation which main task consists of VVJ informing and supporting Flemish cities and municipalities to prepare and implement local youth policy and youth participation. The VVJ was founded in the 1970s. On January 1, 2014 VVJ merged with Karuur and became the only umbrella organization for local participation and support of youth councils. Today VVJ can count on a team of 14 employees and substantially all (305 to 308) Flemish municipalities as members.
- [Demos](#) is a non-partisan public research and advocacy organization. Démos' role has been embedded in the wider cultural field of Flanders by the [Participation Decree](#). They focus on social and policy developments in culture, youth work and sports. Within this focus they publish books and a magazine, organise symposia, work shops, cafés and other gatherings and do research and advise organisations and governments. Démos also contributes to the development of policy and practices that focus mainly on groups and practices that are under-represented and underexposed in our society.

## 5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

### Formal Mechanisms of Consultation and actors

#### Great priorities Debate

The youth and children's rights policy plan tries to serve as an example of participatory policy with great involvement from children, young people, their organisations and experts.

The process for drawing up the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019 completed several participatory stages. In the spring of 2013, an extensive environmental analysis, the Great Priorities Debate, took place. The environmental analysis provide an overview of trends, figures, research and the voice of children, youngsters and experts. The analysis was grounded the social and economic action programme 'Flanders in Action' (Vlaanderen in Actie, ViA). In a second stage, working groups composed of young people, youth workers, children's rights actors, civil society, civil servants and researchers worked together intensively for several months around nine selected themes to arrive at strategic and operational objectives on the basis of priority policy challenges. The Great Priorities Debate, several working groups and feedback through an online survey provided the seedbed for a framework of objectives around 12 priority topics (see also 1.4 what informs the choice of themes).

#### JoKER (Child and Youth effects report - [Kind en Jongereffectenrapport](#))

Since 1997, the Flemish government is obligated by decree to make an impact report on draft decrees directly affecting the interests of children, persons under eighteen.

By decree of July 18, 2008 (decree on the conduct of a Flemish youth and children's rights policy the child impact report (KER) has been extended to a child and youth impact report (JoKER). Since 2013, the format of the JoKER is fully integrated into the regulatory impact analysis (RIA). RIA is a set of necessary and logical steps in preparing a policy measure. The aim is to ascertain the impact on children and young people under the age of twenty five. The JoKER, assesses the effects of new regulations on children and youth. Whenever a minister submits a draft decree to the Flemish Parliament that directly affects the interests of persons under 25 years, the draft must be accompanied by a JoKER. The Youth Division provides advice on JoKER.

## State of youth

The Flemish Government also committed to at least to publish a 'State of Youth' every five years. This 'state of youth', youth monitor or JOP monitor measures the evolution of the living conditions of children and adolescents in Flanders.

## Municipal participatory tools

In addition, a municipality can use other participatory tools to involve children and young people in their youth (work) policy. Other participation instruments that can be used by municipalities to give children and young people a voice are e.g:

- Ad hoc surveys are usually focused on a particular project (or part thereof) of which the municipality wants to know the opinion of the target group
- Children (municipal) council consists of children, elected by other children. The Children's municipal council lets children hear their voices, accompanied by adults.
- The teenager council is similar to the children council but for teenagers
- The youth paragraph is an effect report preceding a decision. It is a policy tool that assesses certain municipal decisions on child-friendliness

However less than half of the municipalities in the Flemish Region (41%) uses one of these other participation instruments. Ad hoc initiatives and child (municipal) council are most common, the youth paragraph and teenager council rarely occur.

## Actors

### Flemish Youth Council (see also 5.3)

The Flemish Youth Council consists of at least 16 and at most 24 members. At a minimum, one third of them has to be younger than 25 years old at the start of their mandate. At most two third of the members have the same gender. According to the law, the Flemish Youth Council has to be elected every three years following an online voting procedure. Youth Councils make efforts to enhance the diversity of the representing youngsters.

### The 'Ambrassade' (see also 5.3)

The Youth Council is supported by the 'Ambrassade', an association recognised and granted by the Flemish Government and also responsible for development, support and provision of information to the youth sector

### Municipal Youth Councils (see also 5.3)

The municipal youth council advices on all matters relating to youth policy, and in drawing up the multiannual plan at municipal level. Consultations on youth policy include topics such as the adoption or amendment of the youth policy plan, the justification notes or the content development of the youth policy, subsidy regulations, material services, youth work infrastructure etc. Consultations on youth policy deal with themes that are broader than youth work and youth work policy. It concerns e.g. local sports and culture policy or issues regarding entertainment, child care, leisure places, mobility, etc. However, 70% of the advices of the youth council are related to youth work policy. More than one in three advices relates to the content development of the youth work policy (subsidy regulations, material services, youth work infrastructure, etc.). Besides almost 20% of the advice deals with the approval of the multiannual planning or amendment of the youth policy plan. Within the broader youth policy most advice is given with regard to nightlife aspects (parties, concerts, ..).

Formulating and following up advice are the core task of the youth council, but in addition the youth council can also organise activities. As many as 92% of the municipalities in the Flemish Region indicates that the youth council also organizes activities. This mainly involves activities that have to do with games, entertainment and recreation.

**Other actors: see also 5.3**

### **Information on the extent of youth participation**

Public authorities don't collect data on young people's participation in consultation processes.

However, the Flemish Youth Council must be composed of at least 16 and at most 24 members and at least one third of them has to be younger than 25 at the start of the mandate.

### **Outcomes**

The Flemish Parliament can consult young people through the Flemish Youth Council. Although the requested input can take various forms, often this concerns consultations on drafts of Parliament Acts or on amendments of Acts. However, the recommendations given by the Flemish Youth Council are not binding.

The input given by the Flemish Youth Council is public and can be found on their own [website](#) and also in the reports of the Flemish Parliament. The input into policy-making can partly be traced by means of the reports of the Flemish Parliament but there exists no clear overview of the integration of young people's input in the policy-making process.

Also the legal provisions and outcomes of the [JoKER](#) and the '[state of youth](#)' can be found on their website.

### **Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people**

#### **Citizen's Cabinet for Youth ([Burgerkabinet](#))**

In 2016, the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Sven Gatz launched a Citizen's Cabinet initiative, focusing on youth in the Flemish Community.

The goal was to bring together a group of 150 people to discuss youth affairs and policies and to give people a voice in culture and youth policy. Central question in this Citizen's Cabinet was how to make youth work more diverse ([report of the results – only in Dutch](#)).

The Citizen's Cabinet for Youth gathered ideas and feedback online until 15 April 2016. Leading contributors were invited to the Flemish Parliament on 6 May 2016 to debate proposals and make recommendations to the Minister. 134 participants came together that day and talked about diversity in youth work. This resulted in the formulation of sixteen recommendations.

#### **Youth Pact 2020**

In 2011, a process was started to prepare the future pact between the Flemish Government, youth and civil society: [Youth Pact 2020](#).

In 2011, the Flemish Youth Council was asked by the Government of Flanders to organise a large-scale survey of dreams and future expectations by and of young people in Flanders. Based on the results of this survey, different meetings are and will be organised. During these meetings young people, policymakers, youth organisations, social partners and other actors in civil society are invited to commit themselves to make Flanders in 2020 a place where young people like to live. The Government signed a Youth Pact, agreed upon by all partners, by the end of June 2012.

## **5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation**

### **Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation**

#### **Youth Pact 2020 ([www.jongerenpact2020.be](http://www.jongerenpact2020.be))**

A process was started to prepare the future pact between the policy makers in Flanders, young people and civil society; the Youth Pact 2020. In 2011, the Flemish Youth Council was asked by the Government of Flanders to organize a large-scale survey of dreams and future expectations by and of young people in Flanders. Based on the results of this survey, different meetings will be organized. During these meetings young people, policymakers, youth organizations, social partners and other actors in civil society are invited to commit themselves to make Flanders in 2020 a place where young people like to live. The Government signed a Youth Pact, agreed upon by all partners, by the end of June 2012.

#### **Youth Policy Plan**

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan is a policy instrument of the Government of Flanders which bundles together the youth and children's rights policies in Flanders. The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan outlines in one single plan all the concerns regarding children and young people and their rights which the Flemish Ministers will pay heed to in their policies in the following years. In 2015 the Government of Flanders presented for the fourth time a youth policy plan to the parliament.

The youth and children's rights policy plan serves as an example of participatory policy with a strong involvement from children, young people, their organizations and experts. Preparations started in the spring of 2013. An extensive environmental analysis, a debate on the big priorities, several working groups and feedback through an online survey provided the seedbed for a framework of objectives around 12 priority topics (e.g. poverty, sustainability, mobility, education, participation, space, welfare, housing, work and cultural education). After that, the competent Ministers were asked to submit their action plans. Finally, the administrations developed projects, processes and indicators.

#### **Scope and contents**

The Youth Policy Plan pursues four large societal objectives for all children and young people up to and including the age of thirty: equal opportunities, broad development, space and greater involvement in society for all children and young people. This whole set of objectives, indicators, projects and processes constitutes the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015 — 2019. Participation is one of the pillars of this Plan.

Regarding the objectives concerning policy participation of young people, the Flemish Government wants to create preconditions which will make a permanent participatory attitude the logical standard. The Flemish Government wants to achieve this goal by the following **operational objectives**:

- strengthening expertise of employees of governments, services and organisations by investing in training and education for anyone who works with children and young people in a large variety of policy areas;. This concerns initiatives relating to media, sport and youth, but certainly also to work, well-being and education. A networking group will promote knowledge exchange and information flow.
- Developing, promoting and applying strategies and providing space and resources to increase the policy participation of groups that are difficult to reach, e.g. pupils in special education, children with a migration background, young people in poverty.
- Encouraging a variety of participatory practices to eliminate gaps in the current participation policy

## Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The Flemish Government is responsible for implementing this plan and will issue interim reports after two years. A first interim report will be sent to the Flemish Parliament before the summer of 2017. This will allow for midterm adjustments to be made. At the end of the Government's term of office a final report will be drawn up.

## Revisions/Updates

For the policy period 2015 through 2019 it is the first fully integrated youth and children's rights policy plan. What is new is that this plan includes both the youth policy and the children's rights policy. This means that a separate Flemish Children's Rights Action Plan is no longer drawn up.

## 5.6 Supporting youth organisations

### Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

A legal framework for supporting youth organisations are:

- The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a revised youth and children's rights policy ([decreet houdende een vernieuwd jeugd- en kinderrechtenbeleid](#))
- Local youth organisations: The Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on supporting and promoting local youth policy and youth work policy ([decreet houdende ondersteuning en stimulering van het lokaal jeugdbeleid](#))

Youth organisations play an important role in the implementation of Flanders' youth policy. There are several accredited youth organisations active at Flemish level oriented towards youth work and young people in leisure time settings. The Division Youth of the Flemish government distinguishes [the following associations/projects](#):

- Structural subsidised associations:
  - Rural organised youth associations (Associations of youth work with participants from at least four provinces of the Dutch-speaking region or three provinces of the Dutch-speaking region and the bilingual Brussels-Capital).
  - Cultural-educational associations.
  - Associations for information and participation. These association perform one or more of the following objectives: 1) create or convey information for or about youth or child rights; 2) guidance of youth in their participatory processes in the policies of governments or institutions with the aim to involve the youth in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the policies of governments or institutions, 3) guiding media production by and about young people.
- Non-structural subsidised associations within one of the following domains:
  - youth work,
  - information to or about youth on youth policy participation,
  - cultural education for young people.

Non-structural subsidised associations receive project grants of the Flemish Government. They do not receive grants every year.

### Public financial support

Youth organisations or youth associations usually receive funding based on specific funding regulations or grant schemes. Recognised organisations receive a basic subsidy but they can also apply for project funding. The Flemish government subsidises the following associations/projects:

- Structural subsidised associations:
  - Rural organised youth associations qualify for structural funding and project funding. In 2016 64 organisations receive structural funding and 62 project funding.

- Cultural-educational associations: In 2016 21 associations received structural funding and 18 project funding.
- Associations information and participation. In 2016 14 associations received structural funding and 13 project funding.

In 2017, the budget allocation ([uitgavenbegroting 2017](#)) for these recognised organisations was € 33 516 000.

- Non-structural subsidised associations - Since January 1, 2013 the Flemish government gives also project grants to organisations for pilot projects within one of the following domains: 1) youth work, 2) information to or about youth on youth policy participation, 3) cultural education for young people. These associations can receive funding for the implementation of an experimental project. In 2015, 9 experimental projects received funding.

Further, initiatives can be regional or local subsidised. However, there are no numbers available of this regional and local subsidised organisations.

### **Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants**

#### **The Citizen's Cabinet ([Burgerkabinet](#))**

The Citizen's Cabinet which was organised in 2016 by the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Sven Gatz formulated 16 recommendations to increase diversity in youth work. Recommendations included among others a broader world view in education, the introduction of local "bridge-builders" to create and maintain active contact between youth organisations, and the creation of an online platform to link initiatives related to diversity. The creation of an online platform will roll out the coming months.

#### **Working group 'Diversity Policy'**

In 2016, the working group 'Diversity Policy' within the Youth Work Commission worked on a vision nota on diversity in youth work. Partly based on this vision, a roundtable discussion with the youth work sector was organised. Based on the vision statement, the Minister of Youth went in discussion with experts from different policy areas and a hundred youth workers from a wide range of youth (work) initiatives, focusing on two goals of the vision statement ([Visienota Diversiteit in/en het jeugdwerk](#)): "More and more equal opportunities" and "social inclusion". The entire process resulted in a set of policy recommendations and commitments in the sector.

#### **Project call "Bridge builders within and to youth work"**

Based on the recommendations of the Citizen's Cabinet on Youth and those of the working group on diversity policy, the Minister of Youth launched a project call in December 2016, called "Bridge-builders within and to youth work" ([projectoproep Bruggenbouwers in en naar het jeugdwerk](#)). The Flemish government will invest 750,000 euros into projects that 'build bridges' within and towards youth work. The call for projects aims to realise youth work for children and young people in vulnerable situations. The intention is to provide financial support to organisations or groups of organisations that offer a youth work that better reflects the diversity of society.

## **5.7 "Learning to participate" through formal, non-formal and informal learning**

### **Policy Framework**

The Flemish policy on citizenship education is defined in Flemish policy documents, such as the cross-curricular attainment targets in education for all pupils in secondary education ([Vakoverschrijdende eindtermen](#)).

Aside from the subject-related final objectives there are several cross-curricular final objectives (VOET) defined. These are minimum objectives which do not appertain to a

particular subject of study, but which are pursued by several subjects or educational projects and activities (so via formal learning as well as via non-formal learning). The cross-curricular final objectives entail an obligation of effort for the schools, not for the pupils.

### Formal learning

The cross-curricular final objectives (VOET) and cross-curricular developmental objectives (apart from the cross-curricular theme learning to learn) apply to all grades in secondary education.

They have a common core of essential skills which are generically formulated and relate to: communication skills, creativity, perseverance, empathy, aesthetic skills, exploring, flexibility, initiative, critical thinking, media awareness, an open and constructive attitude, respect, collaboration, responsibility, self-image, independence, meticulousness, thoughtfulness. These skills are crystallized and integrated in 7 contexts: physical health and safety, mental health, socio-relational development, the environment and sustainable development, the politico-judicial society, the socio-economic society, the socio-cultural society.

With regard to the politico-judicial aspect of a democratic society, particular attention is paid to four interrelated themes:

- active citizenship
- human rights
- democracy and
- the European / international dimension.

Goals are:

The pupils

- can indicate how they can participate in decision making and development of society;
- exercise involvement, participation and decision-making in real school situations;
- can show the importance and dynamic character of human and children's rights;
- are actively and constructively committed for their own rights and those of others;
- show that living together in a democratic state is based on rights and obligations that apply to citizens, organizations and public authorities;
- acknowledge the role of check and balance between the legislative, executive and judicial power in our democratic system;
- can illustrate the role of the media and organizations in the functioning of our democratic system;
- distinguish the main elements of the Belgian federal state structure;
- can compare the life in our democratic system with that in other forms of governance;
- illustrate how a democratic policy pursues the public interest and takes account of ideas, opinions and interests of different stakeholders;
- can explain the impact of European cooperation and of the EU policy and institutions for their own environment;
- can show the importance of international organizations and institutions;
- can give examples that illustrate how globalization entails advantages, problems and conflicts.

### Non-formal and informal learning

The above mentioned cross-curricular themes can also be achieved by means (and even more) by non-formal and informal ways of learning, e.g. by social and civic projects, activities inside and outside the school walls, ... and also by organising pupil participation (mostly in the form of pupil counsels).

In addition, Flemish youngsters learn to participate 'by doing' in youth work, sports, culture, in formal education... In leisure-time organisations, young people do not only

(have to) play together, they often have a say in organisational decisions and sometimes come to lead activities.

### Student councils

In formal education, there are also opportunities for active participation in school policy, anchored in a Flemish Parliament Act on Pupil Participation ([decreet betreffende participatie op school en de Vlaamse Onderwijsraad](#)). Flemish primary and secondary schools, universities and university colleges are obliged to organise **student councils** (or other participation mechanisms) if students request it. Only when the school regulations ensure pupils engagement in school policy in other ways (e.g. by surveys, e-participation), and on the condition that the establishment of a pupil is not requested by at least ten percent of the pupils (where this rate counts at least three students) schools are not obliged to establish a pupil council. At this moment, there are no national or large-scale policy initiatives and programmes to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society.

### Youth participation projects

Under the heading 'participation and information' the Flemish Government funds VVJ to support youth participation in Flanders. VVJ organises the **youth project [Debattle](#)** together with the Ambrassade. Debattle, a project for the local elections, support young people to have a big impact on the policy choices of the new multi-annual planning. Debattle:

- informs young people: how does a municipality work? How do young people vote?
- empower young people and youth councils
- and includes the ideas and wishes of young people in the multi-annual planning

Under the heading 'participation and information' the Flemish Government also funds political youth organisations (youth divisions of political parties) and other organisations that develop initiatives in this field.

### Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There exists no system of quality assurance/guidelines of non-formal learning activities/projects.

However, every student council is obliged to draw up internal rules. These internal rules specify agreements concerning composition of the council, support, gathering, budget, communication,...

Also each structural youth organisations must submit an annual report which entails among others a financial and an activity report.

### Educators' support

Several organisations provide information, pedagogical material, tools, ...for teachers, trainers and non-formal education workers and youth-workers.

### The Power of your Voice ([De kracht van je stem](#))

The Power of your Voice is the educational project of the Flemish Parliament regarding formal education for democratic citizenship. The project is oriented to children, young people and their teachers and offers:

- educational materials for teachers and pupils to work in schools on democracy
- programs and activities for pupils in the Flemish Parliament
- education and training to teachers and students in teachers trainings

### KLAScement

[KLAScement](#) is a free platform of the Flemish Government for teachers, where they inspire one another by sharing teaching materials for students of all ages. A large

amount of learning resources can easily searched by topic, subject or level of education. Also teaching material for social and civic competences are available on the platform.

## **5.8 Raising political awareness among young people**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

Below are some initiatives towards raising political awareness on a Flemish level.

#### **The Power of your Voice ([De kracht van je stem](#))**

Since 2003, the Power of your Voice is the educational project regarding education for democratic citizenship of the Flemish Parliament. This project is supported and financed by the Flemish Government. The project is oriented to children, young people and their teachers and offers:

- educational materials for teachers and pupils to work in schools on democracy
- programs and activities for pupils in the Flemish Parliament
- education and training to teachers and students in teachers trainings

#### **Informing young people on elections and youth policy (Ambrassade, Flemish Youth Council & VVJ)**

In his policy letter of 2016-2017 ([Beleidsbrief Jeugd 2016-2017](#)), the Flemish Minister of Youth wrote that in the autumn of 2016 the Ambrassade, together with the Flemish Youth Council and VVJ, will start a project towards the elections of 2018 (policy letter 2016-2017 Sven Gatz). The project will have four objectives:

- to provide young people with information about the elections and the local youth policy,
- helping youth in their communications to policymakers to make them clear what good local youth policy is about and to give them tools to ensure that policymakers commit to it,
- to stimulate young people and to provide them handles to organize a local debate towards municipal elections,
- to inform young people and provide them tools to weigh after the elections at the local level.

#### **Flemish youth parliament (Vlaams jeugdparlement)**

The Flemish Youth Parliament ([Vlaams jeugdparlement](#)) is an association that organises simulations of the Flemish Parliament for and by young people in the parliamentary benches. They did so in the autumn of 2013, 2015 and 2016. The project is aimed at Dutch-speaking youth living in Flanders who are between 17 and 27 years old. The Flemish Youth Parliament wants to make young people acquainted with the ins and outs of democracy in Flanders. Combined with the appropriate coaching each participant is allowed to participate in the Flemish legislature, and this in all its facets. Several days they are immersed in relevant and contemporary social issues on which they have to apply the democratic principles of debate, file knowledge and coalitions. The Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament cooperate in this project.

Next to these regional initiatives, there are also initiatives on a more local level, organised by municipals or by schools (often related to the above mentioned cross-curricular themes in education).

Finally, at national level there is also a [foundation](#) that fund projects that work on the development of citizenship among young people. The Foundation P&V supports active citizenship and fights against social exclusion of young people. In order to combat this 'political alienation', Foundation P&V's launched in 2016 a multi-year project that seeks to reintroduce young people and young adults to social engagement and the political system in general, by showing them that through collective action, personal problems can be solved and dreams can be achieved. In May 2016, they launched a call to organisations in the broadest sense of the word (non-profits, schools, de facto

associations, ...) that work with and for young people and are able to coordinate a project that brings young people together who want to willingly start a collective project to find a solution to a problem they are experiencing or to realise a dream within the areas of work, health, neighbourhood, mobility, education, etc. The general aim is to make young people and young adults aware that through collective action and starting dialogues with (local) authorities and public institutions, they can solve personal problems or achieve their dreams. They also want to encourage political institutions to be more responsive to young people's problems and dreams.

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values**

At the moment there are no youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values.

However, there is the project the Power of your Voice, an educational project regarding education for democratic citizenship (see also 5.8).

### **Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people**

On 12-19-2016, the Flemish Minister of Youth Sven Gatz launched a call for projects that promote diversity in youth work in Flanders and Brussel ([projectoproep Bruggenbouwers in en naar het jeugdwerk](#)). The Flemish government will invest 750,000 euros into projects that 'build bridges' within and towards youth work. The deadline of this call for projects was March 2017.

The minister wants to encourage youth organisations in this way to work together, to know each other better and broaden the participation offer for all young people. This way minister Gatz also wants to accomplish some of the recommendations of the Citizen's Cabinet for Youth (Burgerkabinet, see also 5.4) that took place earlier 2016. In this Citizen's Cabinet young people asked to organise local initiatives in order to reach more young people. With the call the Minister of Youth wants to provide financial support to organisations or groups of organisations that offer a youth work better reflects the diversity of society. Through their cooperation they can also contribute to increased solidarity and integration in a diverse society.

In 2016, the Working Group Diversity Policy of the Commission on Youth Work worked on a vision of diversity in/and youth work. Partly based on this vision, a roundtable discussion with the youth work sector was organised, which was built around four themes: the theoretical framework, the local policy, the integrated youth policy and the challenges of youth itself. The Youth Minister went there in conversation with experts from all policy areas and a hundred youth workers from a wide range of youth (work) initiatives. He follows the two goals of the vision statement: 'More and more equal opportunities' and 'social inclusion'. The call for projects aims to realise youth work for children and young people in vulnerable situations. The central element of the call is that projects should bridge the gap between existing youth actions in leisure and/or other organisations that reach children and young people in their wide diversity.

### **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

#### **The Ambrassade**

The Ambrassade brings different information players across the sectors (youth, education, welfare, media, ...) together in the Commission Youth Information. This Commission wants to be a reference point for policy on youth information in different sectors, both at the level of regulation as that of the organisations. For both functions (bringing together organisations and inspire inclusion policy role function of youth information) to fully record, the Commission is working with two structures:

A core group, consisting of 10 permanent members, takes on the policy work and meets at least three times a year. The core group of the Committee on Youth Information has

as main objective to monitor, discuss and try to influence youth information in Flanders. She does this by

- Analysis of policy texts
- Discussion of current topics
- Preparing opinions or positions for the Flemish Youth Council
- Exchange with the Flemish Youth Council
- Establish policy action ((open) letter, press release, playful action ...).

In addition, the Ambrassade launched a quality Trusty in 2013. The Trusty label is a visible recognition of quality information products of all kinds of information players.

The Ambrassade also keeps its finger on the pulse when it comes to information needs of children and young people and creates, together with youth information actors, a diverse range of information tailored to children and young people under the name Youth Guide. Children and young people are involved in this.

### **StampMedia**

[StampMedia](#) is an organisation subsidised by the Youth Department of the City of Antwerp, the Flemish Community, Department of Youth and the City of Genk that aspires to strengthen the voice of young people between 16 and 26 years. They try to achieve this close the gap between the media and young people. StampMedia teaches young people the tricks of the journalistic profession and disseminates what is being written in the mainstream press.

## **5.9 E-participation**

In general, E-participation is often emphasised as the ultimate way to involve young people in policy and society.

There are no legal provisions for e-participation. However, a few official opportunities for e-participation exist in Flanders. Some of the few initiatives that are launched in this area:

### **#BePart**

At the end of 2015, the Ambrassade organised an international event ([#BePart](#)) on e-participation, with the support of the Erasmus + program. About 30 European youth workers from seven different countries attended this four-day international conference in which they shared good practices and experiences on e-participation.

### **Young said (Jonggezegd)**

Jonggezegd.be is an online participation tool that cities and towns can use to give young people a say in municipal policy through consultations.

On the one hand, the tool allows young people to bring on subjects and items; on the other hand, the municipalities can forward questions and issues to their young inhabitants. The tool is developed for young people between 12 and 25, with 15-18 year olds as a focus.

## **5.10 Current debates and reforms**

### **Voting age**

At this moment, the lowering of the voting age is strongly debated in Flanders.

On July 15, 2015 a number of party members of Groen and Ecolo (Groen is the Flemish green party, Ecolo the French green party) submitted a bill to lower the voting age for the European, federal, regional and local elections to 16 years ([Stemrecht op 16](#)). At the moment this bill is still being discussed in the House of Representatives, but recently some political parties altered their opinion in favour of lowering the voting age. So at this moment, most Flemish political parties are pro lowering the voting age. Through the

intercession of the CD&V (Christian democrats) youngsters, who hope to increase political interest and involvement of young people this way, the political party CD&V adopted most recently a positive opinion on the introduction of voting rights at 16 years, namely at their party conference in November 2016. It is about voting rights and not voting obligation as is the case for Belgians from the age of 18.

Previously, also three other political parties (the green party '[Groen](#)', the socialist party '[SP.A](#)', and the liberal party '[Open VLD](#)') already supported the right to vote at the age of 16 years. This means that only the right wing Flemish nationalist parties, [N-VA](#) and [Vlaams Belang](#), still oppose voting rights at 16. In May 2016, also the Flemish Youth Council voted an opinion pro-voting 16.

### **Political youth movements**

Political youth movements used to be autonomous funded on the basis of the decree of January 20, 2012 on the renewed youth and children's rights policy ([decreet houdende een vernieuwd jeugd- en kinderrechtenbeleid](#)). From 2017 on political youth movements are however no longer eligible for funding on the basis of this decree, but they can be still recognised on the basis of the decree ([Subsidiëring politieke jongerenbeweging vervalt in 2017](#)). Political youth movements that are currently funded under the decree, are recognised by January 1, 2017. They continue to be recognised as long as they meet the conditions for recognition. Financial support for political youth organisations shall be placed under the party financing.

Several political youth organisations regret this decision. They argue that this decision makes the political youth organisations strongly dependent on their parent parties, which puts their independence at risk and brings the continuity of their activities under pressure.

## **6. Education and Training**

Education & Training

### **Special feature**

Competence for education in Belgium has been transferred to the communities. Only the determination of the starting and finishing ages for compulsory education and minimum requirements for diploma conferrals are still federal matters. In the Flemish Community, the Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for all stages of education and training starting from pre-primary education. Childcare is a competence of the Flemish Ministry of Wellbeing, Public Health and Family.

### **Highlights**

The Flemish Government is aware that educational policy should take regard of the highly diverse backgrounds of children and young people, their individual talents, society's different expectations and the aspirations of the labour market. The Flemish Government aims to make all children and young people stronger and give them every opportunity to develop a dynamic positive learning career. The Flemish Government try to ensure a better alignment with and transition to the labour market by strengthening the system of learning and working.

### **6.1 General context**

#### **Main trends in young people's participation in education and training**

##### **Social inequality in education**

One of the main challenges for education in Flanders is to reduce the social gap in educational outcomes. Several studies (e.g. PISA and TIMSS) show that in Flanders socioeconomic status has a large impact on school performance. Unlike other regions,

Flanders does not succeed in reducing this gap. For example, the Flemish education system is characterized by large differences in PISA scores between secondary schools as compared to other European countries. These differences are related, among other things, to differences in education and socio-economic composition of the pupil population. Research also shows that not only the socio-economic background of pupils themselves, but also those of their fellow students at school can impact their performance. The teacher and the school leadership also strongly influence school results. The gap not only occurs in terms of performance and skills, but also regarding other school career indicators (such as the probability of early school leaving).

International Comparative Research (PISA) also shows that Flanders in comparison with most other countries counts a relatively large number of repeaters. Moreover, Flanders is also at the top in terms of the proportion of pupils with special needs taught in separate schools (special education). This primarily relates to pupils with a foreign or/and disadvantaged background. Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the number of pupils in special secondary education. Repeating, reorientation (B certificate, cascade system) and referrals to special education are characteristics of the Flemish education to deal with pupils with deficits. In 2014 the "M Decree", a measure to provide inclusive education for pupils with special needs by enabling them to enrol and remain in regular education, was approved by the Flemish Parliament (see 6.6 for more information).

For more information see:

- <http://www.oecd.org/belgium/pisa-2015-belgium.htm>
- <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/programme-for-international-student-assessment-pisa>
- <http://www.pisa.ugent.be/en/pisa-in-flanders>

### **Early leaving from education and training (ELET)**

Flanders has a relatively high number of high-performing pupils in compulsory education, of whom many attain higher education degrees. Nonetheless, many pupils, especially those from a lower socio-economic and/or immigration background, experience problems of grade retention and streaming down the hierarchically organized tracking system and finally leave education unqualified.

Flanders uses two indicators on ELET, a European measure that is used to make comparisons with European countries and a Flemish indicator which is based on Flemish educational statistics and that is more reliable for the Flemish situation. The European indicator for 'early school leavers' is based on the labor force survey, which is a population survey. Based on this European indicator, Flanders is doing quite well. Numbers for early school leaving have dropped from 10% in 2006 to 6.8% in 2016, while the EU27 percentages were respectively 15.5% in 2006 and 11.5% in 2016. A percentage of 6.8% ESL is below the EU2020 goal of 10% but still above the Flemish PACT2020 goal of 4.25%. The Flemish indicator indicates only a small decline from 12.9% in the school year 2009-2010 to 11% in the school year 2014-2015.

A decline of ELET can be noticed by most social groups. However, very pronounced social differences remain. For instance, the probability of early school leaving is significantly higher

- in the Brussels Capital Region (24.5% in 2009-2010; 18.8% in 2014-2015),
- in metropolitan areas (e.g. schools in Antwerp: 24% in 2009-2010; 21.7% in 2014-2015),
- in vocational education and more specifically in part-time vocational education and special needs education (e.g. in 2014-2015: the percentage of early school leavers in general secondary education was only 2.3%, while this was respectively 14.3%, 47.2% and 53.7% in vocational education and part-time vocational education
- For pupils scoring high on the OKI-Value or Education Poverty Indicator Value (this value ranges from 0 to 4 and is calculated as the number of the following

characteristics that apply to the pupil: 1) majority of the pupils' family members that speak another language than Dutch; 2) mother has not achieved a diploma of secondary education; 3) lives in a neighbourhood with high school delay; 4) receives a school allowance),

- for pupils with school delay (and increases with every year of school delay),
- for boys (in 2014-2015: 8.4% for girls and 13.5% for boys).

A study carried out by Lavrijsen and Nicaise (2013) reveals that the level of parental education strongly influences the probability of their children obtaining a secondary qualification. Amongst children with low-educated parents, the risk of leaving school early is nearly five times higher than for children whose parents have a secondary qualification. This is more than ten times higher than for children whose parents hold a tertiary degree (Lavrijsen and Nicaise, 2013).

For more information see:

- [Rapport vroegtijdig schoolverlaten in het Vlaams secundair onderwijs 2014-1015](#) (Report on early school leaving in Flemish secondary education 2015-2015)
- <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/dashboard>

### Students' mobility

In 2015-2016, 5.325 Flemish students in tertiary education followed - by means of the Erasmus exchange program - a part of their studies or internship in another European country. This represents an increase of 4.6% compared to the previous academic year. The international mobility of students in Flanders continues to increase year after year. Since the start of the Erasmus exchange program, mobility increases annually: more than a doubling over 15 years ago (2000-2001: 2.575). On average, a student goes abroad for 4.5 months. In 2015-2016, students could also exchange for the first time with the Erasmus program outside Europe; 16 students participated.

Flemish students mainly go to France (2015-2016: 649) and Spain (2015-2016: 643) to study, followed by Germany (2015-2016: 365), Italy (2015-2016: 255) and the United Kingdom (in 2014-2015: 234). For internships, a choice is usually made for a neighbouring country like the Netherlands (2015-2016: 240), followed by Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Germany.

On average, each year 4.000 students from abroad arrive on Erasmus exchange in Flanders. 54 students from countries outside Europe came through Erasmus on exchanges to Flanders.

For more information, see:

- <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/recordaantal-vlaamse-studenten-op-erasmus-internationale-studentenmobiliteit-blijft-populair>

### Regular national surveys on young people's participation in education and training

The Department of Education and Training itself has a long tradition in (international) research and knowledge policy. On the one hand, it involves coordinating, setting up and financing research (see studies above). In addition, the Department of Education and Training also focuses on the disclosure, analysis and interpretation of available administrative data.

Since July 1, 2016, policy-oriented education research identifies 4 pillars:

- [Steunpunt Onderwijs Onderzoek](#) – SONO (Support Centre for Educational Research). SONO is an interuniversity and interdisciplinary consortium of Flemish researchers. During their 1st cycle (2016-2020) SONO focuses on 3 thematic research lines:
  - The learner:

- Student career pathways, including research on early school leaving, truancy, equal education opportunities, ...
- The transition between educational levels and the mechanisms involved
  - The teacher and the school as an organization
  - The organization of education
- [Steunpunt voor Peilingen en Toetsontwikkeling](#) (Policy research centre for test development and assessments). Primary goal of these assessments is to determine to what extent Flemish pupils reach final objectives or developmental aims at the end of particular educational levels.
- [International comparative studies](#) (e.g. PISA, ICCS, PIRLS, ...)
- Construction and monitoring of indicators

Based on administrative data, the Department on Education and Training publishes on a yearly basis:

- [Statistical yearbook](#) of Flemish education (number of students in all educational levels, number of teachers, ....)
- Statistics on the [student characteristics](#) used in the context of equal opportunities policy: home language, mother's level of education, neighbourhood indicator, school allowance
- A report on [early school leaving](#)
- Statistics on [problematic absences and disciplinary measures](#)

### Organisation of the education and training system

Competence for education in Belgium has been transferred to the communities. Only the determination of the starting and finishing ages for compulsory education, minimum requirements for diploma conferrals and the pension system are remaining federal matters.

Education is **compulsory from 6 until 18 years old**. Compulsory education ends at the eighteenth birthday or on June 30 of the calendar year in which one reaches the age of 18. If a pupil stops going to school on his 18th anniversary and does not finish the current school year, he does not have the right to a certificate or diploma which is awarded upon completing the course. For young people who obtain a diploma of secondary education before the age of 18, compulsory education stops at that moment.

A pupil has to comply with compulsory education until the age of fifteen or sixteen. Afterwards only part-time compulsory education is applicable (which is a combination of part-time learning and working). However, most young people continue to attend full-time secondary education.

### Main organization of formal education for young people

#### ISCED 3 – upper secondary education

Fulltime secondary education contains three stages in Flanders. ISCED 3 refers to stages 2 and 3. Each stage consists of two grades. After 2 comprehensive years, pupils make a choice of study at the start of the second stage. From the second stage onwards four different types of education are offered. In Flanders a pupil chooses a course of study within one of the following types of education:

1. **General secondary education** (gse), which focuses on broad general education. It does not prepare pupils for a specific profession, but rather lays a firm foundation for higher education.
2. In **technical secondary education** (tse) attention goes in particular to general and technical-theoretical subjects. After tse a young person may practice a profession or transfer to higher education. This type of education also contains practical training.

3. **Secondary education in the arts** combines a broad general education with an active practice of art. After secondary education in the arts one may practice a profession or transfer to higher education.
4. **Vocational secondary education** (vse) is a practically-oriented type of education in which the pupil receives general education but where the focus primarily lies on learning a specific profession.

Besides mainstream education, special needs secondary education is available. Special needs education (*buitengewoon onderwijs*) is organized for pupils who need **temporary or permanent specific support** because of a physical or mental disability, serious behavioural or emotional problems or severe learning disabilities. On 12 March 2014 the Flemish Parliament approved a parliamentary act on measures for pupils with specific needs (**M decree**, see 6.6 for more information) which aims to make education more inclusive. The decree contains measures which allow pupils with specific educational needs to participate fully, effectively and on equal terms in regular schools and classrooms.

When a pupil is 16 years old or (s)he is 15 and has completed the first 2 years of full-time education (passed or not) (s)he may enter a system of alternating learning and working. All pupils in part-time education are obliged to combine learning and working for at least 28 hours a week. There exist 3 pathways of combining

- Part-time vocational secondary education: pupils follow courses during two days a week in a Centre for Part-time Education. Based on a screening, the workplace learning section can be a real work experience or for those who are not yet ready to work in a regular economic circuit a preparatory pathway or a bridging project with a recognized promotor or with a personal development pathway in a Centre for Part-time Training
- a centre for apprenticeships (in Flanders organised in SYNTRA training centre): pupils follow one day a week a theoretical training in a SYNTRA training centre and four days of practical training in a company or with a self-employed person
- Very vulnerable young people in problematic situations can follow a personal development trajectory (POT) in a center for part-time training. In a POT both the teaching and the work part can be replaced.

The systems of learning and working will be reformed to a system of dual learning ([see section 6.10 for more information](#)).

#### ISCED 4 – post secondary non-tertiary education

In technical secondary education and secondary education in the arts, labour market oriented programmes can be organised after the second grade of the third stage. Since 2009-2010 these programmes are grouped under the heading of **Secondary-after-Secondary** (*Secundair-na-secundair*, Se-n-Se). Se-n-Se programmes last one to three semesters and are organised by schools of secondary education. After successfully completing a Se-n-Se programme a pupil is granted a certificate.

Entrepreneurship education organized by a SYNTRA training centre is also considered ISCED 4 (see also chapter 3).

People of at least 18 years old and youngsters which have completed compulsory education may enrol in adult education and may obtain a recognized diploma, qualification or certificate in adult education. Participants may choose between a generic training on the level of gse (formerly known as second chance education) and a diploma specific training.

#### ISCED 5 – Short-cycle tertiary education

On 1 September 2009 higher vocational education (*Hoger Beroepsonderwijs* - HBO5) was introduced in the Flemish educational system. HBO5 programmes are professionally oriented programmes situated in between secondary education and professionally oriented bachelor programmes. Participants follow this education in adult education,

except for nursing which is followed in full-time secondary education. These are all organised together with higher education schools.

#### ISCED 6: Bachelor's or equivalent level

Bachelor programmes in Flanders may both be professionally as academically oriented. **Professionally oriented** bachelor programmes are primarily aimed at practicing a profession and offer a direct access to the labour market. **Academically oriented** bachelor programmes focus on a broad academic education or an education in the arts. They aim at offering access to a master programme or to the labour market.

#### ISCED 7: Master's or equivalent level

Master programmes focus on advanced scientific or artistic knowledge or competences which are needed for the independent practice of science or arts, or for practicing a profession.

#### ISCED 8: Doctoral or equivalent level

A doctorate may be obtained after original scientific research and the public presentation and defence of the doctoral thesis. Only the universities may award the degree of doctorate in Flanders.

Doctoral schools stimulate and support doctoral studies. They organise courses tailored to the requirements of doctoral students, train researchers in general skills and monitor the employment market.

More information on the different stages of education can be found on [Eurydice](#).

### **Adult education**

Adult education is unrelated to the initial educational career. Course participants may obtain a recognized diploma, qualification or certificate in adult education. Adults of at least 18 years old and youngsters which have completed compulsory education may enrol in adult education.

For further information, please consult the following pages of Eurydice:

- introduction articles of [Organisation and Governance](#) and of each educational level: [Secondary Education and Post-Secondary Non Tertiary Education](#), [Higher Education](#) and [Adult Education and Training](#).

### **Main concepts**

**Early Leaving from education and training**, in Flanders called 'Early school leaving':

At EU level, early leavers from education and training are defined as 18-24 year-olds with only lower secondary education or less who are no longer in education or training (EAK-indicator).

The percentages measured with the EAK-indicator can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/dashboard>

Besides the Eurostat definition of early leavers, the Flemish Community of Belgium also uses an indicator on 'school leavers': students leaving education in a given year without upper secondary qualification. The criteria for qualification are:

- a secondary education degree. This can be:
  - a study certificate of the second year of the third grade of vocational secondary education
  - a final certificate in part-time professional secondary education
  - a certificate of a centre for apprenticeships
  - a certificate obtained in the education form 3 (OV3) of special needs secondary education

- a certificate obtained in the modular system of the (part-time) vocational education or special needs education (OV3).

### **Attainment targets**

Attainment targets are minimum goals which the government deems necessary and attainable for pupils in a certain level of education.

### **Pupil Guidance centres**

The pupil guidance centre or PGC is a service which is financed or subsidised by the Flemish government. Pupils, parents, teachers and school boards may turn to a pupil guidance centre with a question for guidance, information or advice.

The services of the PGC are free and can be situated within the following four domains:

- Learning and studying
- School career
- Preventive health care
- Socio-emotional development

A pupil guidance centre is a multidisciplinary organisation cooperating with other external services within their network: welfare and health institutions. Various professionals work in a PGC, such as doctors, social workers, educationists, psychologists, psychological assistants and nurses. Each team member has a couple of specific assignments, but must always cooperate with the other team members.

## **6.2 Administration and governance**

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

There are a number of federal competences which confine Education and Training Policy. The most important of these are the regulation of access to certain professions, employee statuses that apply to on-the-job learning and paid educational leave. For a number of policy options, including truancy policy and monitoring school attendance, cooperation is required with Federal Government services such as justice, the policy and the other communities.

There is also cooperation with several other Flemish policy areas with protocol agreements being concluded between the competent ministers, including:

- the Minister for Work for the implementation of the qualification structure and competence agenda,
- the policy area Welfare, Public Health and Family for the medical examinations in the pupil guidance centres,
- the policy area of Culture, Youth, and Media (CJM), in relation to Arts and Cultural Education, Previously Acquired Competences and broad school. ACCE, the Official Coordination Culture Education and the CANON Culture Cell shall actively network from a shared policy vision and sensitize in both sectors and at various policy levels,
- the policy area Mobility and Public Works for public transport of pupils with De Lijn,
- Child and Family for before and after-school childcare and encouraging infant participation in nursery education.

### **Governance**

#### **Main structure**

Since 1989, the Flemish Community has been in charge of matters of education and is therefore responsible for the administration of education in its language area, although there are still a number of federal competences. For example the beginning and end of compulsory education, the subdivision into different levels of education, teachers' pensions, language supervision in the schools located in Brussels and the peripheral and language boundary municipalities and the funding of foreign university students.

Within the Flemish Government, the Minister for Education is responsible for nearly all aspects of the education policy from nursery to university education. Only the pensions of the educational staff, the fixing of compulsory education and the minimum diploma requirements are a federal Belgian matter. In this section we only report the policy (sub)domains which relate to the education and training of young people. Information on education and training of children and adults and on the teacher staff can be found on the [Eurydice](#) pages.

**Policy domain** The Policy domain Education and Training ([www.onderwijs.vlaanderen.be](http://www.onderwijs.vlaanderen.be)) comprises:

- **the Flemish Minister for Education** who enters into strategic consultation with leading officials in the **Governing Council**
  - On 25 July 2014 a new Flemish Government took office for a five year administrative period (2014-2019). Ms Hilde Crevits was appointed Flemish Minister of Education. As Minister of Education she is responsible for the policy areas of education and training
- 5 autonomous organisations who, together, form **the Flemish education administration**
  - the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, consisting of:
    - **Department of Education and Training (Departement van Onderwijs en Vorming)**, headed by the Secretary-General, in charge of policy support and development;
    - And **3 agencies and the Inspectorate**, each in charge of policy implementation, headed by an Administrator-General in an Agency and an Inspector-General at the Inspectorate:
      - **AgODi (Agency for Educational Services)** is responsible for the implementation of the education policy of primary and secondary education, the centres for part-time education, part-time art education, the centres for student counselling and the inspection and pedagogical guidance.
      - **AHOVOKS (Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances)**, which looks after the staff, the institutions and the students and course participants following higher education or Adult Education; the development of end goals and qualifications, in close cooperation with stakeholders in the field of education and labour market partners and services to citizens (e.g. study allowances).
      - **AGION (Agency for School Infrastructure)**, responsible for subsidizing the purchase, the construction and the renovation of school buildings.
      - **The Inspectorate** who monitors the quality of education by means of full-inspections. In addition to the screening of schools, centres and academies, the Inspectorate performs the following assignments: they give advice on the accreditation of new institutions, they control institutions and tasks regarding controlling, advice and research regarding the quality of education. ([more information can be found in Eurydice 11.1.1](#))
- the **VLOR** (Flemish Education Council) which functions as a strategic advisory council (see Eurydice for more information). All preliminary draft decrees should be submitted for the formal opinion of VLOR. They are usually also submitted to the Council of State (for a legal opinion) and to SERV, the Socio-Economic Council of Flanders (for socio-economic advice focusing on the link between education and the labour market and lifelong and lifewide learning).

The **Department of Education and Training** comprises the following services and divisions:

- The **Staff Services Education and Training** contribute to the coordination of the Education and Training policy area.
- The **communication** division
- The division **strategic policy support** which, inter alia, formulates strategic policy options, prepares the contribution of the administration to the coalition agreement, the white paper and the long-range plans and guarantees that the policy letters and annual planning are in line with this; it also develops and implements the department's knowledge policy.
- The **Horizontal Policy** division takes care of policy preparation, policy evaluation and regulation of cross-level policy issues such as quality of education, infrastructure, equal opportunities, diversity,...
- The **personnel policy** division
- The division **elementary and part-time artistic education**
- The division institutions and pupils in **secondary education and pupil guidance**
- The division **higher education and adult education**

## Policy

At the beginning of a new legislative term the Flemish Minister of Education formulates the key objectives for education in a policy paper, which is presented to the Flemish Parliament.

On 24 October 2014 the Flemish Parliament took note of Ms Crevits' ['Policy Paper on Education 2014-2019'](#), which contains the following strategic goals:

- To fully develop all talents of every pupil and student
- To guarantee sufficient, professional and motivated educational staff
- To strengthen educational institutions
- To develop a master plan on the construction of school buildings
- To realise top quality

## Organising bodies

The organising body (a government, natural or legal person) is considered by the law (the law of 29 May 1959, art. 2) to be the person/entity who takes the initiative to set up the school and is responsible for its organization. It chooses the level of education, branch of education, the courses of study offered, the venues, the maximum capacity and whether the school infrastructure will be purchased or leased. It is also in charge of preparing the pedagogical project of the school, school development plan, continuing education plan, school regulations, awarding *diploma's* (degrees) and *getuigschriften* (certificates), and choice of pedagogical counselling services. Its freedom concerning teaching methods and educational concept is guaranteed by law. On the condition that a minimum timetable is respected and the curriculum is approved, the school may either be financed or subsidised. The organising bodies are responsible for the recruitment and appointment of staff and receive financial resources from the government. The administrative function of the organising body is usually shared or to a large extent exercised by the School Head. Organising bodies are also called 'education providers'.

## The educational networks

An educational network is a representative association of organising bodies which often takes over some of the responsibilities of the organising bodies. For example, they draw up their own curriculum and timetables. This means that the concerned organising bodies surrender some of their autonomy to the networks.

According to legal statute, we distinguish:

- **official schools** set up by public administrations (community, provinces, cities, municipalities or other statutory bodies);
- **subsidised private schools** set up by a natural person or an entity governed by private law.

According to the type of financial resources, we distinguish between financing and subsidising by the State:

- **GO! Education of the Flemish Community** which is directly and fully **funded** by the Flemish Community;
- **Subsidised education** which receives subsidies from the Flemish Community (salary allowances, operational and equipment allowances and allowances for buildings) provided it complies with the programme and rationalisation standards and certain accreditation criteria.

According to the type of philosophy-of-life education, we distinguish:

- **Denominational schools** which offer religion-based education (Catholic education, Protestant education, Jewish education);
- **Neutral schools** which by means of a subject philosophy-of-life education offer the choice between classes in one of the official religions or non-confessional ethics;
- **Non-denominational schools** which only teach non-confessional ethics;
- **Alternative schools** which vary according to their pedagogical project.

The combination of both criteria leads us to a threefold division, linked to the concept of "**educational network**":

- **GO!**, is publicly run education organised by the public body called 'het GO! onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap' acting under the authority of the Flemish Community. Under the constitution, this GO! education is required to be neutral.
- **Subsidised private education** (catholic education, protestant education, Jewish education, non-confessional education, independent method schools) consists for the largest part of subsidized private Catholic education.
- **Subsidised official education** is organized by cities, municipalities and provinces, intermunicipal companies,...

For more detailed information see Eurydice, [section 2.2.7](#).

## **6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)**

### **National strategy**

in January 2009, Pact2020 was signed. This pact aims, among others, at decreasing the number of early leavers in the Flemish Community of Belgium to the regional 2020 target. In order to attain this objective, a comprehensive strategy has been developed in the '[Flemish Concept Note on Early School Leaving](#)'. This concept note included 52 actions.

The action plan is launched in 2013 and includes:

- Actions that map the issues (monitoring and identification)
- Coordinating actions (cooperation across the different policy areas (horizontal cooperation) and between the federal, regional, local and school level (vertical cooperation))
- Preventive actions (that focus on e.g. care, study and career choice, well-being, flexible learning paths)
- Actions for intervention as soon as a student threatens to abandon student education
- Compensatory actions for young people who fail to qualify

The action plan focuses strongly on preventive actions. Some important elements are:

- Supporting the development of flexible learning pathways in secondary education (good practice, support to schools)
- Opening further transitional pathways (for students from special education and from the alternate training system)
- Prioritising early leaving in-service training for school heads and staff;
- Collecting and spreading good practice on coaching

- Making data collection available at school level and enhancing school capacity to analyse them and draft their early leaving school policy. During the screening process, the inspectorate will examine the effectiveness of the actions implemented to prevent early leaving
- Developing a local basic agreement to fight against early leaving between various actors (schools, Pupil Guidance Centres, Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency, companies, etc.)
- Strengthening the relation to the work component (in the alternate training system, in vocational secondary education with compulsory internships, etc.)
- Further developing and facilitating qualifying profession-oriented pathways for adults

Flemish policy is translated into the specific local context. This will involve all relevant local partners concerned with wellbeing, youth assistance, work, police or justice. Since September 2016 there are 6 networks working together against school dropout in Flanders, one for each province and one for the Brussels-Capital Region.

### **Formal education: main policy measures on ELET**

#### **Monitoring and identification early school leaving**

Early school leaving is in Flanders, as in many other countries and regions, high on the policy agenda. In a yearly report 'Early School leaving school in Flemish secondary education', the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training reports on early school leaving based on their own administrative data. These reports cover the most recent consecutive school years for which figures are available, especially from 2009-2010 to 2014-2015. These reports report:

- The global Flemish figures
- Detailed figures of early school leaving according to student characteristics, such as sex, age, nationality, education and social-economic home situation
- Some key figures per province, for Flemish city centres and for Flemish education in the Brussels-Capital Region

Since the school year 2014-2015, the Department of Education and Training also calculates the following statistics of early school leavers:

- Objectives for Flanders at work.be: [Unqualified school-leavers](#) (choose indicator 'unqualified school-leavers')
- Statistics on [Flemish level](#)
- Statistics on [city- and municipal level](#)
- Statistics on [regional level](#) (for the website of Statistics Belgium)
- School specific statistics on [Mijn Onderwijs](#) (My Education)

European comparative information can be found in the Eurydice and Cedefop Report '[Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe](#)'

#### **Attention points in Flemish policy against school dropout**

In order to avoid early school leaving, the Department of Education and Education focuses on two mechanisms: repulsion and attraction. Problems often pile up before deciding to stop school and these two mechanisms play an important role in the decision to stop.

Elements that make the student feel unrelated to the school or a difficult school career can cause repulsion. These can be attributes to the education system, or external features. The Flemish policy regarding the prevention of ELET, focuses on both.

Features of the education system are:

- School fatigue
- Incorrect study choice
- Repeating
- Truancy

- Learning disabilities
- Language delay

External Features:

- Problematic home and family situation
- Mental health problems
- Relationship with rules and obligations in the youth culture
- Living together in a group

And on the other side, there is the attraction of the labor market, especially when youth unemployment is low. The Policy Research Centre for Study and School Careers conducted extensive research on this. Their study shows that there is a worrying relationship between youth unemployment and the number of early school leavers: the lower the youth unemployment, the higher the number of early school leavers. ([Lamote, Van Landeghem, 2013, et al.](#))

Compared to other European countries, the number of early school leavers in Flanders is still relatively low. Two characteristics of the Flemish school system contribute to this:

- Compulsory education up to 18 years
- A highly developed vocational education

On the other hand, the Flemish education system also provides a nutritional basis for ELET:

- Letting a student repeat his or her year is too often considered the best solution to remedy students with learning difficulties.
- Schools stick too closely to a year-class system, which sometimes inhibits them to make learning paths more flexible.

Prevention actions are based on these insights and foci. Some examples are:

### **Actions against absenteeism and truancy**

Since 2013-2014, absenteeism is registered on a daily basis (via DISCIMUS) for all students in primary and secondary education based on a unique identification record for each student registered in a Flemish school so that their progression can be tracked. The Educational Agency (AgODi) checks whether the regulations regarding compulsory education and attendance are respected.

The Flemish government also has developed a number of [guidelines to tackle truancy](#).

### **Differentiation through flexible learning pathways**

Flexible learning paths provide flexibility in what, how, when, where and with whom students learn within the common curriculum. The goal is to provide as many students as possible with a chance to qualify.

Three forms of differentiation are distinguished.

#### 1. Internal differentiation

The teacher differentiates between students of the same age within a particular grade. Examples are: flexible learning contents, individual learning lines with emphasis on independent work

#### 2. Structural forms of external differentiation

Structural forms of external differentiation are flexible learning paths that transcend the year-class system. The school takes into account differences between pupils by grouping them differently. Examples are: multi-age classes, class or grade-crossing level groups, modularization, flexible timetables, structurally built-in hours for remediation, broadening and deepening, co-teaching, ...

### 3. Practices for specific target groups

With practice for specific audiences, teachers and schools differ only for certain groups of students. Examples are: specific actions for specific target groups; extra remediation, deepening or widening, flexibility in study time,...

The Department of Education and training has bundled some examples on [flexible learning pathways](#).

#### **Educational career and learning guidance**

Various websites and tools provide tailor-made information for young people, parents, education professionals and their partners to support the study choice.

The Department of Education and Training also developed the website [Onderwijskiezer](#). On this website students (and their parents) can find detailed information on disciplines and schools. In addition, the website offers some tests to help young people in their search for a thoughtful study choice that best fits their interests, competences and motivation. The tests measure the interest, study attitude and study method.

Young people who have not (yet) obtained their secondary education diploma will find all possible learning paths for the diploma on the page '[No diploma of secondary education, what now?](#)'.

#### **Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

##### **Time-out projects**

Time-out projects are intended to temporarily retrieve young people from secondary education so that they can return after a while. They focus on pupils between twelve and eighteen years against whom the school is considering or already started a disciplinary procedure. The school or the CLB must demonstrate that the school-intensive interventions are maximized and that the possibilities are exhausted.

Time-out projects have a diverse program. Group-oriented training focuses on social skills, personality and general knowledge, and includes group-oriented consultation. Individual-oriented training includes conversations between the student and the school actors, parents or educators.

During the program all opportunities are used so that the student can have a successful school career. Wherever possible, the school provides school-oriented learning content, and participation in learning moments at school (e.g. classes) and outside the school (e.g. internships) is strongly encouraged. An exam preparation or tests can also be on the program. There is also an intensive joint and individual consultation with all actors.

##### **Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

The action plan for early school leaving requires cooperation between the Departments of Education and Training; Work and Social Economy; Welfare, Public Health and Family; as well as with the Flemish Employment Services and Vocational Training Agency, the Agency for Quality in Education and Training, the Agency for Educational Communication, the Entrepreneurial Training Centre, the Pupil Guidance Centre, social partners, etc.

A thematic working group was established for the development of the action plan in which many stakeholders were involved. Moreover, a cross-sector steering group meets at least once a year to implement the action plan. Both groups are also involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the actions.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are a legal obligation. They involve professionals such as school heads, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists and social workers. With the rollout on 1 September 2016 of the concept nota, 1 VTE was recruited per province and for the Brussels-Capital Region. These network coordinators

mobilize the various local actors from education, well-being and work in an existing or new network.

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

### **Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

In Flanders the term 'EVC' (Erkennen van Verworven Competenties – Recognition of Acquired Competences or RAC) is used to refer to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Validation is possible in institutions for higher education and adult education, in the field of work, socio-cultural sector, youth sector and sports sector.

Since 2011, the Department of Education and Training as well as the Department of Work and Social Economy and the Department of Culture, Youth, Media and Sports (now Department of Culture, Youth and Media) have been discussing the development of an integrated approach towards validation. In Flanders the procedures and practices of RAC vary amongst the policy domains on the basis of different regulations. In order to avoid this fragmentation, the Flemish government is developing an integrated approach towards the recognition of acquired competences. To this aim the Flemish government approved on 17 July 2015 the [concept note](#) 'Integrated policy for the recognition of competences'. The aim of this concept note is to create a single framework linking the validation process to the Flemish Qualification Structure and creating common standards and quality assurance.

The sectors of Education and Training and of Work and Social Economy are taking the lead towards an integrated approach on validation. The ministers responsible for these fields are currently working on a decree on an integrated RAC policy on the recognition of competencies. The ministers are striving for an entry into force by September 2018.

### **Procedure**

An RAC-pathway consists out of four steps:

- Identification: to become aware of and appoint competencies
- Documentation: providing information, and (evidence of) material to illustrate and visualize skills
- Assessment: the evaluation of competencies on the basis of a recognized standard
- Certification: the formal recognition of competencies, based on the results of assessment of competencies

More information on this pathway can be found on

- the Flemish website on [RAC](#)
- the [Eurydice website](#)

### **Validation**

Currently, in Flanders there are several validation strategies **in education and training**, according to the educational level ([De Rick, 2016](#)). None of these strategies was introduced recently. In the education system, validation strategies have been mainly developed in the higher education and the adult education sectors.

The arrangements set up by the **Department of Work** essentially aim at the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through the 'Certificate of Work Experience' ('Ervaringsbewijs') created by a decree approved on 30 April 2004. In short, people can receive a certificate of work experience if they demonstrate that they have acquired the skills needed to perform an occupation. Professional competence profiles are translated into standards by the SERV (Flanders' Social and Economic Committee) and the social partners. These standards are used in a test situation to assess whether people dispose of the required competences.

Within the **cultural, youth and sports sector**, and more specifically within youth work, consultation and (healthy) debate long prevailed. However, several instruments have

been developed over the past years to make competences visible. Overall though, certificates issued to participants in these types of learning or training activities are in general known as “certificates of participation”, which are mainly based on self-assessment practices rather than on institutional or formal assessments, except for the – formal – procedures and diplomas within the Flemish School for sports coaches (in Dutch: Vlaamse trainerschool (VTS)). In the cultural and youth sectors the focus is for the moment only on validation in the sense of ‘identification’ and ‘documentation’ and less so on ‘assessment’ and ‘certification’. Several instruments exist in these sectors to ‘make competences visible’, e.g.:

- Socius, the support service for social and cultural adult education, is an autonomous body with the objective of strengthening the social and cultural sector. One of its stated aims is to ensure that social and cultural organisations play an important role in lifelong learning. In 2008, the Support Centre for Youth together with Socius developed the tool **Oscar** ([www.oscaronline.be](http://www.oscaronline.be)) which was presented to the public in November 2009. Oscar can be used as a portfolio to bring together experience from informal and non-formal learning environments. In this regard, a learning certificate is a competence document with no assessment of the obtained competences. Validation is not a vital part of the tool, nor does it need to be linked with formal professional qualifications. However, since 2015, the use of the tool is not supported anymore.
- Based on the concern that a higher degree of formalisation could undermine the voluntary nature of activity, there is no strong support in the **youth sector** in developing formal qualifications for voluntary youth workers.
  - JES (a city centre for children and young people in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent) developed the **C-Stick** for (low skilled) young people. C-Stick, is a digital portfolio with a personal development plan, a screening and scaling tool and a job application tool. C-Stick also includes a set of techniques for the identification of competences and competence development, with the core elements: observation of competences, feedback, group dynamics, peer learning and experiential learning.
  - The City of Antwerp worked out **ComPas**, the Competence Passport. Schools or organizations accredited with the ComPas label can give a ComPas certificate to young people who followed their course and gained the competencies.
- Since October 2015, there is a specific legal agreement with regard to the attestation of training courses for **youth workers**, delivered by the Department of Culture, Youth, and Media (Youth). The validation of competences acquired through courses including apprenticeships, based on competence profiles, leads to the award of certificates. This new system is due to be evaluated by the end of 2018.

### Information and guidance

So far, little information activities have been implemented in Flanders. Awareness-raising activities are undertaken independently by the respective governmental departments and/or by validation actors. However, in time a large, coordinated awareness-raising campaign will be needed to inform the public about validation. In the meantime, All information regarding validation has been made available to the public via the website [www.erkennenvancompetenties.be](http://www.erkennenvancompetenties.be). In addition, intermediate organisations which are closely related to the target groups could function as information centres.

### Quality assurance

The quality control at EVC is currently part of the existing quality control systems in the various policy areas. However, EVC is rarely explicitly investigated in all its aspects (EVC procedure, EVC standard, EVC instruments, personnel). In addition, the quality of EVC practice is variable and the EVC expertise in the field is limited.

At the moment, different recognized organizations can judge and officially acknowledge competencies. The following EVC providers can provide a formal proof of acquired competencies:

- The Examination Board of Secondary Education Adult Education (for Diploma or certificate of secondary education and exemptions for adult education)
- Higher education (for the diploma of bachelor and master)
- NARIC-Vlaanderen (recognition of foreign study certificate)
- "Cel become teacher" (cel wordt leerkracht) (recognition of useful experiences for teachers)
- Test centres experience certificate (experience certificates)
- VDAB (Flemisch Public Employment Service) (certificate of education or training; entrance ticket for a function at the Flemish government)
- Syntra (certificate or diploma)
- SELOR (Entry card for a job at the federal government; currently this card is only available for penitentiary security officers)
- Flemish Training school (VTS qualification: applicants who have successfully gone through the validation procedure can obtain either an exemption for a course or training programme or a full exemption which means that a proof of competences equal to a VTS qualification is awarded)

## **6.5 Cross-border learning mobility**

### **Policy framework**

As described in [Eurydice](#), Flanders has participated very actively in the European programmes (such as Comenius, Erasmus and Leonardo Da Vinci) right from the start. In multilateral cooperation (Unesco, the Council of Europe and the OECD), Flanders opts mainly for projects that tie in with Flemish education policy or where Flanders is able to make a structural contribution.

The European Union has set the target that by 2020, 1 out of 5 students from higher education gained a foreign experience. The Flemish government even wants to go further, as stipulated in the action plan "[Brains on the move](#)". By 2020, at least 1 in 3 graduates from higher education must have followed part of their education or internship abroad, both inside and outside Europe. To this end, the Flemish government will provide the necessary grants, with extra attention for students from under-represented groups. These are students with a disability, scholarship students, immigrants, work students and students from cultural-ethnic minorities with a migration background.

### **Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education**

#### **Programmes for pupils in secondary education**

- **eTwinning**: Through eTwinning, schools can set up online projects in collaboration with schools in Europe. The use of eTwinning - the online community for schools in Europe - is free and low-threshold. An eTwinning project can be performed by teachers, teacher teams, directors, librarians, ICT coordinators and also by pupils
- **Erasmus+, Individual learning mobility** (Epos-Vlaanderen): Pupils who follow initial vocational education, such as technical and vocational education, can go abroad individually or in groups for 2 weeks to 12 months abroad.
- **Neighbour classes** (Epos-Vlaanderen) is a simple grant program that allows class exchanges between 2 schools: 1 Belgian class and 1 class from a neighbouring country of Belgium. Schools in primary and secondary education of all levels and forms (including special needs education) can participate. Central to the projects are class exchanges, but these may not be the only project activities.
- **With Erasmus in Schools** (esnbelgium) a school can invite an Erasmus student to class for one or more hours. In this way, students acquire knowledge of cultural diversity and international mobility.

- The Prince Philip Fund provides financial support for language-crossing exchange projects in Belgium that promote cooperation between schools, colleges and universities.

An overview of current partnerships in Comenius, Leonardo Da Vinci and Grundtvig can be found on the [EPOS website](#).

When they have reached the age of 15, pupils can also study abroad for a few months or a year on their own initiative. To go abroad during secondary education there are 2 ways: through a mediation organization (AFS, Easy languages, EF, UWC, YFU, WEP) or the student arranges everything himself.

See also: <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/de-grens-over-met-je-klas>

The action plan "[Brains on the Move](#)" contains a wide range of initiatives that contribute to the further development of an international high-quality higher education in Flanders. The emphasis is on student mobility. The action plan contains not only measures for Flemish students who go abroad, it also creates opportunities for attracting foreign students.

#### Erasmus Program

The European Commission's **Erasmus program** is the most prominent. Institutions in higher education (or a consortium of institutions) can apply for EPOS for mobility of staff and students (including graduates) within Europe. This allows students to study, work internship or gain work experience at a company or educational institution in another European country. During the academic year 2015-2016, 5.325 Flemish students in tertiary education followed - by means of the Erasmus exchange program - a part of their studies or internship in another European country.

Mobility outside Europe is also possible within **Erasmus +** through cooperation with international partner countries, also known as International Credit Mobility). Institutions in higher education (or a consortium of institutions) can submit an application to EPOS. Through this action, students and staff from one of these partner countries can also come to a European Higher Education Institution.

By means of the **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees** a joint international master program can be offered by a consortium of at least three European higher education institutions. There are scholarships for outstanding students from all over the world. Teachers give on-class lessons, training and doing research.

#### Other programs

The Flemish Department of Education & Training finances, within the framework of the Mobility Action Plan, also the following scholarship programs:

- **Priority Country Programme:** This program replaces (since 2017-2018) the former Transition Fellowship Program and promotes student exchange between Flanders and a number of priority countries, namely Brazil, Chile, Japan, Morocco, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, the United States of America and South Africa. Under the Priority Country program, both an exchange of two students in a framework of a duo project is possible, as single outgoing mobility from Flanders
- **ASEM-DUO:** The purpose of this program is to promote student exchange between Flanders and 4 countries in Asia, namely China, India, Vietnam and South Korea. Under ASEM-DUO, only two student exchanges in a framework of a duo project are possible. This can be done for one-semester mobility (with renewal of up to 1 year, where the grant amount is limited to 1 semester).
- **The Washington Centre:** The Washington Centre is an independent, nonprofit organization offering internships and academic seminars to students from Flemish universities and colleges. The Department of Education and Training makes 12 scholarships of € 7,500, - available to Flemish students who want to do an

internships during one semester in international organizations or companies in Washington.

- **Generic scholarships:** The Flemish government allocates generic scholarships for mobility outside of Europe to students in tertiary education (ISCED 5,6 and 7). The program aims to stimulate mobility complementary to the possibilities within the Erasmus + program. Mobility of minimum 1 month and maximum 12 months refers to study, internship or research in the context of a final work. The selection of the students takes place within the institution of higher education. The funding program is managed and supported by the Flemish Universities and Higher Education Council in cooperation with the Department of Education and Training.
- **Erasmus Belgica** - a collaboration project between the Communities of Belgium: This is a cooperation project between the three Communities of Belgium to enhance the mobility of higher-education students and to give them the opportunity to follow part of their programme at a university or university college in another Community. The programme follows the same principles as the European Erasmus programme.

More information on these programs can be found on the website "[Studeer in het buitenland](#)".

### Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

Where EPOS vzw is the Flemish National Agency that implements Erasmus+ for education and training in Flanders, [JINT](#) vzw, founded in 1989 by the Flemish government, does this for the youth section "[Youth in Action](#)". JINT vzw is financed by two institutions:

- The Department of Youth within the Agency for Socio-Cultural Work of the Flemish Authorities
- The Youth Programme Unit of the Directorate-General of Education and Culture of the European Commission

For **young people and the youth sector (non-formal learning)** the programme sets out the following objectives:

- To improve young people's competences and skills, especially for young people with fewer opportunities, and to promote their active participation in society and the labour market.
- To improve the quality of youth work.
- To support and strengthen youth policy at local, regional and national level and to support the recognition of non-formal learning.
- To increase the international dimension in youth activities and in the work of youth organisations and youth workers.

Approximately 6000 young people, youth workers and policy makers, participate in **JINT activities** each year:

- 1800 young people between 15 and 25 participate in international exchange projects
- Over 25% of these young people come from groups with fewer opportunities.
- 3000 young people contact JINT for information about international exchanges or cooperation
- 600 youth workers participate in international training initiatives in Flanders or abroad.
- 300 young people and youth workers join youth policy debates and information sessions

### Quality assurance

**NARIC-Flanders** is responsible for the recognition of foreign diploma's in higher education (academic recognition), higher vocational education, adult education and secondary education, as well as for professional recognition for teachers from the EEA. In addition, NARIC-Flanders issues certificates to holders of a Flemish diploma who want to go abroad to work or study.

A number of websites have been developed to help young people with their plans abroad.

The website <http://www.studeerinhetsbuitenland.be/> is developed by Flanders Knowledge Area. Flanders Knowledge Area supports, through various projects, the internationalization of Flemish higher education. On their website they provide information on e.g. the different possibilities of studying abroad, the contact persons for international mobility programs in the institutions for higher education, information on credits transfer and quality of international programs, ... . At the request of the Department of Education & Training, Flanders Knowledge Area vzw created a manual for [studying abroad](#) with several tips and tricks for students who go abroad.

<http://www.kamiel.info> is developed for young people between the ages of 16 and 30 who go abroad for a temporary, non-tourism activity. Kamiel informs young people on all practical issues when going abroad. Kamiel was launched in 2006 on the initiative of the Platform Kleurrijk Vlaanderen (Platform Colorful Flanders). Its objectives are:

- Detecting the information needs of young people
- better coordinate and improve information provision on international mobility
- collaborate around information initiatives

The Kamiel-site was realized with the support of the Flemish Government and the European Commission, Erasmus +: Youth in Action program.

The [Go Strange](#) website provides an overview of organizations that allow Flemish youth from 14 to 30 years old to go abroad They also provide information about scholarships and grants and tips to prepare the foreign adventure. Go Strange is powered by JINT vzw, the coordination body for international youth work.

Students in higher education can contact in their institution an internationalization service for general information on international mobility. The study or internship in another European country within the Erasmus+ program must meet the following conditions for students

- meet the learning objectives of the degree to be achieved;
- meet the student's personal development needs;
- be an integral part of the student's study program (only applicable to study)

## **6.6 Social inclusion through education and training**

### **Educational support**

#### ***M-decree***

For pupils with special needs, the entry into force in 2015/2016 of the Flemish 'M-decree' (**Decree on measures for pupils with special educational needs, 12.03.2014**) was a major step towards increasing inclusion in the mainstream educational system. From September 2015, every child, including those with special needs, has the right to enrol in a mainstream school, provided this is possible with reasonable adaptations. Around 180 full-time staff specialising in special education provide support to teacher teams in regular education.

The M decree indicates how Flemish schools should deal with students who cannot follow the classes in a regular school by limitation. Inclusive education is now the first option. The goal is to allow more students to run in the ordinary education school, thus referring fewer students to schools for special education.

A school sets up a care continuum and examines with the teacher(s), parents and CLB (centre for pupil guidance) what reasonable adjustments or measures a learner with special educational needs requests to be able to follow the lessons. This complies with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principle: To offer the study material in a way that is accessible to a diverse student population by varying in materials, methods and evaluation. Reasonable adjustments may include remedial measures (e.g. helping students individually), differentiating measures (e.g. variations in learning material and

lesson approaches), compensatory measures (such as allowing a laptop), and dispensing measures (allow exemptions from curriculum components). The student can:

- follow the common curriculum (if he meets the eligibility conditions for mainstream education and has a motivated report)
- follow an individually adapted curriculum (if he has a report for access to special needs education)

The M-Decree also includes collegial support by teachers and paramedics from special education and other forms of support.

Since the introduction of the M decree, more students with specific educational needs are studying in mainstream education. To accompany those students and their teachers, there is a **new support model from September 1, 2017**.

In the school year 2017-2018 a new support model for schools and centers for part-time vocational secondary education was introduced to deal with pupils with specific educational needs. Pupils who need more than basic care and increased care can now receive care in the classroom through a new support model. Partnerships between schools for general and special education, and support networks replace integrated education (GON), inclusive education (ION) and the security projects in the school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. For pupils with special educational needs, who have a motivated report or enrollment report and who attend classes in a school for regular education, the school can rely on support from a school for special education.

More information on the M-decree can be found on:

- <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/grote-lijnen-van-het-m-decreet>

The M decree also led to a number of changes in special education. Since the school year 2015-2016 there are new definitions for some types of special education. Currently the following types and forms of education exist in special needs education:

Types of education

- Type basic offer: Young people with special educational needs for whom the common curriculum with reasonable adjustments is not feasible in a school for ordinary education. This type will gradually replace Type 1 from September 2015. Students from this new type may, after a positive assessment of the school and the CLB, be able to return to normal education over time
- Type 1: For young people with a mild mental disability
- Type 2: For young people with mental disabilities
- Type 3: For young people with an emotional or behavioral disorder, but without mental disabilities
- Type 4: For young people with a motoric restriction
- Type 5: For young people in a hospital, a prevention or residential setting
- Type 6: For young people with visual impairment
- Type 7: For young people with auditory impairment or speech or language impairment
- Type 9: For young people with autism spectrum disorder, but without mental disabilities (since September 2015)

Forms of education:

- Form 1: Social participation and possibly employment in an environment with support
- Form 2: Social participation and employment in an environment with support
- Form 3: Social participation and employment in a regular working environment
- Form 4: General, Vocational, Artistic and Technical Education

## OKAN (onthaalonderwijs voor anderstaligen kinderen)

To facilitate the integration of **non-Dutch-speaking newcomers** in mainstream education, schools can be granted supplementary teaching periods/extra teacher hours – and in primary education an extra operational allowance too – within the framework of OKAN, reception education for non-Dutch-speaking newcomers.

OKAN-pupils in secondary education receive Dutch language lessons for one year. Then they get guidance in further education. In order to be admitted to OKAN, students must meet the following conditions:

- Being a newcomer (maximum one year uninterrupted stay in Belgium))
- By December 31 of the school year at least 12 years and not 18 years old
- Do not have Dutch as home language or mother tongue
- Do not properly master the language of instruction to be able to follow the classes successfully
- have been registered for a maximum of nine months in an educational institution with Dutch as an educational language

### Ill or physically weak pupils

Ill or physically weak pupils can attend education

- in hospital schools and preventoria,
- in children's and young people's psychiatric services
- via temporary or permanent education at home
- via synchronous internet education

### CLB's (Centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding - Centres for Pupil Guidance)

For **tuition, counselling and school career support**, many initiatives are taken, with the CLB's, (Centres for Pupil Guidance) playing a central role.

### Homework guidance

At the beginning of 2017 the Flemish Minister of Education Hilde Crevits granted 100.000€ to three projects on homework guidance in Gent, Ostend and Bruges. In an easily accessible way these projects support homework guidance, the development of study skills and language stimulation while offering family support at home for 400 societally vulnerable families. In this way they contribute to the prevention of and elimination of learning backlog and the empowerment of parents and they offer parenting support in the framework of the school career of the children.

## Social cohesion and equal opportunities

### Act on equal opportunities

The Act on equal opportunities (GOK-beleid) in education contains three major provisions:

- **The right to enrolment:** Each pupil has the right to enrol in the school of his/her (parents') choice, Also foreign-language newcomers and pupils with a report for access to special education. Only in a strictly limited number of cases, a school can refuse an enrolment or refer a newly enrolled pupil to another school. An independent Commission for pupils' rights can be contacted by the school or the parent to decide whether a pupil may be refused enrolment.
- **Legal protection:** Through the establishment of [local consultation platforms](#) (LOP's) and the [Commission on Pupils Rights](#), the government wants to ensure legal protection.
  - The LOP's ensure the right of enrolment, act as an intermediary in case of conflicts and co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education. Representatives of all the schools of a region and their partners all come together to make regulations. These platforms exist both for primary and secondary education

- The Commission on Pupils Rights supervises the rights of pupils..
- **Extra support for additional needs provision in schools:** This support is aimed at schools that have a rather large number of pupils who meet certain socio-economic indicators. This extra support consists of additional teaching periods or additional teaching hours per teacher.

In mainstream secondary education, this is determined on the basis of the following five indicators:

1. Student's home language
2. Received a school allowance
3. Highest level of education of the mother
4. The pupil is temporarily or permanently taken out of his own family
5. The parents belong to the migrant population

For special needs secondary education only the indicators 'pupil's home language' and 'mother's highest level of education' apply. A pupil meeting at least one out of five equal opportunities indicators is a GOK-pupil. The school may obtain extra funds for these pupils. For detailed information on regulations for equal opportunities in education: <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/gelijke-onderwijskansen>

### **Fighting discrimination Cross-curricular themes in Education**

Fighting discrimination is included in the cross-curricular themes, more specific within the context of the objectives concerning the socio-cultural society (see chapter 5.7 for more information). The cross-curricular final objectives entail an obligation of effort for the schools, not for the pupils.

### **Gender equality**

Gender in de klas (gender in class) is an initiative by RoSa czw (Kenniscentrum voor gender en feminisme) and is a website with practical tips for teachers who wish to teach and bring gender consciousness to pupils.

<http://www.rosavzw.be/genderindeklas/>

### **Anti-bullying programmes**

When a pupil is encountered with violence, bullying or sexually transgressive behavior at school, different steps can be undertaken:

- Inside the school by contacting a teacher, the direction or a coordinator or guidance.
- CLB (centrum voor leerlingenbegeleiding/ centre for pupils guidance) where different specialist work like social workers, psychologists and pedagogues.
- External organisations like 'Awel', which is a free helpline where children and young people can anonymously tell their story. This is also possible at the JAC (Jongeren AdviesCentrum) who give practical tips, advice and information. Some centres provide courses to become more assertive.

See also: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/onderwijs-en-wetenschap/op-school/pesten-op-school>

### **Fighting radicalisation**

Further actions have been implemented to counter radicalisation in accordance with the [16 January 2015 concept note on radicalisation](#) and the [2015 Action Plan 'Prevention of processes of radicalisation which may result in extremism and terrorism'](#).

Tools were developed to support primary workers that are confronted with the reality of radicalisation:

- A new edition of the newsletter 'Schooldirect' was dedicated to radicalisation. It also mentioned contact points in case of problems or questions relating to radicalisation.

This newsletter was distributed to some 14.300 subscribers amongst which are all Flemish principals of all education levels .

- The Education magazine 'Klasse' launched a first live stream session 'Klasse-live', during which teachers could (anonymously) ask questions on radicalisation to two experts (one academic and one teaching guide).
- Within the Department of Education, a central contact point was established for schools and CLB's.
- A contact point for radicalisation was also established within every school/ CLB umbrella group to have a clear line of communication for information and knowledge between the central authority and education institutions. Frequent meetings between these people has led to the establishment of expertise in support of colleagues.
- A successful call for study materials learning materials and educational sources was launched on the free online platform for teachers 'Klascement'. Teachers can source from these to inspire each other and share materials for pupils of all ages.
- A script 'Guidelines for prevention, tackling and handling radicalisation in education' was developed.

An Islam expert group has been assembled to contrive a counter argument for radical Islam. These theological adept experienced in the living environment of young people, can clarify interpretations of Islam and its norms and values for the benefit of young people, classes and primary workers. These primary workers on their part can then confidently talk with pupils and/or his or her parents. Additionally, these experts can work preventively on demand of the schools to guide class conversations on personal beliefs. Early 2016 the expert group had already answered almost a hundred of the one hundred and fifty requests.

The dialogue between ideologies has been strengthened to allow theological classes to support the dialogue between students of different beliefs. After consultation rounds between recognised institutions, educational umbrella organisation and community education representatives, 24 inter-ideological competences have been agreed upon within the framework of the common charter. A new commitment agreement has been reached between community, municipal and provincial education umbrella organisations, signed on 28 January 2016. Providers of theological classes commit to contribute to the educational project of the school. They will be able to join the school team and participate in training sessions organised by the school.

For more information, see also [Eurydice](#).

## **6.7 Skills for innovation**

### **Innovation in formal education**

#### **STEM-projects**

In Flanders, innovation in education is strongly linked to the promotion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)- disciplines. With the Lisbon Strategy (2000), the EU called for greater attention to be given to technological development and innovation in higher education. In 2010 it turned out that Flanders had not only achieved the predicted 15% growth but also surpassed it. However, the proportion of diploma's in mathematics, science and technology compared to total of full-time higher education graduates decreased from 20.5% to 19% in the same years. Therefore, various actions have been launched in Flanders with the STEM Action Plan.

In 2016, The Flemish minister of Education, Hilde Crevits subsidized [30 innovative STEM-projects](#). Pupils and their teachers in technical and vocational schools were invited to participate in rethinking the construction of qualitative and innovative school buildings (Masterplan Scholenbouw). That way, two important subjects of the legislature are brought together (STEM and school infrastructure). The selected projects, on the one hand, focused on building and equipping new schools, with attention to technical installations, energy efficiency and environmental comfort. Students worked on projects

concerning the improvement of air quality in classrooms, energy-efficient systems at school, and designed a school-based playground. On the other hand, there was also room for innovative STEM projects concerning attractive STEM education in the vocational and technical education. These projects cover a wide range of themes, ranging from the cultivation of flour worms as a central element in a food security project, the analysis of the rollercoaster of a theme park, to perfecting the barriers in the car park of the school and the firm introduction of STEM into care education.

In 2017, Flemish Minister of Education Hilde Crevits subsidized [92 innovative STEM projects](#) in Flanders on climate awareness. In these projects pupils, teachers and external partners collaborate on a project to make young people aware of the climate problem.

### **Development of Entrepreneurship Competences**

The Flemish Government launched the Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education 2015-2019 ([Actieplan Ondernemend Onderwijs 2015-2019](#)), at the end of 2015. More information on this Action Plan can be found in chapter 3.8.

Entrepreneurship has yet to be included in the curriculum. Nevertheless aspects of entrepreneurship such as creativity and sense of initiative are incorporated as cross-curriculum attainment targets in primary and secondary schools. More information on these cross-curriculum goals can be found in chapter 3.8.

### **Strengthening innovative learning environments**

In her Policy Plan on Education (2014-2019), Flemish Minister of Education Hilde Crevits emphasizes the strengthening of innovative learning environments. In Flanders, some schools have taken already the step to 1-to-1 computing, with each student having his own ICT device.

In the context of its ICT and digital media policy, the Department of Education and Training established networks of innovative schools during the school year 2013-2014. These networks consisted of at least ten schools that tried new technologies and exchanged their experiences with other schools from the network. One of the main content areas of the network was working with tablets. The schools from the Innovative Schools Network studied the preconditions, the learning potential, the stumbling blocks, etc.

### **Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

For non-formal education on **entrepreneurship** we refer to chapter 3.8.

Since 1 January 2013, the Flemish government gives subsidies to associations that set up an **experimental project** in one of the following areas:

- Youth work
- Information to or about youth and youth participation
- Cultural education

Experimental projects focus on new developments and needs that live in the youth sector and more generally in youth. They have to be innovative in terms of methodology or content. Examples of this are the startups of youth work through new methods or attracting new audiences. In 2016, The Minister of Youth subsidized 11 projects.

## **6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media**

### **National strategy**

On May 4th 2012, the Flemish Government principally approved the [media literacy concept note](#), which is a joint proposal from former minister of Media Ingrid Lieten and former minister of Education Pascal Smet. In the Concept note media literacy is defined as: 'Media literacy is the whole of knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow citizens to deal with the complex, changing and mediatised world in a conscious and critical way. It

is the ability to use media in an active and creative way, aimed at societal participation' (Lieten & Smet, 2012).

The Flemish Government has undertaken commitments in the field of media literacy in different action plans, also in the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Plan 2015-2019. However, attention to media literacy in this plan is limited.

The Flemish Knowledge Centre Media Literacy has the task of ensuring that all Flemish citizens have the necessary knowledge, insights and skills to use media in our highly mediated society. The Knowledge Centre unveils knowledge and insights about specific and diverse media themes such as cyberbullying, online privacy, gaming, ... It collaborates with different partners like the VRT and organizes a wide range of support and training initiatives for professionals and volunteers from the education, social, cultural, welfare and poverty sectors and the broad media literacy field. The Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy pays specific attention to vulnerable groups such as children and young people. An additional focus is on target groups that can and should play a facilitating role in bringing about of media literacy competencies. For young people, it concerns mainly parents, youth workers, counselors in youth care, library staff and teachers.

### **Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

Since September 2010 media literacy has been one of the cross-curricular goals for secondary education. More specific two goals have been formulated:

- Pupils are alert to media
- Pupils participate thoughtfully to the public space by means of the media

With regard to media literacy, the explanatory memorandum of these cross-curricular goals clarifies that media literacy refers to a conscious and critical attitude towards classical (television, radio, press) and new media internet applications, text messaging and the ability to an everyday, informal and creative media use that is (implicitly or explicitly) geared to participation in the cultural public sphere (readership letter, youtube, chat rooms, blogs, webcam, etc.).

The PXL college developed in collaboration with Mediawijs.be, the research group MIOS of the University of Antwerp and the Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg an [educational package about online advertising literacy](#). Teachers can use this educational package to address advertising literacy issues come into the classroom. In an interactive way, young people are encouraged to think about online advertising.

The Department Education and Training also provides information on media literacy and online safety on her website:

- <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/ict>
- <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/ict-in-de-klas#Veilig-internet-en-mediawijsheid>

### **Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning**

The media literacy field is a broad field of actors spread over different sectors and policy domains. A study of Mediawijs.be and Cemeso (VUB) identified in 2012 more than 222 actors in Flanders who focus on making children, young people and adults media literate.

The Flemish Knowledge Centre on Media literacy '[Mediawijs](#)' is the most important actor in promoting media literacy in Flanders. Mediawijs provided for 2015, 2016 and 2017 120,000 euros to collaborate on projects that work on media literacy. A wide range of information about safe and critical internet and social media can be found at the [Knowledge Centre on Media Literacy](#).

Mediawijs.be launched in 2015 '[Media coach MOOC](#)', an online learning course on media literacy. Through videos and background information, participants get to know more on various topics such as privacy, online identity and media & relationships. The Media

coach MOOC aims at teachers, youth work, library staff and other professionals interested in media literacy.

### Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

The [Veilig Online](#) – website (Save Online website) is an initiative of the Gezinsbond (Family Federation) in collaboration with Child Focus. The website provides advice to parents who suspect that their son or daughter is being cyberbullied.

The Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen (in a Multidisciplinary Cooperation between Social Work, Teacher Education, Applied Psychology and Digital Arts and Entertainment) developed a series of lessons and the [Re: Pests](#) game to tackle bullying in secondary education. Through the game, students learn to recognize and address bullying behavior.

[Villa Crossmedia](#) (<http://villacrossmedia.eu/>), a European project, wants to make young people aware of the opportunities, but also the pitfalls that accompany the use of new media. Villa Crossmedia provides young people with the opportunity to fully experiment with media, and tries to make them more media literate at the same time. Villa Crossmedia devised, together with Mediaraven, an expert in young people and media, a game to test and enhance the media literacy of young people: the Caspar game. A game targeted at young people from 12 to 26 years old, with diverse difficulty degrees. The questions and assignments in the game came about in cooperation with Sensoa (Flemish expertise centre that promotes sexual health, [www.sensoa.be](http://www.sensoa.be)). The name of the game functions as a 'mnemonic device' for items a young media maker has to think about and to take into account when producing media, and stands for CASPAR: Copyright, Audience /aim, Storytelling, Privacy and Authorship.

### Campaign "Think before you post"

Flemish Minister of Education Hilde Crevits launched in 2014 (in collaboration with Mediawijs.be, the Department of Education and Training, Canon Cultuurcel, EMSOC, the Privacy Commission, Child Focus and the SPION project) a campaign on online privacy. The campaign aimed to sensitize teachers and pupils in secondary education to the theme of online privacy in the classroom. Goal of this campaign was to provide children and young people with skills for responsible and safe use of the Internet. The campaign entailed a book (Mediawijs Online), new course material on online privacy policy, a privacy manual for teachers and the "First aid kit for privacy and social media". All secondary schools have received this information.

The website [Clicksafe](#) is an initiative of Child Focus where information about safely and responsible internet use can be found for and by children and young people. Moreover, educational material, tips and training can be found to let pupils internet safely.

The Flemish Department on Education and Training also provides information on cyber-bullying on her website: <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/cyberpesten> . On this website information is provided on different types of cyber-bullying, prevention and approach of cyber-bullying and help services and lines for victims of cyber-bullying.

Several other organisations and their websites warn for the risks posed by new media, e.g.:

- <https://www.cyberpesten.be/>
- <http://www.veiligonline.be/>
- <https://tegencyberpesten.mediawijs.be/>
- <http://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/hoe-omgaan-met-sexting>
- <https://jongerengids.be/tieners/internet>

### Reporting cyberbullying, sexual cross-border behaviour on internet

In Flanders there is no specific reporting point for cyberbullying, but young people can contact a CLB (centre for pupil guidance) or a JAC (youth advice centre) in their area, the children's and youth helpline Awel ((<http://www.awel.be>, offers a telephone line, chat functions, a forum, and mail services) or contact Teleonthaal.

They can also phone, chat or email with Child Focus. Child Focus' main focus is on sexual cross-border behaviour but in their prevention program they also work on safe internet use. On their "Click Safe" pages (<http://www.childfocus.be/nl/preventie/clicksafe-veilig-internetten>) they provide first aid assistance in case of cyberbullying and give advice to counteract cyberbullying. They inform also on issues like sexting, grooming and sextortion (<http://www.childfocus.be/nl/seksuele-uitbuiting>). Young people can contact the emergency number (116000) of Child Focus in case of cyberbullying issues

## **6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

**Jeugdmaps.be** is an online GIS tool which consists of:

- An online map for anyone to find information about youth places in Flanders and Brussels
- A web tool on which municipalities and youth work in Flanders and Brussels can log in to chart and manage their youth space themselves.

### **Awareness raising initiatives**

Despite the emphasis placed on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning at European level, responsibility for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning remains a matter for individual Member States. Flanders has already taken steps, initiated initiatives and launched pilot projects, but mainly from a strong labor market focus. Top-level authorities' efforts in raising awareness among the public about the value of non-formal and informal learning in youth work are scarce.

Since 2001, "The Day of Youth Movement" has been organized in October. That day, all youth movements come together to ask for attention for their target group, youth, and their organisation, the youth movement. All children and young people who are members of a youth movement go to school in their youth-moving clothes that day. This day is organized by the Flemish youth movements themselves.

## **6.10 Current debates and reforms**

### **Modernisation of secondary education**

In order to further develop the strong points of the system, to address possible points of improvement and to guarantee quality education for every pupil, a modernisation of secondary education in Flanders is carried out. The key ideas for this modernisation have been elaborated in three concept notes, approved by the Flemish Government in May 2016 and January 2017. The notes contain measures for pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Flanders.

In this section we describe only the aspects relating to modernization in upper secondary education. For elements regarding primary education and lower secondary education we refer to [Eurydice](#).

The study offer in the second and third stage will be made more transparent and rational. The offer is built along a matrix with three dimensions, namely 'fields of study', 'finalities' and 'types of education'. The current 29 study areas will be reduced to 8 fields of study:

1. Languages and cultures
2. STEM
3. Arts and creation
4. Agriculture and horticulture
5. Economics and organisation
6. Society and welfare
7. Sports
8. Nutrition and catering

Within these 8 fields of study the courses of study will content wise be arranged from abstract to practical. For each field of study the finality will be clearly determined: transition to higher education, entrance on the labour market or a combination of both.

The current matrix contains a study offer for fulltime general secondary education and special needs education type OV3. The study offer of the programmes in Secondary-past-Secondary and Part-time Vocational Secondary Education will be inserted at a later point in time.

On the basis of this new arrangement of the study offer various school concepts are possible. Two of them will be stimulated:

- Domain schools organise within one field of study a coherent offer of courses of study within various finalities.
- Campus schools organise within various fields of study a coherent offer of courses of study within various finalities.

The modernisation of secondary education will in the future be implemented in phases. The legislative framework is in elaboration to allow a roll-out of the modernized secondary education, grade by grade, from 1 September 2018 onwards.

On 27 October 2017, the Flemish Government in principle approved the decision with a number of measures concerning the modernization of secondary education. The decision fully maps the education structure and the education offerings (with the exception of Sen-Se and the dual-related education) and regulates the admission and transition conditions for students and the student empowerment for first grade students and the inflow into the first grade of second grade. This decision is now being negotiated with the social partners.

### **Reforms in Part-time Arts Education**

Reforms in Part-time Arts Education are described in Section 8.10.

### **Reforms in the system of part-time learning and part-time work**

In the coalition agreement of 2014, the Flemish Government raised the ambition to reform the the system of learning and working into a system of dual learning. In June 2015 the Flemish Government approved a (revised) [concept paper](#) that outlines the plan to reform the dual learning system.

Dual learning will be considered a pathway that stands alongside full-time education. Both pathways are equivalent to each other and result after successful completion in a secondary education degree. How many hours a week pupils will work in the workplace will depend on their field of study and the type of agreement.

The concept paper includes a guarantee of workplaces for every pupil that wants to do dual learning. Actors in both the policy areas of education and training and employment have committed themselves to fulfilling the workplace guarantee.

- The most important commitment from the employment point of view is that the SYNTRA will act as labor market director. They will mobilize and appeal to sectors and enterprises to become part of the dual learning system; this will increase both the quality and the quantity of workplaces.
- From the education point of view, the most important improvement is that they will rationalize the course program based on labor market analyses.

Furthermore, sectoral partnerships will be created with the educational providers, the sectoral social partners, SYNTRA Flanders and the public employment services. Through this new system, young people will be able to obtain their qualifications on the work floor in more fields of study.

During the school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 a pilot project is running in schools and SYNTRA apprenticeship centres. During the school year 2016-2017 34 schools and 5 SYNTRA centres participated in the pilot project. Since September 1, 2017,

a total of 102 schools and SYNTRA centres have started the pilot project. They each organize 1 of the 21 dual fields of study. The results of all the pilot projects will be used to finalize the concept of the dual learning system, which will subsequently be made into law.

### More information

For information on recently adopted or planned reforms and policy measures, please also consult topic [Ongoing Reforms and Policy Developments](#) on Eurydice. While Eurydice provides comprehensive and comparable information, further information may also be found on the [website of the ministry of Education and Training](#) and on <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/onderwijsbeleid-en-vernieuwing>.

## 7. Health and Well-Being

Health & Well-being

### Special Feature

Measures and initiatives to strengthen health and well-being of young people are streamlined across different policy fields and in different action plans. The implementation of the Flemish action plans is part of the Flemish health objectives formulated in the health conference of 2016. Therefore the chapter illustrates the relevant parts of action plans pertaining to young people.

### Highlights

The Flemish Government gives special attention to (organised) sporting opportunities for urban and disadvantaged youth by making use by the financial means of the Participation Decree and the Poverty Act. The Flemish Government funds non-profit organisations that encourage physical activities that have a beneficial effect on young people's health and fitness. Fitness can be interpreted more widely than only physical condition. Young people's mental health is important too. The Flemish action plans on tobacco, alcohol and drugs and on mental health focuses on youth.

### 7.1 General context

#### Main trends in the health conditions of young people

The Department of Public Health of the University of Ghent assesses the state of health of young people every four years. This [survey](#) is part of the international study Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) and carried out under the supervision of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

#### Health and psychosomatic complaints

Health is defined as 'resource for living a productive life' in the international study HBSC of WHO.

In Flanders, the majority of young people believes that they have good health according to the survey of the Department of Public Health of the University of Ghent ([Factsheet Subjectieve gezondheid](#)). More boys than girls indicate to have good health: respectively 83,2% and 75,7%. The survey also mentions that young people in vocational training and in technical secondary education are less capable in estimating their health.

With regard to health problems, young people mention to suffer from sleeping problems. More girls than boys suffer from headache, nervousness and backache. The survey revealed that the prevalence of health problems has been increased compared to 2010. However, the prevalence of medication for this complaints has been decreased.

## Physical activity and nutrition

In 2014, the Department of Public Health of the University of Ghent has examined the physical health and leisure time of young people in Flanders ([Factsheet Fysieke activiteit en Vrije tijd](#)). The results of this survey shows that the proportion of young people with enough exercise is very low and decreases as they get older.

In general, 14% of young people exercises enough, namely 60 minutes per day and seven days per week. The percentage of boys and the percentage of girls who exercise, are respectively: 17,5% and 10,5%. Adolescent boys are significantly more active than adolescent girls. There are no differences in the proportion of young people with enough exercise according to their education.

The prevalence of obesity and overweight of boys and girls is more or less equal (16,4% of the boys and 16,1% of the girls), according to the factsheet Nutrition of the Department of Public Health of the University of Ghent ([Factsheet Voeding](#)). This is an increase compared to 2010.

The proportion of 18-year-olds who does not have breakfast is 19%. Young people in vocational education have less breakfast every day than young people in other types of education. In 2014, there are significant decreases in the percentage of young people in general education that have breakfast every day. The consumption of vegetables and fruit is stagnated compared to 2010. There is also a decrease in the daily use of soft drinks.

## Substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs)

Despite recent signs of a decline in the prevalence of legal and illegal drugs, the use of alcohol and cannabis remains widespread among adolescents and young adults in contemporary European society. Many people initiate alcohol and drug use during their years as a teenager. According to a recent research report, 75.4% of the Flemish scholars (12-18 years) have drunk alcohol at least once during their lifetime.

In general, the alcohol consumption of the Flemish young people has decreased between 2010 and 2014. The proportion boys and girls that drinks beer, wine, liquor and alcopops every week, is decreased or at least stagnated. The results of the survey of the Department of Public Health of the University of Ghent mention that there are still significant differences between boys and girls ([Factsheet Alcohol](#)). More boys than girls drink beer, liquor and alcopops every week. The same survey reported that there are also differences regarding education level. Young people in technical education choose to drink beer every week, whilst young people in vocational education drink more often liquor and alcopops. Young people in general education drink less than young people in other types of education.

The Department of Public Health also studied the use of tobacco ([Factsheet Tabak](#)). The study mentions that there is a downward trend with regard to the tobacco use. Between 2002 and 2010 the proportion of young people smoking is decreased and this trend continued in 2014. Despite this downward trend, the differences in education level still exist. More young people in vocational education smoke and start smoking at an early age, according to the study. The direct vicinity is an important predictor for the smoking habits of a young person. Young people of which both parents smoke, have a higher chance to smoke than young people of which none or only one parent smokes.

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug. In Flanders, 17% of young people in secondary education have used cannabis. Between 2010 and 2014, there is a significant decrease in the number of boys that have ever used cannabis. With regard to the cannabis use of girls, there is no significant difference compared to 2010. Furthermore, there are significant differences regarding to the type of education and age: the use of cannabis increases as people grow older. In addition, more young people in vocational education use cannabis than young people in other types of education. The cannabis use of young people in vocational education is four times higher than the cannabis use in general secondary education. In general, the use during the past year is around 12%.

Young people using cannabis once a week is limited to 2% and is lower than a few years ago.

### **Emotional and mental well-being**

In 2013, there was a [Health survey](#), commissioned by the Flemish and Federal Government. Emotional problems assessed in this health survey are anxiety disorders, depressive feelings and sleeping problems. Young people suffer with emotional psychological problems more than in the past. The prevalence of emotional problems of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 increased in 2013. Young women more than young men suffer from emotional problems.

In 2014, a survey of the Department of Public Health of the University of Ghent ([Factsheet Mentale Gezondheid](#)) also mentions that 11,9% of the boys and 20,4% of the girls considered to end their life at the moment they were 17-18 years old. Young people who following vocational education more than young people who are following another educational orientation are thinking about committing suicide. In total, more than 16% of young people in higher secondary education hurt themselves intentionally. Girls often do this more than boys.

In 2013, the Flemish Regional Indicators ([VRIND](#)) mention that 1.052 persons in the Flemish region committed suicide. Almost three out of four are men: 771 men against 281 women. Suicide is one of the most causes of death among young adults between the ages of 15 and 54.

### **Main concepts**

Three elements constitute the basis of well-being, as referred to in the [Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan](#) (2014-2019). Children and young people feel good about themselves, are not afraid to say otherwise and know who they can turn to with questions. These three elements are the basis of the operational objectives. The Flemish Government wants to take measures to increase the resilience of children and young people by focusing on preventive work and investing in accessible support.

#### 1. More than just a label

There is a growing tendency of applying labels to children and young people. As the number of labels grows, so does the use of medication by minors. The Government of Flanders is taking initiatives which will ensure a more conscious use of these labels. In sectors coming under integrated youth support the Diagnostics Quality Centre wants to develop instruments, do research and offer support in order to realise higher-quality diagnostics. This should allow for the achievement of higher-quality care. Efforts are also made towards a policy for pupils with special educational needs.

#### 2. Help break taboos

The mental well-being of children and young people is often surrounded by taboo. Several methodologies and tools are already in place to open up discussion about this topic. However, the process used for this is mostly too complex or cumbersome. The Government of Flanders wants to do a thorough job in making information accessible. We realise broad access to youth support. The accessibility to services and support is improved by extending the 'Huizen van het Kind' (children's centres), organising parenting support for parents from disadvantaged groups and investing in extensive and easily accessible networks.

#### 3. There is someone young people can turn to

Every child and young person should have someone to turn to for support and who can refer him or her, if necessary. We look into the possibility of establishing a unique communication platform for children and young people. We more widely publicise the helpline 1712 (violence, (child) abuse). Finally, we offer support to confidential advisers of minors in youth support.

## **7.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Health and well-being of young people is not exclusive a youth policy theme. The Flemish government works via both horizontal and vertical consultation and planning.

Most relevant policy domains are:

At regional (Flemish) level:

- Health and well-being policy
- Sports policy
- Educational policy
- Youth policy

In the following we focus on the regional level and describe for each of the domains the relevant responsibilities.

### **Main public bodies at a community-level (Flemish Community)**

#### **Flemish Government**

The Flemish Government is responsible for the funding of the policy domain and non-profit organisations in this field.

#### **Flemish Minister in charge of Welfare, Public Health and Family**

The Government of Flanders consists of 9 ministers, who are in office for a 5-year term. Minister Jo Vandeurzen (Christian Democratic party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family (from 2014 until 2019).

#### **Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family**

[The Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family](#) consists of the Department Welfare, Public Health and Family, the Agency Care and Health, the Agency for Youth Welfare, the Agency Child and Family and the Flemish Agency for Disabled Children. Its aim is to help build the Flemish Government's policy, which organises responsive care in an effective manner, together with the agencies and partners in the field.

The Ministry ensures the administrative follow-up of the Policy Plan on Welfare, Public Health and Family. It is responsible for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the policy domain.

Within the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family, the **Flemish Agency for Youth Welfare** provides guidance to young people.

The Youth Welfare Agency helps youth in difficult living conditions. Together with all the partners in the special youth care sector, The Youth Welfare Agency organises quality prevention and assistance to children and young people in problematic living conditions in order to maximize their chances of personal development. The Youth Welfare Agency coordinates prevention policy and provides assistance to minors through committees for special youth care, for social services, and for legal assistance and arbitration committees.

The key tasks of the Youth Welfare Agency are:

- prevention and assistance;
- recognition and funding of youth assistance facilities;
- an educational, pedagogical and therapeutic provision;
- counsellors in special youth care;
- community institutions.

### **Flemish Minister in charge of Sport**

Minister Philippe Muyters (Flemish-Nationalist Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Work, Economy, Innovation and Sport (from 2014 until 2019). He is responsible for the Policy Plan on Sport.

### **Flemish Agency Sport Flanders**

The Flemish Agency Sport Flanders ([Sport Vlaanderen](#)) supports the Flemish Government with the preparation and evaluation of grassroots sports and top sports policy in Flanders. The agency helps also with the implementation of the sports policy: financial support for boards, sports federations and sport clubs and monitoring and evaluation.

The main tasks are:

- the subsidisation and coaching sports federations, local authorities and sport actors
- the development and recognition of sport education and valorising certificates and diplomas
- advising, coaching and supporting the extension of sports infrastructure
- the administration of 13 sportcentra
- sport promotion on Flemish level
- the implementation of top sport policy
- promotion on healthy and ethical sport
- the implementation of an anti-doping policy
- the focus on policy development for the sport sector
- the monitoring of the international sports policy
- the cooperation between sport sector and other policy domains

### **Flemish Minister in charge of Education and Training**

Minister Hilde Crevits (Christian Democratic Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Education and Training (from 2014-2019).

### **Flemish Ministry of Education and Training**

The Department of Education and Training together with the Minister in charge of Education and Training is responsible for the advice, evaluation and follow-up on education policy in Flanders.

The Flemish policy on education of health and well-being is defined in Flemish policy documents, such as the cross-curricular attainment targets in education ([Vakoverschrijdende eindtermen](#)).

### **Flemish Minister in charge of Youth**

Minister Sven Gatz (Liberal Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels (from 2014 until 2019).

He is the coordinating minister of the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan.

### **Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth and Media**

The 'Division Youth' – embedded in the Department of Culture, Youth and Media – ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights and is responsible for the coordination of a horizontal Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (leisure, education, work, equality, etc.).

### **Main non-public actors**

#### **Non-profit organisations working on health and well-being**

The Flemish Government funds non-profit organisations in this field. Examples are (including substantial focus and work with children, youth and young people):

## VIGEZ

The Flemish Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention ([VIGEZ](#)) is a centre of expertise. Since 1991, VIGEZ is recognised and funded by the Flemish Government. VIGEZ helps the Flemish Government to achieve the Flemish Health Objectives.

## YAC

The Youth Advice Centres ([Jongerenadviescentrum-JAC](#)) are part of the Flemish Centres of General Welfare (CAWs). The 11 regional CAWs have a total of 51 JAC's.

JAC's are financed through the CAW centres by the Ministry of Welfare. Most of them get some additional money from local and provincial government and private sponsoring.

In Flanders, YAC's offer advice, support and guidance to young people between the ages of 12 and 25. All sorts of question are treated anonymously: housing advice, (student) work, sexual health, children's rights, emotional well-being, substance abuse, etc.

## VAD

[VAD](#) (Vlaams expertisecentrum Alcohol en Drugs, Flemish expertise centre on alcohol and drugs) is a non-profit organisation and expertise centre for alcohol, drugs, psychoactive substances, gambling and gaming. VAD enables discussion within society about alcohol and drug issues, expand (inter)sector networks with potential partners and support a high quality and scientifically based approach to deal with alcohol and drugs issues.

## CPZ

[CPZ](#) (Centrum ter Preventie van Zelfdoding, Centre on suicide prevention) is a non-profit organisation on the prevention of suicide. CPZ enables discussion within society about suicide and helps people to get through a suicidal crisis.

## SENSOA

[Sensoa](#) promotes sexual health as a centre of expertise in Flanders and does so with an international perspective.

Sensoa works on the basis of the World Health Organisation's definition of "sexual health". Sexual health is more than just the absence of disease and preventing the risks of unplanned pregnancy, sexual abuse, STDs or HIV. Attention should also be paid to the pleasurable and positive aspects of sexuality. This then translates itself into a constructive, respectful approach towards sexuality and sexual relationships.

For Sensoa, sexual health is inextricably linked with promoting and safeguarding sexual rights. We believe that sexual rights should be respected, safeguarded and upheld so that everyone is able to experience his or her sexuality free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

In Flanders, health and well-being of young people are a joint responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Health, Public Health and Family, the Flemish Minister of Education and Training and the Flemish Minister of Youth and its administration and agencies.

As mentioned in 1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries, youth policy is a transversal policy. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government.

Besides the Flemish Policy Plan, the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy envisages three more instruments of youth policy:

- Impact study of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER)
- Contact points for youth and children's rights and a coordinating administration
- Youth Progress Report

## **7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

### **National strategy(ies)**

There is no strategy specifically aiming at youth fitness and physical activity.

However, there is the Policy Paper on Sport submitted by the Flemish Minister of Sport Philippe Muyters for the period 2014-2019 ([Beleidsnota Sport 2014-2019](#)).

The Policy Paper consists of eight objectives:

1. facilitating grassroots sport (cf. sports open for all layers of the population) through various partnerships
2. optimising the offer in sport facilities
3. permanent strengthening of the healthy and ethical sports climate
4. aiming at doping-free sport in Flanders
5. investing in quality, professionalisation and employment
6. developing and sharing knowledge and promoting sport
7. achieving a return on the available top sport potential
8. contributing to an international sports policy

The Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) focuses on the population in general and specifically on students and young people. The Policy Paper mentions also a specific objective targeting young people in vulnerable situations. It states that young people in vulnerable situations can be empowered through sports.

Measures and initiatives are taken to encourage youth fitness and physical activity by applying the EU Physical Activity Guidelines. Policymakers are developing a normative frame for 'medically and ethically sound' practice of sports. As in the case in many other sectors, the Flemish Government funds non-profit (sports) organisations that encourage physical activity. In Flanders, sports policy has a specific focus on youth sport activities, for instance, making use of the financial means for the Flemish Parliament Act of 2016 ([decreet houdende de erkenning en subsidiëring van de georganiseerde sportsector](#)). It also gives special attention to (organised) sporting opportunities for urban disadvantaged youth through the Participation Decree of 2008 ([Participatiedecreet 2008](#)). Youth fitness can be interpreted more widely than only physical condition.

Since 2016, the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders is responsible for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of sports policy in Flanders. In 2016, the budget of the Flemish Government allocated to the policy domain Sport is 121.000.000 euro. Every year, the implementation of the Flemish sports policy is evaluated in the business plan of the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders.

### **Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

#### **Youth fitness and physical activity**

#### **Youth focus in the Flemish Parliament Act (2016) concerning the recognition and subsidisation of the organised sport sector**

The Flemish Parliament Act entered into force on 10 June 2016 ([decreet houdende de erkenning en subsidiëring van de georganiseerde sportsector](#)). It organises the recognition and the subsidisation of sport organisations. This Flemish Parliament Act has also a policy focus on youth sport activities.

The Flemish Government wants to increase the quality of youth sport clubs with a consequential increase of youth participation. The Flemish Government funds non-profit (sports) organisations that encourage physical activities that have a beneficial effect on young people's health and fitness.

In 2016, the expenditure of the Flemish Government directly connected with this decree was 25.929.000 euro.

## **Flemish Parliament Act (2012) concerning the stimulation and subsidisation of local sport policy**

The Flemish Parliament Act entered into force on 6 July 2012 ([decreet houdende het stimuleren en subsidiëren van een lokaal sportbeleid](#)). It organised the subsidisation of municipal and provincial sport organisations and the sport service of the Flemish Community commission. In 2016, the expenditure of the Flemish Government directly connected with this decree was 1.299.000 euro.

However, in 2014, the Flemish Government decided through a decree to change the budget allocation from the Act on local sport policy to the municipalities fund (Community Fund/[Gemeentefonds](#)). The budget is directly allocated to the municipalities and they have the autonomous authority concerning sports policy.

### **After-school activities**

In 2010, the Flemish Government asked the Flemish School Sports Foundation ([Stichting Vlaamse Schoolsport](#)) to support and develop policies promoting sports and exercise in schools. At the same time, this Foundation also promotes sports and exercise after school through cooperation between schools and non-profit (sports) organisations in the school's neighbourhood (see also grassroots sports activities).

### **Flemish Outdoor Play Day**

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2014-2019) mentions that the Flemish Government will organise and support the annual Outdoor Play Day ([Buitenspeeldag](#)). Since 2008, the Flemish Government organises Outdoor Play Days in cooperation with media partners and children's channels.

Once a year, children are encouraged to play outside: Flemish tv channels, such as Nickelodeon, VTM Kazoom and Ketnet, cancel their broadcast for a day while parents, youth leaders, sports coaches and local governments organise all kind of outdoor games and activities.

### **The role of sport as an activity supporting teamwork, intercultural learning, fair play and responsibility**

#### **Flemish Parliament Act of 20 December 2013 concerning healthy and ethical sport**

The Policy Paper on Sport 2014-2019 ([Beleidsnota Sport 2014-2019](#)) mentions to strengthen a healthy and ethical sport environment by stimulating ethical exercising. The Flemish Government will support knowledge sharing, exchange of good practices, the development of expertise, instruments and quality standards through learning networks.

The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 December 2013 ([decreet inzake gezond en ethisch sporten](#)) describes that ethical exercising has three pillars: personal integrity (physical, psychological and sexual), fair play and social integrity (solidarity, diversity and inclusion). These three pillars have a special focus on the best interests of children and young people.

In 2016, the expenditure of the Flemish Government directly connected with this project is 45.000 euro.

### **Sportmix**

[Sportmix](#) is a multicultural sport event. Sportmix focuses on friendship, fair play and respect for different cultures. It is a sport event on which young people can learn more about other cultures.

Sportmix targets young people between the ages of 12 and 16. It is in the first place meant for schools.

## Equal access to sport and physical activity for everyone

### Participation Decree (2008)

The Flemish Government gave special attention to (organised) sporting opportunities for urban and disadvantaged youth, for instance making use of the financial means of the Participation Decree (2008).

The [Participation Decree](#) entered into force on 1 January 2008. Through subsidisation in the participation decree, the Flemish government wishes to promote the active participation of vulnerable groups in culture, youth and sports.

This Decree offers:

- policy instruments to stimulate the participation of various groups, such as young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, refugees, disadvantaged groups in youth care, (young) people with disabilities, etc.;
- subsidies for projects that encourage participation. This particularly concerns initiatives related to socio-cultural work, communication, circulation and dissemination of artworks, financial obstacles, and physical access;
- and grants for large scale cultural events.

### Poverty Act (2003)

The Poverty Act ([Armoededecreet](#)) of 12 October 2003 provides in grants of projects with an experimental and/or innovative nature. The grants are also meant for socially relevant projects ([projecten Armoededecreet](#)). An example of a call for projects in 2016 is "**Bridges between sport and/or youth work and children in poverty**".

The most marked problems in accessibility of leisure (sport) activities for young people (and children) in poverty are located in three areas:

1. durable participation of vulnerable children and young people,
2. financial assistance to enable participation and
3. skills and training of workers / volunteers / organizations to open up to (the environment and needs of) vulnerable children and young people.

Therefore, the Flemish Minister for Poverty Reduction, Liesbeth Homans (term: 2014-2019), launched a call for projects "bridges between sport and/or youth and children in poverty" ([projectoproep bruggen tussen sport, jeugdwerk en kinderen in armoede](#)) In total 100 project applications were submitted. From this, 19 projects were selected for a total amount of 860 432 euros.

### Grassroots sport activities

The Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) mentions to facilitate grassroots sport through various partnerships. The Flemish Government will stimulate people, including children and young people, to sport lifelong through a dynamic grassroots sports policy. By doing so, the Flemish Government and the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders launch the campaign 'Sporters experience more' ([Sporters beleven meer](#)).

Furthermore, the Flemish Government wants to ensure that this grassroots sports policy is qualitative, healthy and democratic. Increasing sports participation, stimulating physical fitness and strengthening social cohesion are central in this policy.

Grassroots sport activities for children and young people, mentioned in the Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019), are aimed at offering after-school sport activities (Sportsnack and Sport after School). They are organised by the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders and the Flemish School Sports Foundation (see also extracurricular sports activities).

In 2016, the expenditure of the Flemish Government directly connected to this project is 194.000.

## Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation

The Flemish Agency Sport Flanders and other sports organisations should present an annual activity and financial report on how they implemented the assignment of the decrees to the Flemish Government.

## Physical education in schools

In Flanders, physical education is mandatory in secondary education and the compulsory taught time is two teaching hours per week. In secondary schools with study areas such as sports science (general education), physical education and sport (technical education) and top level sporting schools, physical education is taught more than two teaching hours per week. Students only are excused from physical education with a medical certificate.

Furthermore, the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders and Flemish School Sports Foundation (Stichting Vlaamse Schoolsport - [SVS](#)) stimulate and support schools to draw up a school sport policy to engage students in both physical education and local extracurricular activities outside school and to encourage students to participate in sports throughout the life-course (see sports activities outside the curriculum but within a school day).

The Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) also mentions to support a sports offer for students in tertiary education. By doing so, the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders continues to support the extension, coordination and promotion of sports offer in high schools and universities in Flanders. This support is also regulated by the Flemish Parliament Act of 3 April 2009 concerning the allocation of grants for the extension, coordination and promotion of the sports offer in Flemish universities and high schools and the recognition and subsidisation of the Flemish overarching student sport associations ([Decreet houdende de toekenning van subsidies voor de uitbouw, de coördinatie en de promotie van het sportaanbod van de studentenvoorzieningen van de Vlaamse universiteiten en hogescholen en de erkenning en subsidiëring van een Vlaamse overkoepelende studentensportvereniging](#)).

## Pedagogical tools for teachers

The Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) mentions to invest in quality, professionalisation and employment by developing competences, knowledge and skills through training, by offering knowledge, information and practical tools and by facilitating employment in the sport sector. The Flemish Agency Sport Flanders and the Flemish School for Sports Trainers ([Vlaamse Trainersschool](#)) have a role in the implementation of this objective.

For sports teachers in particular, The Flemish Agency Sport Flanders stimulates sports teachers to undertake further training. By doing so, the Flemish Agency Sport Flanders organises training and courses for sports teachers through the Flemish School for Sports Trainers (Vlaamse Trainersschool).

Under the authority of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and together with [Klascement](#), an educational portal site providing various teaching materials was developed. It makes the results of the Flemish Government projects available to a wider range of educational stakeholders.

## Physical activities outside the curriculum but within the school day

The Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) states that it will strive for a tailor-made sports offer in every life stage. In this connection, there is the organisation of school sport events and the stimulation of after-school sport.

The Flemish Agency Sport Flanders and the Flemish School Sports Foundation (Stichting Vlaamse Schoolsport) organise these school sport events during school days.

Furthermore, physical activities outside the curriculum but within the school day are implemented through the scheme 'Sports moves your school' ([Sport beweegt je school](#)) of the Flemish School Sports Foundation (Stichting Vlaamse Schoolsport). 'Sports moves your school' is a tool which supports schools to draw up a qualitative physical activity and sport policy and to achieve realistic goals for implementing high-quality, integrated

motion within classroom settings, promoting physical activity both within and between lessons.

### **Extracurricular sports activities**

As mentioned in the Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) and the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2014-2019), there is the organisation of [Sportsnack](#) for children aged between 8 and 12 years and the organisation of Sport after School ([Sport Na School](#) (SNS)) for young people aged between 12 and 18 years.

Since 2014, the SNS project is launched in Flanders. Teachers throughout Flanders are granted half-hour exemption from their teaching assignment in order to develop, together with the municipal sports services and local sports providers, sports provision for young people aged between 12 and 18 years. This project is mostly aimed at young people who

are not yet members of any sports club and who do not want to commit themselves to a sporting activity on a regular basis. For a fixed (low) amount, the SNS pass allows these young people to practise organised sports immediately after school, free of obligation, throughout the school year. This initiative is being rolled out across Flanders during 2015.

Practical coordination is ensured at the level of each province, while central management and general promotion of the initiative are organised at Flemish level, by means of a partnership between Bloso and the Flemish School Sports Foundation.

In addition, there will be a reinforced cooperation between the policy domains sport and education to expand and optimise the after-school sport offer.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

#### **Community schools**

The Policy Paper on Sport (2014-2019) and the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (2014-2019) mention to organise a qualitative after-school sports offer for children and young people. By doing so, the Flemish Government asked the Flemish School Sports Foundation to support and develop policies promoting sports and exercise in schools. The Flemish Government also asked the Foundation to encourage sport after school through cooperation between schools, municipalities and non-profit (sports) organisations in the school's neighbourhood. This objective is in line with the concept of Community schools with sports ([Brede school met sportaanbod](#)).

The organisation of Sportsnack and Sport after School (see also extracurricular sports activities) are part of the concept Community Schools with sports. Community Schools with sports have an active cooperation with sport clubs, youth work, etc. within the neighbourhood and increase the participation of children and young people in sports.

The Flemish Government also supports Flemish sport events which will contribute to several policy objectives on sport.

The collaboration of Community schools with sports is supported by municipal subsidies. These municipal subsidies are provided from the Community Fund (gemeentefonds).

#### **Call for projects 2016 "Bridges between sport and / or youth work and children in poverty"**

See also 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity.

## **7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition**

### **National strategy(ies)**

There is no strategy specifically aiming at youth health promotion.

However, there is the Policy Paper on Welfare, Public Health and Family submitted by the Flemish Minister on Welfare, Public Health and Family Jo Vandeurzen ([Beleidsnota Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin 2014-2019](#)). The Policy Paper covers the period of 2014-2019. It targets the population in general, but a lot of the actions are meant for young people.

The Policy Paper consists of six objectives:

1. prevention of health and welfare problems and realisation of first line aid to strengthen the well-being of people
2. realisation of tailor-made care, on the basis of possibilities of people
3. strengthening of the support of families by aligning essential elements of the Flemish Family policy with each other
4. the recognisable position of law centres in the policy domain Welfare, Public Health and Family and a better cooperation between assistance and justice
5. stimulation of quality of care and social entrepreneurship by focusing on regulatory and social instruments
6. cooperation with three other policy domains, administrative level, science, actors on the ground and users to answer the increasing complex care issues

The Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family ([Departement Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin](#)) is responsible for:

- preparation and evaluation of the policy plan, submitted by the Flemish Minister on Welfare, Public Health and Family and supports the Flemish Minister in controlling and monitoring the policy implementation of the agencies;

and policy implementation, including through subsidisation of welfare and health organisations

## Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

### Youth health promotion

The policy domain Welfare, Public Health and Family intends to strengthen the well-being of (young) people by preventing health and welfare problems. The Agency Care and Health –embedded in the Flemish Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family – is responsible for the preparation and evaluation of this Preventive Health Policy. A lot of these preventive actions, mentioned in the Preventive Health Policy, are meant for children and young people.

This Preventive Health Policy ([Preventief Gezondheidsbeleid](#)) consists of two methods:

- health promotion
- disease prevention

Since 1998, the Flemish Government developed Flemish Health Objectives ([Vlaamse gezondheidsdoelstellingen](#)) to set priorities in the Preventive Health Policy. These objectives are measurable, general accepted and should be realised within a certain period.

There are six Flemish health objectives:

- Health objective on vaccinations
- Health objective on population screening of cancer
- Health objective on suicide
- Health objective on diet and physical activity
- Health objective on tobacco, alcohol and drugs
- Health objective on incidents in the private sphere

These objectives are formulated on the health conference in 2006 and related action plans are drawn up by the Flemish Government. Some of the campaigns/action plans focus on young people, such as the action plan on substance use, healthy nutrition, physical activity, suicide prevention and sexual health.

The health objectives and related action plans have to be approved by the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament. In 2016, there was a health conference and new objectives are formulated (see current debates and reforms).

### **Healthy lifestyles promotion**

The Flemish Action Plan on Diet and Physical Activity 2009-2015 ([Vlaams Actieplan Voeding en Fysieke activiteit 2009-2015](#)), created by the Flemish Ministry for Welfare, Public Health and Family, is implemented to realise the Flemish health objective on diet and physical activity. The action plan focuses on healthy nutrition and physical activity among the population in general. In addition to this, specific attention is paid to children and young people.

Main objectives:

- to learn healthy eating and exercising habits
- to keep weight low and to prevent overweight

Activities of this action plan focus on six priority areas for implementation: in the local community, in the environment of infants and young children, at school, in the workplace, incorporating a range of support for health care providers, and through information and communication.

The health objective on diet and physical activity and the related action plan are finished in 2015. In 2017, there will be the preparation of a new Action Plan on Diet and Physical Activity (see current debates and reforms).

### **Healthy eating and nutrition promotion**

The Flemish Action Plan on Diet and Physical Activity promotes healthy eating and nutrition (see healthy lifestyles) and includes projects and initiatives in this field.

### **Prevention of risky behavior and substance abuse**

Young people frequently fall victim to drug and alcohol abuse. In 2010 and 2011, the Flemish Action Plan on tobacco, alcohol and drugs (from 2009 until 2015) specifically targeted youth ([Vlaams Actieplan Tabak, Alcohol en Drugs](#)). This action plan consists of three parts: policy vision, sectors and target groups and outlines of action.

Main objectives per substance:

Tobacco

- the percentage of smokers by persons younger than 15 years is not higher than 11%
- the percentage of smokers by 16-years-olds and older is not higher than 20%

Alcohol

- the percentage of young people of 15 years and younger who drink more than once a week is not higher than 20%
- the percentage of 15- to 25-years-olds who drink more than once a week is not higher than 13%
- the percentage of men older than 16 years who drink more than 21 units of alcohol per week is not higher than 4%
- the percentage of women older than 16 years who drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week is not higher than 4%

Drugs

- the percentage of young people of 17 years and younger that have used cannabis or another illegal drug is not higher than 14%
- the percentage of young people of 17 years and younger that have used cannabis or another illegal drug 12 months before the survey is not higher than 8%
- the percentage of 18- and 35-years-olds that have used cannabis or another illegal drug 12 months before the survey is not higher than 8%

The action plan states to pay systematic attention to differences in gender and target groups, such as persons living in poverty, ethnic-cultural minorities.

The health objective on substance use and the related action plan are finished in 2015. In 2017, there will be the preparation of a new action plan. (see current debates and reforms).

### **Funding available for the action plans**

The budget of the Flemish Health Objectives and action plans is funded by the Flemish Government. The Flemish Government has annual budget allocated to Preventive Health Policy and this budget is allocated to actors, initiatives and projects in this field.

### **Monitoring and evaluation of the action plans**

The partners, organisations and individual care providers which are recognised and/or subsidised by the Flemish Government for tasks of the Preventive Health Policy, are accountable and monitored. The Flemish Governments defines detailed rules.

Furthermore, there is policy evaluation of the action plans and environmental analysis when designing the new Flemish Health Objectives.

## **Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

### **Health education**

Every school in Flanders is expected to develop a health policy. This is not required by decree, but there is a regulatory framework for the development of health policy in schools:

1. the attainment targets/cross-curricular targets in school curricula ([vakoverschrijdende eindtermen 2010](#))
2. the assignments of schools regarding care (policy) and student guidance
3. the legislation on health policy, security and infrastructure

At secondary level, subject-related attainment targets for health education can be found in courses of physical education and natural science. However, health education in secondary schools is mainly cross-curricular (cf. physical education and security, mental health and socio-relational development).

VIGeZ (Flemish Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention), with the support of the Flemish Minister of Education and Training and the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family, provides a [website](#) with pedagogical tools and teaching material to develop a health policy and to support teachers responsible for health education.

### **Sex education and personal relationships education**

Every school in Flanders decides whether or not sex education and personal relationships is part of the curriculum. It is a cross-curricular attainment target in school curricula.

However, sex education and personal relationships are mostly part of the courses natural sciences and 'project general courses' (PAV). This involves knowledge about reproductive organs, contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted diseases. Furthermore, [Sensoa](#) (Flemish expertise centre of sexual health), with the support of the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family, provides pedagogical tools and training to teachers responsible for sex education. Sensoa has a database with teaching material on their website and also organises training in schools for students

In 2017, the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament are discussing with stakeholders the curriculum for the 21st century and the use of learning outcomes as final objectives. Hilde Crevits, Minister of Education and Training states that sexual education and personal relationships education is relevant to teach in a comprehensive manner.

## Peer-to-peer education approaches

There are no measures for peer-to-peer educational approaches aiming to enhance young people's knowledge and understanding of factors related to their health and well-being.

In Flanders, school governing boards have a wide autonomy and can decide freely on their teaching methods, timetables and curricula.

## Collaboration and partnerships

Every school in Flanders is expected to develop a health policy. The school health policy pays attention to collaboration with school services (centres for educational guidance and educational guidance services) and external partners (expertise organisations and local health organisations).

The (content-specific) collaboration with schools, CLB's (centres for educational guidance) and external healthcare organisations is regulated through protocols. At the school level, the policy contract with CLB also sets out cooperation arrangements.

## Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

### Information providers

#### Agency Care and Health

The Agency Care and Health ([Agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid](#)) promote healthy lifestyles and nutrition. Together with the Flemish-funded partner organisations, the Agency provide advice and information on healthy nutrition, physical activity and mental resilience.

#### Flemish-funded partner organisations

These partner organisations, such as ViGeZ and VAD, are expertise centres of preventive health care. They are also responsible for health promotion. They give information and advice, develop methodologies and other material and support the implementation and the use of it.

The cooperation between the Flemish Government and these partner organisations is defined in a management agreement and further concretised in annual plans and budget plans.

- **ViGeZ**

The Flemish-funded expertise centre [ViGeZ](#) helps the Flemish Government to achieve the Flemish Health Objectives.

The Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family defines the policy priorities and budget allocation through a management agreement between ViGeZ and the Flemish Government.

ViGeZ, as partner organisation, is responsible for the general health promotion and for promoting health policy in settings (schools, local authorities, workplace...) and to target groups (general population, persons of lower socioeconomic status...). By doing so, ViGeZ has projects and campaigns for general health promotion. ViGeZ has three websites: healthy school, healthy municipality and healthy working for individuals, practitioners and policy makers.

- **VAD**

The expertise centre [VAD](#) is a partner organisation of the Flemish Government regarding the Preventive Policy on Alcohol and Drugs.

The Drugline is the public service of VAD for all questions about alcohol, illegal drugs, psychoactive medication and gambling. The Drugline is a telephone and online helpline.

It offers information about drugs and helps with questions about assistance, prevention and documentation material.

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns**

#### **“Feeling well feels better” campaign**

Since 2013, there is the “Feeling well feels better” campaign ([Goed in je vel, dat voelt beter](#) campagne) organised by the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family, Jo Vandeurzen, and the Agency Care and Health.

This awareness-raising campaign encourages every Fleming to live healthy, eat healthy and exercise more. There are a lot of practical instructions to live healthy on the website of the campaign.

Furthermore, the campaign is a common thread running through the different actions and projects on diet and physical activity organised by the Flemish Government. The campaign targets the population in general, but has specific actions that are meant for young people. Examples of these projects are:

- “My active food pyramid” to test your eating and movement behavior online. This project is organised by ViGeZ
- “Tutti Frutti” is a Flemish school project for fruits in schools. Every school organises a day per week on which students only eat fruit as a snack. This project is organised by ViGeZ for primary schools to inform and sensitize students.
- “10.000 Steps” to exercise enough. This project is organised by ViGeZ.

#### **“Flanders quits smoking”**

Flanders quits smoking is a media initiative and [website](#) of the Flemish Government and ViGeZ. The website offers anti-smoking support in Flanders. There is information for:

- smoking young people ([smartstop app](#))
- parents of smoking young people
- adults
- professionals in schools, workplace, municipality and care sector

Smartstop for young people is implemented in the second and third level of secondary education in Flanders.

#### **“Don’t be fooled” campaign**

In 2014, there was the “Don’t be fooled” ([Laat je niet vangen](#)) anti-cannabis campaign of the Flemish Government. This campaign was a great success.

The Flemish expertise centre VAD wants to raise awareness of cannabis through their [Drugline](#)-project by boosting the “Don’t be fooled” campaign every two years.

The new campaign builds on the success of the previous campaign. This campaign is a media initiative and consists of videos for young people, their parents and other family members on youtube, facebook and public service TV.

#### **“Condom van and Healthies”**

[Joetz](#) (youth work division of the socialist health service) has awareness raising actions about safe sex. Joetz roams around Flanders with its ‘condom van’ to promote safe sex and trains young people to take up a health prevention role towards other young people. These [Healthies](#) (young health coaches) man the condom van, but also run workshops on health issues in schools.

## **7.5 Mental health**

### **National strategy(ies)**

#### **Flemish Action Plan on mental health**

The sixth State Reform and the growing demand for health have led to the decision of the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and family to develop a new Flemish Action Plan on Mental Health ([Vlaams Actieplan Geestelijke gezondheid](#)).

The Flemish Action Plan on Mental Health, that will cover the period between 2017 and 2019, focuses mainly on strategies of prevention and early detection of psychological problems. Specific attention is paid to children and young people. A target group within the youth population are those who slip through the net and have specific needs and requirements. The action plan focuses on the following actions:

- programme “Early detection and intervention” for children and young people
- primary care psychology
- therapists for young people
- highly intelligent young people
- online help
- self-care for young people and vulnerable young people

The actions of the action plan are realised within the budgetary framework of the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family. The budget allocated to the action plan is two million euro.

#### **Flemish Parliament Integrated Youth Care Act**

Integrated Youth Care is a cross-sectoral policy programme of the Flemish government. It aims to achieve a coordinated approach to help troubled young people and their relatives. The clients face multi-problem situations (e.g. bad family situation, skipping school, mental issues, etc.) that require a multi-faceted care strategy. The institutional makeup of the care (health, welfare, education) landscape in Flanders, however, is relatively fragmented and characterised by strong (sub-) sectors.

On March 1, 2014 the [Integrated Youth Care Act](#) came into force. This act entails a far-reaching cooperation between all anchors sectors involved in youth. The main objective is that every young person with a problem finds as quick as possible the appropriate help. This renewed act puts the young central. The inherent strength of children and young people and their immediate surroundings are considered the main source of assistance. The act anchors this principle and translates it into practical assistance to all amenities.

#### **Flemish Action Plan on suicide prevention**

In the Flemish Region, the health objective suicide and the related Flemish Action Plan on Suicide Prevention are adopted on 7 September 2012 ([Vlaams Actieplan voor preventie van zelfdoding 2012-2020](#)). The Flemish Action Plan on suicide prevention (2012-2020) of the Agency Health and Care consists of five strategies:

1. mental health promotion regarding the individual and the society
2. suicide prevention through a telephone helpline and online support
3. improving expertise and network formation among intermediaries
4. strategies for specific risk groups
5. development and implementation of recommendations and resources for suicide prevention

In the period 2014-2020, the budget of the Flemish Government allocated to the Flemish Action Plan on Suicide Prevention (2012-2020) is 3.100.000 euro. The Flemish Government and the Agency Care and Health are responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the action plan.

The partners, organisations and individual care providers which are recognised and/or subsidised by the Flemish Government for tasks of the Preventive Health Policy and Integrated Youth Care, are accountable and monitored. They must submit an annual progress report to the Flemish Government. The Flemish Governments defines detailed rules.

### **Improving the mental health of young people**

#### **Kopklanken – conference on the mental well-being of young people**

In 2016, the Flemish Youth Council started the project [Kopklanken](#). Young people of the Flemish Youth Council gathered information and advice of experts and policy makers. They did an online survey among 1100 young people and participated in two European youth conferences. This resulted in strong signals and a number of concrete policy recommendations on mental well-being of young people.

On 4 March 2017, these strong signals and policy recommendations were presented on the conference Kopklanken, which provided a forum for different voices (young people, policy makers, experts and youth workers).

#### **“Fit in your head, feeling well” campaign**

The Fit in your Head, feeling well campaign ([Fit in je hoofd, goed in je vel](#)) was launched in 2006 by the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Family and was further developed into a spin-off website.

The campaign and website of the Flemish Government aim at fostering resilience and ability to self-care among people aged over 16 years in Flanders. The implementation of this action is part of the first strategy of the Flemish Action Plan on Suicide Prevention (2012-2020), namely the mental health promotion of the individual and the society.

For the period 2015-2020, the budget allocated to the ‘Fit in your head, feeling well’ campaign and website is 119.650 euro. This budget contains also the budget for the campaign and website Noknok.

#### **Noknok**

[Noknok](#) is a website and focuses on young people between the ages of 12 to 16 years old. It contains information and assignments to feel good about yourself. The implementation of Noknok is also part of the first strategy of the Flemish Action Plan on Suicide Prevention (2012-2020).

For the period 2015-2020, the budget allocated to the ‘Fit in your head, feeling well’ campaign and the ‘Noknok’ campaign is 119.650 euro.

#### **Koppvlaanderen**

[Kopp-Vlaanderen](#) has an attractive and youth-friendly website for children and young people of parents with mental problems. The implementation of ‘Kopp-Vlaanderen’ is part of the fifth strategy of the Flemish Action Plan on Suicide Prevention (2012-2020), namely the attention for risk groups.

Since 2014, the project ‘Kopp-Vlaanderen’ was not renewed. It also was no longer implemented by the Flemish Government.

#### **Tweehuizen**

[Tweehuizen](#) is tailor-made website, supported by the Flemish Government, for children and young people from divorced parents. Parents also find information on the website to help their children and young people in a difficult period.

#### **Awel**

[Awel](#), the previous Children- and Youth Telephone, is a helpline for young people. There is also a chat function.

**Tele-onthaal 106**

Tele-onthaal is a helpline for people who are in a difficult situation. You can reach them 24/24u by phone on the number 106. They also have a chat function on their website.

**Zelfmoord1813**

[Zelfmoord1813](#) (suicide 1813) is a website and suicide line to help young people of the Centre on Suicide Prevention (CPZ). CPZ has a management agreement with the Flemish Government.

The website contains also Thinklife, an online self-help course which teaches young people to cope with suicidal thoughts. The suicide line and chat function on the website is part of the second strategy of the Flemish Action Plan on Suicide Prevention (2012-2020), namely the accessible telecare.

For the period 2015-2020, the budget allocated to the suicide line and chat function of CPZ is 325.000 euro.

## **7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks**

**Policy framework****Programme “Early detection and intervention” of the Flemish Action Plan on Mental Health (2017-2019)**

The Flemish Action Plan on Mental Health 2017-2019 ([Vlaams Actieplan Geestelijke Gezondheid 2017-2019](#)) of the Agency Care and Health mentions to provide additional funding for the realisation of the programme “Early detection and intervention” to children and young people (0-23 years) who show signals of possible mental problems.

In this new programme, special attention will be paid to psychosis, suicide, eating disorders and addiction. Early detection results in specific interventions and partners in education and integrated youth care will be involved.

No further information of this new programme is available.

**Flemish Parliament Act of 1 March 2014 on Integrated Youth Care**

On March 1, 2014 the [Integrated Youth Care Act](#) came into force. This renewed act entails a far-reaching cooperation between all anchor sectors involved in youth and puts the young central. The main objective is that every young person with a problem finds as quick as possible the appropriate help (see Mental Health).

If young people need specialised help they must first apply to the “access portal” or “intersectoral gateway”. Together with young people and their parents this access portal will then check which help would offer the best solution to a problem. In short: young people can no longer approach a specialised organisation for help themselves.

In total there are six sectors involved:

- Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities (VAPH)
- Agency of Youth Welfare
- Child and Family (K & G)
- General Welfare Work (AWW)
- Mental Health Centres (CGG)
- Centres for Educational Guidance (CLB)

**Flemish Parliament Act of 1 December 1998 concerning Centres for Educational Guidance (see also 4.6)**

On December 1, 1998 the Centres for Educational Guidance (CLB’s) Act came into force ([decreet betreffende de centra voor leerlingenbegeleiding](#)). The Decision of the Flemish Government of 3 July 2009 reformulated and updated the operational objectives of the

CLB's. CLB is a service financed by the Flemish Government. In Flanders, there are 73 centres, which each belong to one of the three educational networks.

CLB's offer pupil-oriented services but can also support schools and parents in the optimisation of pupils' welfare and the pupils' functioning within the school environment. The care provided by CLB's covers four areas:

- learning and studying: problems with reading and spelling, speech and language, etc.
- the educational career: monitoring compulsory education, study-choice guidance, information regarding education and the link to the labour market, directing to and from special education, etc.
- psychological and social functioning: behavioural problems, social skills, emotional problems, etc.
- preventive health care: medical check-ups, vaccinations, taking measures in the event of contagious diseases, healthy nutrition, substance abuse, etc.

So CLB's provide multidisciplinary guidance. To this end, a CLB co-operates with welfare and health institutions. In a CLB, doctors, social workers, educationalists, psychologists, psychological assistants and nurses are employed.

The welfare of the pupil is central and guidance is based on trust and dialogue. Therefore the guidance only starts when a pupil or parent has taken an initiative in this respect. If a school asks the CLB to supervise a pupil, the centre will always first expressly ask for the parents' consent (for a pupil under the age of 12), or the pupil's consent (from the age of 12).

## Stakeholders

### **Programme "Early detection and intervention" of the Flemish Action Plan on Mental Health (2017-2019)**

The new programme of "Early detection and intervention" will focus on a intersectoral cooperation with general practitioners, services of paediatric, actors within integrated youth care, schools, CLB's, children's centres and centres for general welfare work.

### **Flemish Parliament Act of 1 December 1998 concerning Centres for Educational Guidance (see also 4.6)**

School teachers are responsible for early detection and can notice unusual behavior or worrying signals of students. If they have a suspicion that the physical safety and mental well-being of a student will suffer, school teachers should involve the teacher who is responsible for care and well-being of students. The school in consultation with the student and his parents can decide to refer the student to a CLB.

## Guidance to stakeholders

There is no further information on guidance provided by public authorities to sensibilise the stakeholders.

However, the Flemish-funded partner organisations of the Flemish Government, such as ViGeZ and VAD, provide information, guidelines and (teaching) material for stakeholders on their website.

## Target groups

The action plans focus on vulnerable groups and people with increased vulnerability, such as young people with mental problems.

## Funding

The funding of the Flemish Government is provided to actions of the Flemish action plans and to organisations in this field.

Funding mechanisms are described where the programme / intervention is mentioned above.

## **7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly**

The Policy Paper on Welfare, Public Health and Family ([Beleidsnota Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Gezin](#)) and the [Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2014-2019](#) mention that children and young people feel good about themselves, are not afraid to say otherwise and know who they can turn to with questions.

In this connection, each municipality in Flanders must have a better management to help find children, young people and adults their way to information on mental health and to help break taboos of mental well-being.

Some actions target minors (0-17 years) and others focus on young adults (17-30 years). The following processes and projects will be undertaken in the policy period 2014-2019:

- the organisation of the 'wide entry' ([brede instap](#)) accessible for young people with a request for help, apart from characteristics of problems
- the extension of 'children's centres' ([Huizen van het Kind](#)) that will regroup all child-related health services and cooperate closely with general practitioners.
- parenting support for parents in vulnerable situations
- increasing the access of social services with community-oriented networks
- realising a wide, accessible and integrated welcome (network) within welfare work

The monitoring and evaluation of these actions is done by the Flemish Government. Each structural subsidised youth associations responsible for these actions must submit an annual progress report. The Flemish Government defines detailed rules.

## **7.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **The health objectives**

The implementation of the Flemish action plans is part of the Flemish health objectives formulated on the health conference in 2006. The Flemish health objectives and related action plans are finished in 2015. In December 2016, there was a new health conference where health objectives and related action plans were formulated. In 2017, the Flemish health objectives formulated on the health conference of 2016 will be submitted to the Flemish Parliament. 2017 is the starting year for the Flemish health objectives and they should be realized at the end of 2025.

### **The Sixth State Reform**

The institutional agreement of December 2011 on the sixth State reform, entitled 'A more efficient federal State and more autonomous entities', provides for substantial State reform that will take place over several stages. This State Reform has led to the transfer of competences from the federal level to the communities and regions. Communities are now responsible for family policy and also competences for mental health.

## **8. Creativity and Culture**

Creativity & Culture

### **Special feature**

Measures and initiatives of creativity and culture is streamlined across different policy domains at the Flemish level. Creativity and culture is a joint responsibility of the Flemish Minister of Youth, the Flemish Minister of Education and Training and the Flemish Minister of Culture. The Flemish Government also funds organisations active in this field.

## Highlights

In 2010 and 2011, the Flemish Government took many measures to support cultural expression and access to culture for young people. Youth culture was put forward as a priority for local and provincial youth policy. This led to many cooperation projects between different local actors on this theme.

## 8.1 General context

### Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

#### Participation survey

Every five years a large-scale [participation survey](#) is organized, in which a standardized questionnaire is presented to a representative sample of the Flemish population. This study has to provide the Flemish government with reliable figures on the degree of participation in the domains of culture, youth, media and sports. Furthermore, the participation survey has to provide answers to key questions concerning the barriers to participation, modes and contexts of participation, the degree of overlap in participation in these domains and mechanisms that influence participation. In 2019 the [Knowledge Centre on Cultural and Media Participation](#) will conduct this survey for the 4<sup>th</sup> time. The previous three surveys have been carried out in 2003-2004, 2009 and 2014. In 2014 3965 Flemish people between 15 and 86 years old participated in the study; 949 of them were 30 years old or younger.

This participatory study shows that young people in Flanders are actively involved in culture. Certainly the youngest group is highly active. For instance, 59% of the young people between 15 and 17 year old exercises at least monthly a creative hobby. Among young people aged 18 to 25 this percentage drops to 38% and among 26 to 30 year olds to 34%, but also among these age groups active cultural participation is still significantly higher than among adults.

Regarding receptive cultural participation, the participation of young people differs less from that of other age groups. The table below lists some figures that illustrate this.

	Young people			Adults
	15-17	18-25	26-30	31-86
<b>Exercises at least monthly a creative hobby</b>	59,0%	37,6%	34,3%	20,6%
<b>Receptive cultural participation past 6 months</b>				
Visiting museums and exhibitions				
• Occasional (<3 times)	28,9%	24,3%	24,5%	18,9%
• Frequent (at least 3 times)	15,7%	9,1%	11,3%	11,2%
Going to the theatre				
• Occasional (<3 times)	26,5%	18,2%	17%	16,7%
• Frequent (at least 3 times)	6,6%	2,3%	4,5%	5,1%
Visiting cultural heritage				
• Occasional (<3 times)	23,5%	21,7%	18,9%	16,6%
• Frequent (at least 3 times)	29,5%	20,8%	27,2%	22,2%

On the website [www.participatiesurvey.be](http://www.participatiesurvey.be) more information on the previous Participation Surveys is available. On that website you can also find web tools that allow to generate tables and figures from the datasets. The web tools contain the answers to a selection of questions from the surveys of 2009 and 2014 and a selection of trend data from the surveys of 2004, 2009 and 2014.

So, cultural participation of young people is certainly not lower than that of adults. However trend analyses on those participation surveys indicate that younger generations (not age groups) compared to older generations participate less in highbrow cultural activities.

### **Survey on Cultural Education – Cultuur leren smaken (*learning to taste culture*)**

In 2013 the **Cultural Policy Research Centre** (CPRC; now called the [Knowledge Centre on Cultural and Media Participation](#)) conducted a survey on cultural participation and education in Flemish secondary schools. In order to grasp the complexity and diversity of cultural participation and education two samples of secondary schools were drawn: a representative sample of secondary schools, and an extra sample of secondary schools in metropolitan areas. The first sample allowed to draw a detailed portrait of cultural participation and education among young people in Flanders, the second sample allowed to zoom in on the cultural participation and education of the less privileged groups (which are overrepresented in big cities). Based on these two samples the study reached 84 secondary schools in which a total of 5086 pupils (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade of secondary education) completed a questionnaire on cultural activities and cultural education in both a school and a leisure context. The survey also addressed both receptive (visiting or attending cultural activities) as active cultural participation (the practicing of a creative hobby).

Almost all young respondents (95%) reported that they had attended at least one cultural activity during the six months previous to the study. Most visited are the movies, libraries and musical festivals. Not only the receptive participation rate is high among young people, also their more active participation is high: 61% of the young performed at least once a creative hobby the previous 6 months. Creative working with multimedia was most mentioned as a creative hobby, followed by singing, visual arts, playing music and photography. Most creative hobbies are performed alone or with friends, whereas a considerable smaller share of pupils chooses to perform a creative hobby in part-time arts education or other forms of arts education (mostly for learning to play a musical instrument or drama lessons). Being culturally active in less formal associations is less common except for dancing which is often practiced in dance clubs.

55% of the young respondents had followed or was still following an out-of-school arts education class. When young people attend these arts classes, most of them choose for highly formal institutions of which part-time arts education (Deeltijds Kunst Onderwijs or DKO) is the most important one. More than a third of the young people in Flanders does attend or has attended courses in part-time arts education (DKO). Focus is here on highbrow expressions of art. Non-formal education offered by e.g. youth centres, cultural centres and associations, reaches less young people, except for dance courses. The figures on arts education outside the school show in general a focus on more 'traditional' cultural forms: young people follow arts education classes in visual arts, dance, music or drama. While multimedia and photography, singing and writing are the most performed creative hobby's, they are seldom practiced in arts education classes. They are mainly performed alone or with friends.

Besides, both formal and non-formal arts education classes during leisure time seem mainly practiced in primary education. There is a large backdrop in participation in arts education when young people enter secondary education. This is the case for both formal and non-formal forms of arts education. For instance, while 40% of the young respondents once followed classes in part-time arts education (DKO), this was at the moment of the survey only 15%. During secondary education the participation rate decreases further: in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of secondary education (youngsters of approximately 13 years old) a quarter still follows arts education. Among the pupils in the final year of secondary education (approximately 18 years old) this number has declined sharply.

Already at the start of secondary education, **social differences** can be observed. In the first grade (first two years) of secondary education, the social differences are not that big, but are already visible and young people in the vocational tracks (vso) attend

significant less cultural activities than pupils in general education (gso). In upper secondary education, the differences are becoming more pronounced. For instance, only 32% of the pupils in vocational education have been to a library outside the school hours during the previous 6 months, while this percentage in general education is 70%. Also 35% of the pupils in general education have visited at least once a monument, noteworthy building or archaeological site over the past six months while only 12.5% of the pupils enrolled in vocational education have visited such a place. Pupils in technical education take an intermediate position. With regard to active participation or amateur arts the social differences are more pronounced in upper secondary than in lower secondary education. Largest differences are found for playing a musical instrument. In upper secondary education, 27% of the young people in gso plays a musical instrument, while only 9% in vocational education does.

Also **ethnic differences** are huge, certainly with regard to receptive cultural activities. With regard to active participation, the ethnic differences are less pronounced and even non-existent for some activities. This is for instance the case for dancing, acting and singing. However, again for playing musical instruments differences are large.

Although schools invest in cultural participation and education, the study shows that **schools fail to bridge the social gap**. Moreover, the results indicate that schools perpetuate and even worsen inequalities. Young people from less privileged backgrounds and who participate less during leisure time are overrepresented in vocational education, where they have fewer opportunities to participate in cultural activities.

More information can be found on:

Beunen, S., Siongers, J. & Lievens, J. (2016) [Cultuur leren smaken. Een onderzoek bij Vlaamse jongeren naar cultuurparticipatie en cultuureducatie](#). Gent: Onderzoeksgroep CuDOS - Vakgroep Sociologie, Universiteit Gent.

Siongers, J., Lievens, J. & Beunen, S. (2016) [Arts education in Flanders](#). Gent: Onderzoeksgroep CuDOS - Vakgroep Sociologie, Universiteit Gent.

[Webtool on study](#)

### **Bamford Report**

In 2006-2007, Anne Bamford conducted an evaluation in Flanders on the nature, scope and impact of arts and cultural education on children and young people. The aim of the research was to gather an extensive amount of data on the size and quality of arts and cultural education in Flanders and resulted in the report 'Quality and Consistency. Arts and Cultural Education in Flanders'. This report revealed a profusion of high quality initiatives in cultural education, both within compulsory education and in leisure time. The spread of these initiatives, however, appeared to be scattered across the educational landscape, thus excluding a considerable group of children and youngsters from participation. One of the main conclusions of the report was that although accessibility for all is a highly prized belief in Flemish education, the reality is that arts and cultural education is generally available at the highest level to the affluent and educational elite of Flanders. Schools and cultural institutions are aware of the need for greater cultural diversity but in practice arts and cultural education tend to favor students from the higher social classes (Bamford, 2007). Bamford's conclusions and recommendations led to the start-up of the Culture in the Mirror research project, initiated by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training in 2009.

### **Administrative data**

The Department of Education and Training publishes annually an overview of the most important statistics on Flemish education, e.g. on the school population, staff, infrastructure, ... . In these statistical overviews, also figures on Part-time Art Education are included. During the school year 2015-2016 177.798 persons were enrolled in part-time arts education; 76% of these participants were young people (specific age is not

mentioned in the publication) with an overrepresentation of girls. The number of girls enrolled in arts education is twice as high as the number of boys. Most popular among young people are the disciplines visual arts and music, with respectively 45.826 and 58.423 young people enrolled in during the school year 2015-2016.

Most recent publications:

- [Flemish Education in figures 2015-2016](#)
- [Flemish Education in figures 2014-2015](#)
- [Flemish Education in figures 2013-2014](#)

## Main concepts

### Amateur arts

In Flemish cultural policy, a broad concept of amateur arts is used. It entails associations as well as individual artists who are active in the field of theatre, dance, music, (audio)visual arts, and writing. In the [Amateur Arts Decree](#) it is furthermore defined as: every form of art that in the context of socio-cultural life gives each citizen the opportunity to develop oneself through the practice and experience of art and to develop potential creative skills on a voluntary and non-professional basis.

### Cultural heritage and immovable tangible heritage

In Flanders, a clear distinction is made between policy on **cultural heritage** (moving and intangible) and **immovable tangible heritage** (e.g. monuments and landscapes), see 8.2 for more information cultural heritage policy in Flanders.

Cultural heritage is described as all the valuable that we received from our predecessors, but also objects, stories, documents and traditions that we pass on to these and next generations.

**Moving cultural heritage** is the heritage that is preserved in museums, archives, libraries, documentation centers, churches and monasteries, theology circles, heritage associations, schools and theaters ...

**Intangible heritage** also includes less tangible things, such as stories, traditions, parties, songs, dialects ...

**Immovable tangible heritage** includes architectural, archaeological, landscape, heraldic and maritime heritage.

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

#### Main actors in policy making

#### Cultural responsibilities in Belgium and Flanders

In **Belgium**, the **Communities** have exclusive competence for cultural policy and its implementation. The **Government of Flanders** can issue laws to that effect, called **Flemish Parliament Acts**. This implies that there is no Ministry of Culture at national level, but three Ministries of Culture at Community level, respectively for the Flemish, French and German speaking communities. Each community has developed its own policy with specific instruments and structures for implementation. In Flanders the Arts Division of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media has been entrusted with this task.

**Cultural Heritage** policy in Belgium is however a shared competence amongst **communities and regions**.

In Flanders the **Flemish community**, within its cultural competence, is responsible for movable tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It concerns policy regarding institutions and their collections, cultural heritage expert organisations, heritage objects

such as paintings, sculptures, machines, furniture, ... and also policy regarding transmission of habits and traditions, knowledge and competences, feasts and everyday life, ...

The **Flemish Region** is responsible for immovable tangible heritage e.g. monuments, sites, landscapes, archaeology, ...

The **Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs** does not have any cultural competences. The international aspects of cultural policy also fall within the responsibility of the **Minister for Culture**.

Certain **large cultural institutions** in **Brussels** remain the responsibility of the federal government of Belgium.

### Ministries and policy areas

#### **The policy area of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media**

The competent minister for the legislature 2014-2019 is: Sven Gatz, Flemish Minister of Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels.

Since 1 April 2006, the Flemish public administration system has undergone major changes. The main tasks are now organised on the basis of 13 policy areas, one of which is "Culture, Youth, Sports and Media". The Culture, Youth, Sport and Media Policy area consists of the following components:

- The Department of Culture, Youth and Media
- The internally independent agency (IVA with legal personality): Sport Flanders
- An external agency (EVA) Flemish Media Regulator
- the Policy Council: Forum where politicians and senior officials involved in a specific policy area meet and that supports the Flemish Government in the management of the Culture, Youth, Sport and Media Policy Area. The policy council consists of the competent ministers and the leading officials of the department and agencies:
  - Flemish ministers Sven Gatz (responsible for Culture, Media and Youth) and Philippe Muyters (responsible for Sport) and their Cabinet Heads
  - The Secretary-General of the Department of Culture, Youth and Media
  - The Director General of Sport Flanders
  - The Administrator-General of Flemish Regulator for the Media

Departments lend support and offer advice on policy-making and monitoring, while the Agencies apply the policy. On September 20, 2013, the Flemish Government decided to reduce the number of entities and advisory councils. Among other things, the Agency for Social and Cultural Work for Youth and Adults, Arts and Heritage and the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp included in the Department of Culture, Youth and Media.

The Department of Culture, Youth and Media is led by a Secretary General and consists of:

- Staff of the Secretary-General
- General Support and Management Service
- Youth Department
- Department of Social-Cultural Work
- Department of Art
- Department of Cultural Heritage
- Department of Media, Film and e-Culture
- Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA, since 1/8/2014)
- Strategic Advisory Council Culture, Youth, Sport and Media (SARC, since 1/1/2016):

The SARC comprises representatives of community-based organisations and independent experts. Within its structure there is a general council, a permanent bureau and four sector councils, namely

- a sector council for Arts and Heritage,
- a sector council for Social-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults,

- a sector council for Media and
- a sector council for Sport.

The General Council is responsible for the conceptualisation of cultural policy fields in a coherent broader social context. The four sector councils are autonomous and empowered to give direct advice on their specific policy area.

### **Flanders Heritage Agency**

The [Flanders Heritage Agency](#) inventories and protects valuable buildings, landscapes, archaeological sites and the heritage fleet. Furthermore, they support the conservation of immovable heritage and carry out policy-oriented research. They inform the public regarding legislation, financial support, contact information and specific projects. In this respect, local authorities and provinces also constitute important partners to disseminate the immovable heritage policy.

### **The policy domain Education and Training**

The [Policy domain Education and Training](#) comprises:

- **the Flemish Minister for Education** for the legislature 2014-2019 is Ms. Hilde Crevits (she is also vice-minister president). As Minister of Education she is responsible for the policy areas of education and training.
- 5 autonomous organisations who, together, form **the Flemish education administration**

More information on the constellation of this policy domain and the underlying structure can be found in 6.2.

Of specific importance towards cultural education is:

**CANON Cultuurcel** (CANON cultural cell), which is one of the services within the division communication of the Department of Education and training.

CANON Cultuurcel

- provides information, inspiration and financial support to teachers.
- conducts research and conducts consultations on cultural education at Flemish and European level.

On their website the following information can be found:

- news about current cultural themes
- publications that stimulate creativity
- Information on study days and events

### **Local governance**

From 2016, the funds for the implementation of a local cultural policy are added to the municipal fund. Sectoral plans, such as the cultural policy plan and the youth policy plan, are abolished and integrated into the strategic multi-annual planning of the municipality. This leaves local authorities more freedom to shape a number of Flemish priorities in their own local policy. The responsibility for conducting a local cultural policy is now fully in place by the municipalities. Where the Flemish government had a leading and controlling before, it is now more supportive and stimulating.

### **Main public actors involved**

#### **Public (<http://www.publiq.be/>)**

In 2017, CultuurNet Vlaanderen and CJP (Cultureel Jongeren Paspoort – Cultural Youth Passport) Joined forces and became 'Publiq'. Public is specialized in cultural marketing and communication. Their ambition is to make (more) people (more) enthusiastic for (more) culture. Publiq **informs** about cultural and leisure activities in Flanders and Brussels. In order to do that Publiq has developed the UiT network of more than 250

regional partners in Flanders and Brussels. Websites, magazines and brochures of local governments feature a recognizable UiT label, which shows the way to activities in the neighbourhood. They also developed the UiT database (see also 8.4).

Public has also a wider **activating** mission. They offer local governments within the UiT network a useful set of tools with which they can develop policies to encourage public participation.

Publiq pays special attention to children, e.g. the label 'Vlieg' ('Fly') announces the cultural options for the very young (under 12) and cultural centers and leisure services are using this fly-label extensively in their communication. However, such a label is only developed for children (-12) and not for young people above 12.

### Cultuurconnect

As already mentioned, sectoral plans, such as a cultural policy plan or youth policy plan, do not exist separately and must be integrated into the strategic multiannual planning of the municipality. Cultural education is under the new decree on Local Culture Policy identified as one of the Flemish policy accents. For the local youth policy, 'youth culture' has been put forward as a Flemish priority, which includes:

1. the way the municipality wants to respond to youth cultural expressions of children and youth and how they want to support, stimulate and facilitate;
2. the way the municipality wants to stimulate, support and facilitate the artistic expressive experience of children and young people. This also includes aspects of cultural education.

Multiannual planning is in Flanders seen as the ideal step for anchoring cultural education as a necessary social lever in municipal or urban policy. [Cultuurconnect](#) supports cultural actors in integrating cultural education in an integral (with all partners from local cultural policy) and transversal (in collaboration with other partners, such as education, community development, youth, social services or other services) way. The Ambrassade and VVJ fulfil a similar role regarding actors from local youth policy.

Other potentially relevant support points and centers of excellence in the field of cultural participation and education with regard to young people are:

[Circuscentrum](#): Circuscentrum is the official link between the Government of Flanders and the circus sector. One of the 5 activity pillars of the Circuscentrum is pedagogic support.

[De Ambrassade](#) supports youth workers' organizations (some of whom are active in cultural education)

[Demos](#): knowledge centre on participation

[FARO](#) is the Flemish interface centre for cultural heritage. It is a not-for-profit organization that supports the sector of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Flanders and is subsidized by the Flemish government. FARO's aim is to strengthen and support the cultural heritage field in Flanders (museums, archives and libraries and several other heritage organisations).

The [Forum voor Amateurkunsten](#) is the contact point for all amateur artists. It brings together nine national amateur organizations.

[Kunstenpunt](#) (Flanders Arts Institute) is an Interface organisation and expertise centre for music, performing and visual arts from Flanders & Brussels

[Lasso](#) is a Brussels network for cultural participation and arts education

[Mediarte.be](#) encourages initiatives concerning education, training and employment in the audiovisual sector

The [Sociaal Fonds voor de Podiumkunsten](#) (Social Fund for the Performing Arts) operates in two areas, namely education and employment, with a particular focus on risk groups.

The latter are all groups experiencing thresholds to work in the sector, but also employees in the sector whose employment could be threatened. In order to strengthen their position, we use financial incentives in the form of training and employment premiums.

[Vitamine C](#) is a learning network of field workers and policy-makers who want to connect children and young people with art and culture.

The [Vlaams Fonds voor de Letteren](#) (Flemish Fund for the Letters, VFL) is a Flemish Public Institution which focuses both on authors and readers. It's policy is aimed at supporting creation, production, presentation and framing.

[VVJ – Vereniging Vlaamse Jeugddiensten](#) (Association of Flemish Youth Services) informs and supports Flemish cities and municipalities as members organization for the preparation and implementation of the local youth policy.

## **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

### **Between culture, youth and education**

The Flemish government has recognized the importance of arts and cultural education for a long time. In a protocol agreement dd. 18/02/2002, the Flemish Ministers of Education and Culture at the time agreed to develop a policy on the different levels of culture and education: school time, leisure and professional time. Both ministers jointly and separately took various initiatives to implement this protocol.

In order to conduct a structural dialogue between the two policy areas, four advisory groups and one steering group were installed, including representatives of both departments in addition to a number of external experts. The Steering Group's objective was to set up a concrete timetable and action plan to achieve the objectives of the protocol while the advisory groups had the task of giving concrete recommendations and advice to the steering committee to achieve structural cooperation. These advisory groups focused on the different fields within which cooperation between Culture and Education can be formed, respectively, school time, leisure time, professional time and teacher education. The conclusions and recommendations issued partly led to the respective policy papers of both ministers, after which the steering and advisory groups were dissolved.

Yet the focus on this issue and - correspondingly - the need for close cooperation between the policy domains Culture, Youth and Education only gained momentum in recent years.

Since then, regular consultations have been held between both administrations for information exchange and cooperation on the above topics. CANON Cultuurcel is the partner within the Policy Domain Education and Training. For example, various studies and publications have been prepared together ('Heritage Education in Flemish Education and XS-About Children, Culture & Communication', 2007).

In response to the Bamford report (see 8.1), the former Flemish Minister for Education and Training, Frank Vandenbroucke, founded a committee and a sound board. He also involved Flemish Minister for Culture and Youth, Bert Anciaux. The task of the committee was to submit a number of concrete proposals for better arts and cultural education in Flanders, based on a critical test of the recommendations of the Bamford report. A sound board group gave the various institutions and sectors concerned (e.g. part-time arts education, teacher training, cultural centers, ...) the opportunity to express their views on the proposals formulated by the committee. This resulted in the report "[Gedeeld/Verbeeld](#)" (Shared/imagined) with recommendations of the Commission Culture and Education" that was presented on September 18, 2008.

Also in September 2008, Minister Anciaux presented the '[Policy and Action Bill on Cultural Education in Policy Fields Culture and Youth](#)', entitled [Smaakmaker](#) (Taste Maker). With that note, he wanted to put the efforts made in the field of cultural education in the spotlight, while at the same time providing new perspectives. The focus on cultural

education has increased intensely over the last decades and has spread and nested in several aspect of cultural and youth policy. From the perspective of cultural and youth policy, according to Anciaux, education plays an exceptional - but not exclusive - role in cultural education.

A first initiative that addressed the shared concerns formulated in “Gedeeld/Verbeeld” and “Smaakmaker” was the formalization of internal official consultation within the Department Culture, Youth, Sports and Media as an ‘anchor point’ for cultural education. This served as a focus on cultural education for actors in their own policy area, but also for players from other policy areas (including CANON Cultuurcel) and at other policy levels. The existing informal civil consultation group on cultural education, coordinated by the Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media and representing the various entities, was formalized and renamed ACCE: Ambtelijke Coördinatie CultuurEducatie (See below for more information)

Approximately at the same time as the Commission Culture and Education started, a working group started on a substantive renewal of part-time art education. The working group included various sub-workgroups with experts from the field of work and related sectors within and outside education. That process led to a separate report on part-time art education (DKO) with ‘[Verdieping/Verbreiding](#)’ (Deepening/Widening). The report aimed to open up perspectives on a substantive renewal of part-time arts education and focuses on a dual mission: organizing artistic training for the active culture participant and promoting art and culture education in schools.

#### ACCE

This intra-ministerial platform for the coordination of cultural education (Ambtelijke Coördinatie CultuurEducatie) within the ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, works on the harmonisation of cultural education and cooperation between parties involved.

ACCE operates both at an administrative level and across the relevant sectors. The platform serves as a direct contact point for stakeholders within and outside the policy fields of Culture and Youth, including CANON.

Goals:

- follow-up and support of the policy cycle (policy preparation, implementation and evaluation) regarding the subject of cultural competence / cultural education
- focus is on cultural competency / cultural education for the actors involved within their own policy area, but also for the other policy areas, both at Flemish level and at other policy levels (European, regional, local)

The actual work of ACCE includes:

- the organization of structural consultations, both internally within the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, as well as with support points, stakeholders and other players at the intermediary level
- setting up short-term research on cultural education in the fields of culture and youth and the formulation of an Occupational Cluster Culture Educator and Competence Profile 'Conductor of Art Practitioners' (Tempera, 2012)
- the organization of an annual sector event, which also provides the Flemish Cultural Prize for Cultural Education

## **8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people**

### **Existence of a national strategy**

Currently, the Flemish government implements a transversal policy for cultural education. The policy is not organized by sub-sector, but runs across the different cultural sectors. Therefore one speaks about cultural education in a broad sense, of which art education, social-artistic work and heritage education are part of.

In recent years, the respective ministers for culture and education worked more closely together in their policies on cultural education and joint initiatives were taken. This led to a joint strategy, which was included in three official documents.

### 1. **Concept note 'Groeien in cultuur' (2012, 'Growing in culture'):**

On January 20, 2012, the Flemish Government approved the concept note "Growing in culture". The note addresses the need for more transversal policy attention for cultural education, outlines the contours of a common strategic policy framework and a first action plan. Where in the past, the ministers in question each developed a vision for cultural education from their own jurisdiction, ministers Schauvliege and Smet (legislature 2009-2014) developed for the first time a shared policy framework. This made it possible to develop a joint policy in the long run, to build a single quality framework for cultural education and to better align existing regulations and to set up joint actions. All actions, mentioned in this policy paper, aimed at providing children and young people with all opportunities to develop their creative talents, thus enabling a lively interaction between culture, youth and educational practice.

### 2. **Concept note 'Doorgroeien in cultuur' (2013, 'Further Growing in Culture')**

On the proposal of the Minister of Culture Mrs. Joke Schauvliege and Minister of Education, Mr. Pascal Smet, the Flemish government approved the concept note on Cultural education "Doorgroeien in Cultuur" on July 19, 2013. This note sets out a strategic policy framework for cultural education for adults (18-plus) and explains the policy vision and objectives. Also, the note entails some actions and initiatives that contribute to these objectives.

*Doorgroeien in Cultuur* is an additional complementary note on "Groeien in Cultuur", starting, like the previous note, from the need for a more overarching culture education policy, this time for 18-plus. In *Doorgroeien in Cultuur*, the key question is: how can we appeal to 18-plus people to "grow in" in different life stages and in different life domains? Also in this document the interfaces between Culture, Education and Youth remain as a starting point. Making connections between the different types of learning environments (part-time arts education, social association, art or heritage organization, an amateur company ...) is a priority.

### 3. **Action Plan 'Cultuur en Onderwijs – Samen voor meer en beter' (2016, Action Plan Culture and Education: Together for more and better )**

On 14/10/2016, the Flemish Government adopted the "Action Plan Culture and Education: Together for more and better". Based on this plan, Flemish Ministers of Education and Culture Hilde Crevits and Sven Gatz strengthened their cooperation. It is their ambition to enjoy each child and every young person, regardless of the home and socioeconomic background, of culture. Cultural awareness and cultural expression help young people to meet the challenges of tomorrow more self-consciously. Professional organizations from the cultural sector are given a more pronounced role. Both ministers also make a recommendation from the Citizenship Cabinet on Culture Participation that Sven Gatz organized in 2015.

#### **Scope and contents**

##### **Scope:**

With the Culture and Education Action Plan and the previous concept notes, it is the ambition to let every child and every young person enjoy culture, regardless of the home and socio-economic background.

Professional organizations in the cultural sector are given a more pronounced role in this objective. Cultuurkuur.be will be further developed as a digital platform to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between culture and education, both virtual and in reality.

**Content:**

The action plan takes as a reference the theory of "[Cultuur in de Spiegel](#)" (*Culture in the Mirror*) and the empirical findings from the study "Cultuur leren smaken" (*Learning to taste culture*, See 8.1. for some empirical findings)

Actions are rolled out over three domains.

- information and communication on the theoretical framework "Cultuur in de Spiegel" and the digital platform "[CultuurKuur](#)"
- Providing professionals in both cultural and educational sector, possibilities for training and networking to work within the theoretical framework, to work together and to learn from each other
- Contentually deepening: This entails supporting, disseminating and facilitating knowledge building and sharing (e.g. by means of pilot projects, seminars, ...).

**Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

Existing channels within the culture and education policy areas will be activated to achieve the goals. In particular CANON Cultuurcel (within the Communication Division of the Department Education and Training) and ACCE (within the Departement of Culture, Youth and Media) will be responsible for implementation of the strategy. They will for instance:

- be responsible for the communication of the theoretical framework and empirical results
- be in charge for the training of experts in cultural education
- guide pilot projects
- ...

There hasn't been yet an evidence-based monitoring or evaluation of the implementation of the action plan been conducted

**Revisions/updates**

The action note sets out a number of objectives in the short term. However, the two policy areas wish to go beyond the stated objectives and actions in this short-term plan and to set benchmarks in the long term.

To do this substantiated, the note and follow-up trails will be followed by a group of educational and cultural professionals with experience in the practice of cultural education. This focus group will be tasked to monitor closely the policy developments and monitor the actions listed in the note, and to report and make proposals for adaptation or improvement where necessary.

**8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation****Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture**

In Flanders different policies, programmes projects and initiatives are introduced to facilitate access to cultural activities. Most of those initiatives are not exclusively directed to young people, but often they have the largest impact on young people.

**UiTPAS-Vlaanderen (UiTPAS Flanders)**

The [UiTPAS](#) is a card developed by Public (see 8.2). This card combines attractive benefits for all cardholders with financial discounts for people with low or fixed incomes. In this way people in poverty can participate in leisure activities with reduction rates but without stigmatization. The UiTPAS-card is not specific directed to young people, but a lot of young people make use of it. This is among others due to the fact that many schools use the UiTPAS system to apply it in a structurally way to let young people participate in (compulsory) school trips. Some schools also decided to provide all their pupils with a UiTPAS. In this way, they avoid the stigma that only pupils in poverty would have an UiTPAS.

UiTPAS was launched in June 2012 as a pilot project in Aalst and surrounding municipalities. After a positive evaluation by the Flemish government, the program started in Brussels (under the name of Paspartoe) and in Ghent. In 2015, Ostend and the Southwest region also started implementing UiTPAS. In 2016 the Kempen, Maasmechelen and Leuven region followed. Also for 2017 there are several extensions.

On June 8 2017 the 100.000th UiTPAS was sold. Of this total number of cardholders approximately 50% were people with low or fixed incomes who could use the UiTPAS with reduction rates (52% in 2016).

Publiq who guides and follows up the UitPAS registers anonymous real-time data on the participation patterns and preferences of UiTPAS users. This way, governments can gain a better insight into the participatory behavior of their citizens in general and of people in poverty in particular.

### **Iedereen UiT (Everyone UiT) - leisure agendas with information on accessibility for people with physical disabilities**

Another product of Publiq is *Iedereen UiT*. Publiq collaborates with Enter vzw, Intro vzw and the Agency Accessible Flanders to enrich the data in their UiT-database (see next section 8.4.2) with information on the accessibility of cultural activities and sites and the presence of special facilities for people with disabilities. This information is available on [UiTinVlaanderen.be](http://UiTinVlaanderen.be) and also on *agendawidgets* that are integrated on sector-specific websites.

### **Stadspiraten (City Pirates) - a project for children in disadvantaged neighborhoods**

The 'City Pirates' project brings together museums and youth work to make socially vulnerable children acquainted with heritage in their area. This threshold-reducing action is aimed at city children who cannot go on holiday and do not often come into contact with culture. In 2011 a pilot project took place in Ghent, and in recent years the action was extended to Antwerp, Aalst, Ostend, Leuven, Brussels, Genk and Knokke-Heist.

### **BILL**

BILL presents cultural news for and by young people from 16 to 30 who live in Flanders and Brussels. About 60 volunteer youth reporters are involved in the content of BILL. For communication various media channels are used: live reports on Instagram, videos on Facebook, depth interview on the site, ... BILL uses also low-threshold and original awareness-raising campaigns and actions in school campuses and cities to reach young people.

BILL makes an own selection of events not to be missed and striking items. Everything gets an equal place, from popular mass events about interesting niche events to promising young people and their passion projects. The latter receive an extra stage and boost with the annual BILL Awards for young, creative, enterprising talent.

The BILL app provides an overview of the cultural activities and events in Flanders, Brussels and even in Europe through collaboration with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA). Through the app young people discover the best rates for young people and enjoy the cultural BILL discounts. The app is spread through education partners, cities, magazines and other channels.

### **Disseminating information on cultural opportunities**

#### **UiT-Databank (UiT-Database) - UiTmetVlieg ("OuT with Fly")**

The UiT-Database, developed by Publiq, is a database where all information on leisure activities in Flanders is entered, gathered and redistributed. In 2016, around 21,000 organizers entered 189.012 activities. This information is accessible through the calendars of local governments and through Publiq's website [UiTinVlaanderen.be](http://UiTinVlaanderen.be). By making a selection in the themes (e.g. theater, music, ...), the region, the data, etc. everyone can easily find a customized offer in the wide range of cultural and leisure

activities. The UiT database is also a source of information for newspapers, magazines and (websites of) Flemish television channels. Several external channels use the UiT database on a daily basis for the publication of their listings.

The UiT-Database is also the agenda partner of many government-campaigns and information services within and outside the culture, youth and sports sectors. In collaboration with several partners Publiq Vlaanderen also develops UiT calendars tailored to target groups with specific information needs, such as disabled people or non-native speakers.

[UiT met vlieg](#) is part of the UiT Database and is a leisure agenda focusing on children. On [UiTmetVlieg.be](#) one can find tailored information on trips and activities for and with children. The label Vlieg (Fly) makes the culture and leisure offer for families with young children (-12 years) visible and recognizable. In view of the frequently-addressed needs of parents regarding the timely finding of creative holiday camps, Publiq also decided to adopt and integrate the website "[Mijn kind op kamp](#)" (my child on camp) - created a few years ago by Mediaraven as a temporary project - on the family platform *UiT met Vlieg*.

For young people, a label like "Vlieg" is not provided. However, the BILL-website makes also use of the UiT-database.

### **Cultuurkuur**

Cultuurkuur is a co-production of CANON Cultuurcel and Publiq. [Cultuurkuur.be](#) is a platform where cultural-educational organizations and artists introduce themselves and their activities (workshops, shows, lectures, etc.) to schools. Organizers of cultural education activities can publish their activities on Cultuurkuur through the UiT-Database.

Teachers can browse through the range of activities and make a choice that suits the age of their pupils, the learning objectives, the region or the fields of interest. Teachers and schools can contact the organizers directly to make further arrangements.

The site also encourages interaction. Teachers can recommend or discuss activities and by doing so, inspire other teachers. They can also follow the pages of cultural providers to keep up with their new projects.

### **Dynamo**

Dynamo, formerly also known as dynamo3, is a subsidy project of CANON Cultuurcel. With DynamoOPWEG schools can request free bus transport to cultural destinations and with DynamoPROJECT they can apply for a subsidy to support a creative project at school. In addition, schools can find on Cultuurkuur an overview of other subsidies for culture at school, e.g. subsidies from cities and municipalities.

### **Prettiggeleerd.be**

Recognized organizations in the social-cultural adult sector can post their activities on [Prettiggeleerd.be](#) by entering them at [www.uitdatabank.be](#) and indicates which offer is organized by recognized socio-cultural adult organizations.

Other providers with an adult education offer can also enter this via the UiT-Database. Their activities also appears on [Prettiggeleerd.be](#).

### **Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people**

In 24 February 2017, the Flemish Government ratified the new Cultural Heritage Decree. This decree regulates the support of organizations in Flanders who occupy with cultural heritage activities. The Cultural Heritage Decree of 24 February 2017 draws the framework of support for the cultural heritage field in Flanders. The decree aims to promote care and dealing with moving and intangible heritage by developing the cultural heritage field, promoting qualitative and sustainable cultural heritage work and enhancing the social embedding of cultural heritage. "Together with the sector, I want to ensure that our cultural heritage is discovered and appreciated by a wider public, and that as many people as possible, and especially the cultural heritage communities, are

involved in cultural heritage and cultural heritage activities," said Minister Gatz at the launch of the new decree. However, there is no explicit focus on young people.

In Flanders, the official launch of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 will be given On 21 November 2017. The Flemish government, FARO and Herita present their concrete plans and incentives that day. FARO and Herita are two institutions that support the discovery and appreciation of the cultural and artistic heritage. But neither of them focuses in particular on young people in their activities. However, Herita, which is a non-profit **membership and network association** that focuses on the awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage, pays explicit attention to families and children on their website.

A focus on young people in awareness-programmes seems rather rare in Flanders. One exception is the project "[Jong redt Oud](#)" (Young saves Old), initiated by the Provincial Cultural Heritage Center (PCCE), together with the Limburg municipal councils. The project *Jong redt Oud* is an educational and participatory project in which children and adolescents "adopt" a heritage site, monument or landscape with heritage value in their area.

## **8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences**

### **Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training**

#### **Formal education in regular education**

##### *Separate subjects*

In policy documents (e.g. [Policy Note on Culture 2014-2019, in the Policy Letter on Education 2016-2107](#), Action Plan '[Cultuur en Onderwijs – Samen voor meer en beter](#)') the importance of cultural education and the need to promote the artistic and creative abilities of young people is emphasized. However, In practice the status and provision of cultural education is less prominent. Cultural education is only a compulsory subject in the first two years of secondary education. In these first two years goals are defined for musical and arts education. In upper secondary education schools are not obliged to offer courses on culture or creativity.

In Arts Secondary Education (approximately 2% of the pupils are enrolled in this track) art courses are compulsory. The type of art courses that are offered differ according to the specific discipline the pupil follows. Disciplines that are offered in arts education are e.g. architectural education, artistic education, audiovisual education, ballet, ...).

In general, technical and vocational educational tracks art subjects are optional and it is up to individual schools whether they offer the subject and often also up to individual students whether they study the subject when offered.

##### *Integrated in other subjects*

In upper secondary education cultural education is mainly integrated in other courses. For instance, dance education is integrated in sports, literature in the language courses, cultural heritage in history courses.

In the discipline human sciences (offered in gso) more attention is paid to cultural education. Their main courses are behavioral and cultural sciences. Cultural sciences is broader defined than cultural education as defined in the above mentioned policy documents, but the curriculum on cultural sciences does entail some final goals on arts. For instance, in the second grade pupils must know to:

1. Describe how art works can express values
  - Compare different appreciations of arts

And in the third grade in human sciences, pupils must know to:

- Illustrate and analyze the role and social meaning of artistic expressions for society

- Analyze artistic expressions from an art-critical, historical and cultural angle

In vocational education, one of the final goals for the subject PAV (project general courses) in second grade is to respect the historical-cultural heritage.

#### *Cross-curricular themes*

Creativity and cultural education is mainly integrated as a **cross-curricular theme** in Flemish education and this for all pupils in upper secondary education. These cross-curricular final objectives are minimum objectives which do not appertain to a particular subject of study, but which are pursued by several subjects or educational projects and activities (via formal learning as well as via non-formal learning). The cross-curricular final objectives entail an obligation of effort for the schools, not for the pupils.

The cross-curricular final objectives apply to all grades in secondary education (see Chapter 6 on education and training for more information). They have a common core of essential skills which are generically formulated and relate to different skills and attitudes. Two of those are relevant in the development of creativity and culture, namely:

- creativity
  - pupils can develop and implement original ideas and solutions
  - pupils take steps to realize innovations
- aesthetic skills
  - pupils can experience beauty
  - pupils can create beauty

These skills and competencies are crystallized in 7 contexts: physical health and safety, mental health, socio-relational development, the environment and sustainable development, the politico-judicial society, the socio-economic society, the socio-cultural society.

Art-related cultural exploration as part of social identity development, social interaction and social participation is one of the focal points in the context of the socio-cultural society. Objective is that when dealing with art, media and heritage, pupils take on individual and social learning processes. This is concretised in two goals (both in second grade):

- Pupils are actively involved in the culture and art that surrounds them;
- Pupils illustrate the mutual influence of art, culture and technology, politics, economics, science and philosophy of life

#### *Within part-time arts education*

Part-time art education (PAE) is additional education aimed at both children, youngsters as well as adults. It allows students to get acquainted with art in all its expressions, to develop a critical approach towards art, and to practice certain forms of art themselves, individually or in group (e.g. in an orchestra, a dance group, or a theatre company). PAE also prepares some young people for a professional artistic career in higher art education.

On 12 May 2017, a new decree on arts education has received its first approval in the Flemish Government. Goal is to launch the new policy on 1 September 2018. In section 8.10 you can find more information on the new decree and the changes this new decree will bring. In this section we describe the regulations that are currently in force.

Part-time art education offers four fields of study:

- Visual arts
- Music
- Drama
- Dance

Each field of study has its own structure with stages and options which are established in law. There are three stages: a primary stage, a secondary stage and a higher stage. Only in the field of study of visual arts a specialization stage is organized.

Participants in part-time art education enrol on a voluntary basis and pay a registration fee. At the moment, children from the age of six can start in the disciplines dance and visual arts. For the disciplines of music and drama a child must have reached the minimum age of eight (when the new decree on arts education comes into force this will also be six – see 8.10 for more information).

A pupil starts in the first year of the option of his choice. In order to pass to a next year a student must pass tests which are organised at the end of the year. When a student successfully completes a stage (s)he receives a final certificate which indicates the level (s)he reached.

The programmes in part-time art education comprise an entire school year of maximum 40 weeks, which lasts from 1 September until 30 June. Some schools combine the weekly teaching periods of certain subjects into fortnightly or monthly classes.

### **Non-formal learning and youth work**

Non-formal arts and cultural education in Flanders is mainly part of the Culture and Youth policy fields of the Flemish Community. Four types of subsidies are relevant with concern to non-formal learning on creativity and culture, namely subsidies for cultural education associations, subsidies for experimental youth work, general national youth work organisations and youth houses.

#### **1. Youth Work – cultural education associations**

Youth work organizations can apply for subsidies as a [cultural education association](#). To be subsidized as a cultural education association, the organization must first meet a number of general conditions (see Article 17 of the [Decree of 20 January 2012 on the implementation of a renewed youth and child rights policy](#)).

To be recognized, the association must realize at least six times a year one of the following modules:

- organizing a cultural educational activity offer for young people in leisure time;
- organizing a cultural educational activity offer for the youth outside of leisure time;
- training of cultural education counselors;
- guiding young people to an artistic product;
- guiding local cultural education initiatives for youth

When an association is recognized then

- this recognition is valid for an indefinite period, provided that the association continues to act in concordance with the conditions for grant and recognition,
- receives a basic operating subsidy of 80 000 € per year;

The cultural education associations that receive an operating grant may also receive project grants for initiatives that

- stimulate the artistic creativity of children or young people
- (or) children or young people learn to understand the language of the arts.

Only projects that respond to developments or opportunities that could not be met when drafting the policy note and which have a special character for the association are eligible for subsidization.

In 2017 22 associations were recognized as cultural education associations and received operating subsidies. Only one of these organisations focused exclusively on children, the others focused (also) on young people:

- **Artforum vzw** ([www.artforumvzw.be](http://www.artforumvzw.be)): Artforum is a national youth service that gives children, young people and young artists the opportunity to participate actively

and/or receptively in professionally framed arts and culture activities and projects. These activities and projects are located within the broad field of creativity, cultural education, social-artistic and/or artistic work .

- **Casa Blanca vzw** ([www.casablancavzw.be](http://www.casablancavzw.be)): Casa Blanca is an association that aims at developing, executing and supervising art projects for children and young people. They offer activities in a leisure context as well as in school, their activities include e.g. cultural educational programs and workshops.
- **Cirkus in Beweging vzw (Circus in Movement)** ([www.cirkusinbeweging.be](http://www.cirkusinbeweging.be)): *Circus in Beweging* is an open house for circus education and uses circus activities as a means to promote individual, social, motoric and creative development.
- **Circusatelier Circolito** ([www.circolito.be](http://www.circolito.be)): Circusatelier Circolito teaches circus techniques in an educationally responsible and creative manner. Attention is paid to technology, expression, creativity, basic motoric features, surprise and motivation, success, self-confidence, initiative, learning (self-learning), teamwork, communication ...
- **Circusplaneet** ([circusplaneet.be](http://circusplaneet.be)): Circusplaneet uses circus as a creative medium to give children and young people the opportunity to develop individually and in group, both physically and mentally. Also they want to spread and develop circus as an art form.
- **Danskant** ([www.danskant.be](http://www.danskant.be)): *Danskant* uses dance, music and movement as an educational and active cultural experience with the aim of promoting personality development, social integration and participation among children and young people.
- **Jekino Educatie vzw** ([www.jekino.be](http://www.jekino.be)): *Jekino Educatie* is a youth work association that wants to guide children, young people and youth leaders and help them in the development of a healthy critical attitude towards the powerful influence of various (audiovisual) media
- **Jeugd en Dans vzw** ([www.jeugdendans.be](http://www.jeugdendans.be)): *Jeugd en Dans* (Youth and Dance) propagates amateur dance in all its diversity, by organizing and supervising youth work activities, and providing information and documentation.
- **Jeugd en poëzie vzw** (Youth & Poetry , [www.jeugdenpoezie.be](http://www.jeugdenpoezie.be)): *Jeugd en Poëzie* is an arts and cultural education organization that wants to promote youth poetry and wants to initiate, stimulate and guide children and young people into creative language and poetry writing.
- **Jeugdtheater Ondersteboven** ([www.jto.be](http://www.jto.be)): Youth Theater Ondersteboven is a youth theater company in Waasland. JTO is mainly a home for short workshops, longer courses, courses and vacations. In addition to training, JTO also produces theater and musical productions for children and young people.
- **Kidscam vzw** ([www.kidscam.be](http://www.kidscam.be)): Kidscam brings children and young people in an artistic way in contact with the audiovisual, especially animated film. Participants in the workshops are immersed in an artistic work process, and return home with a result. The realized films are finished and brought out.
- **Larf!** ([www.larf.be](http://www.larf.be)): Larf! is an arts education association that represents a youth theater where theater projects are made with children and young people. Children and young people can discover and experience the game of theater in an open house. By means of workshops and performances, Larf! reconciles theater and education.
- **Let's Go Urban** ([www.lets Gourban.be](http://www.lets Gourban.be)): Let's Go Urban offers a post-school program that consists of urban arts & street culture activities for young people from six to thirty years. The workshop offers various disciplines, such as urban dance, urban music, urban media, urban sports (freerunning & tricking) and urban dreamers (for young people who want to make their dream come true).
- **Mooss** ([www.mooss.org](http://www.mooss.org)): Mooss was established in Leuven in 1981. Its general objective is 'active arts education': learning, over and through the arts through active forms of work. Mooss wants to bring children and young people into contact with theater, music, dance, visual arts and audiovisual arts through their own

expressive activity. In addition, Mooss offers contemporary arts education at existing art exhibitions.

- **Musical On Stage** ([www.musicalonstage.be](http://www.musicalonstage.be)): Musical On Stage's main objectives include practicing theater arts and musicals, contributing to general cultural expansion, organizing educational projects and internships, composing music, organizing cultural excursions and organizing workshops and training.
- **Passerelle** ([www.passerellevzw.be](http://www.passerellevzw.be)): Passerelle wants children and young people to discover the world of contemporary dance. She brings young amateurs in dialogue with young choreographers and artists from other disciplines. This way, the association bridges the world of professional dance with that of the amateur.
- **Piazza dell'Arte** ([www.piazza.me](http://www.piazza.me)): Piazza dell'Arte is a mobile multidisciplinary educational art organization, which gives every youngster the opportunity to develop creatively by means of different multimedia techniques. The association focuses on young people from the age of 12 in (high) schools, neighborhoods, youth events, youth houses and cultural centers.
- **'t Kwasteeltje** ([www.tkwasteeltje.be](http://www.tkwasteeltje.be)): 't Kwasteeltje is an academy where children and youngsters are immersed in a musical world of image, circus, theater, dance, music and audiovisual education. The development of creative techniques, skills and expression is central to all activities in the workshops, the camps and courses.
- **Villa Basta** ([www.villabasta.be](http://www.villabasta.be)): Villa Basta wants to discover and stimulate creative enjoyment in all young people from 6 to 30 years to develop it into creative talent. Through workshops and projects on site, children and young people are stimulated. This growth is realized by means of several workshops and studios. Villa Basta also guides the 'outflow' to stages and partners in the cultural field.
- **Villanella - Kunstbende** ([www.kunstbende.be](http://www.kunstbende.be)): The Kunstbende is an art contest for young people aged 13 to 19, where they can challenge each other in categories such as performance, new media, video, design, photography, txt, txt on stage, music and dance.
- **Circus zonder handen** (Circus without hands, [www.circuszonderhanden.be](http://www.circuszonderhanden.be)): *Circus zonder handen* is a social-inclusive circus school in a metropolitan context. The association organizes weekly lessons with low-threshold circus activities and holiday camps. In addition, the organisation has an offer of activities on request.
- **ZZmogh** ([www.zZmogh.be](http://www.zZmogh.be)): ZZmogh wants to stimulate active art experience from a playful angle. Through musical projects and multi-day camps for schools and youth services, children and young people have the opportunity to actively and creatively participate in the activities and come into contact with the various musical domains. zZmogh aims at children and adolescents aged 6 to 18, in school and leisure time, and to their supervisors.

## 2. Experimental projects

Since 1 January 2013, the Flemish government has granted subsidies to associations that set up an experimental project in the following areas:

- Youth work
- Information to or about youth and youth participation
- Culture education of the youth.

Experimental projects focus on new developments and needs that live in the youth sector and more generally in youth. They are innovative in terms of methodology or content, for example startups of youth work through new methods or attracting new audiences.

In September 2016, the Youth Department received 24 grants for an experimental project. The Minister of Youth decided to subsidize 11 projects. The following 5 projects are geared toward young people and focus on the development of culture and creativity competences:

- **A school called tribe** (<http://www.asct.be>): In this project, musical and narrative activities are set up related to the jazz / hiphop idiom. The activities aim to support young people in constructively developing creative, social and critical skills.
- **Start to steam** - (project of Nerdlab vzw; [www.nerdlab.be](http://www.nerdlab.be)): Nerdlab is working on the development of a STEAM technique in which the A (arts) is added to the STEM methodology.
- **Creation up (project of Rythm Naturals vzw)** – (<http://www.rhythmnaturals.com>): Rhythm Naturals works on a participatory and inclusive creation project where talented diverse young dancers make full-fledged dance productions.
- **Spontane actie zones** (Spontaneous action zones, project of Toestand vzw; [www.toestand.be](http://www.toestand.be)): De Toestand developed a method of creating Spontaneous Action Zones in vacant and unused areas. Crucial is dialogue, creation, autonomy and action.
- **Al-tochtonen van de toekomst** (<https://altochtonenvandetoekomst.com/>) - (Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen project vzw): With this project *Vluchtelingenwerk* wants to enable young refugees to make their voices heard in places that matter. In addition, the association wishes to respond to the need for a meaningful leisure activity for this vulnerable target group.

### 3. National Youth Work

Also within subsidized national youth work, some organisations focus on cultural participation, some examples (other examples can be found in 8.7):

- **Jonge Helden** (Young Heroes, [www.jongehelden.be](http://www.jongehelden.be)): *Jonge Helden* aims to promote game and play to children and youth in a framework of creativity and with attention to participation, environment and community life. To this end, CREFI organizes vacations and courses, youth hosts are supported, and play-offs have been worked out.
- **Koning Kevin** (King Kevin, [www.koningkevin.be](http://www.koningkevin.be)): Koning Kevin aims to stimulate and develop a playful, creative and artistic attitude. Therefore Koning Kevin programs a range of initiatives in which dance, drama, music, image, media, game, but also creative thinking, figurative theater, cooking, writing are addressed.

### 4. Youth houses

Besides, 39 youth houses were subsidized in 2016 for the performance of an artistic project.

Youth houses are open and low-threshold meeting places for young people, which can be found in almost every Flemish municipality. Youth houses are considered to be places where impulses are given for diversity, youth culture, attention to vulnerable groups, sense of creativity and enterprise.

On 19 June 2013, the Flemish Parliament asked the Flemish Government to recognize youth houses as 'anchor points' for young people in local communities and to consider them as partners, especially in areas that are also part of the Flemish youth policy plan: diversity, youth culture, broad schools, vulnerable groups and sense of creativity and enterprise.

With the subsidies for supra-local projects of youth houses, the Flemish government wants to respond to changes that occur in the youth house sector and give impetus for creativity and innovation.

Youth houses that meet a number of conditions may receive subsidies for the execution of:

- a top-level project to promote artistic expression in young people
- a top-level project to support entrepreneurship among young people.

Per project a personnel subsidy of up to 40.000 euros and an operating subsidy of up to 5 000 euros can be given.

For more information, see:

[http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugdhuizen/resolutie\\_jeugdhuizen.pdf](http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugdhuizen/resolutie_jeugdhuizen.pdf)

<http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugdhuizen.aspx>

## Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

### Training for teachers in formal education

Since 1 September 2007 two types of initial teacher training programme remain:

- the **integrated teacher training programme** at university colleges, leading exclusively to a Bachelor's degree in education for nursery education, primary education or secondary education. Subject-specific and pedagogical/didactic components are integrated throughout these programmes;
- the **specific teacher training programme** at a university college, university or Centre for Adult Education, which is taken in addition to or after a subject-related initial programme and professional experience.

Both types of teacher training programs can lead to a diploma or certificate that allows to become a teacher in secondary arts education or a teacher in part-time arts education.

There are various different organisations (non-profit organisations, university colleges, universities, etc.) that offer in-service training projects. These are recorded (purely for information reasons, with no evaluation purpose) in an [in-service training database](#) on the Klascement-website that can be consulted online. And also on [Cultuurkuur.be](#), professionals in education, culture and youth work can find some trainings and workshops on teaching methodologies for cultural education.

### Training for professionals in non-formal education

In 2012, the Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media and the Department of Education and Training made a description of the occupation cluster 'cultural educator' and developed a competency profile for facilitators for artistic practitioners. The described competencies are intended as an in-depth guide to education, training and recognition of acquired competencies (EVC).

Several of the organisations mentioned in 8.5.1. offer management training and animator courses, e.g. [Mooss](#), [Jonge Helden](#), ... .

In 2017 Canon Cultuurcel and the Department of Culture, Youth and Media organized the **Expert Training Cultural Education** in 2017. This training was aimed at directors, policy staff, practitioners, educators and pedagogical counselors ... from the wide field of culture and education. Participants were immersed in the theory, policy and practice of cultural education for a number of months, focusing on the framework of "Cultuur in de Spiegel" (Culture in the Mirror).

[Heritage Classes & Citizenship](#) is an initiative of the Brussels-Capital Region. Since 2005, the Heritage and Citizenship project has been focusing on Brussels schools through activities such as walks and quests by roaming the school district. These activities, where the heritage is approached in an original and interactive manner, bring young people into contact with immovable heritage. Since 2012, the Heritage Classes provide a set of educational packages that will allow teachers with a young audience to actively discover the Brussels heritage. These files are available for free on the website of Heritage Classes with the aim of reaching a much larger number of students.

### Providing quality access to creative environments

As mentioned in the section 'Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training' youth houses are open and low-threshold meeting places for young people, which can be found in almost every Flemish municipality. They are

considered to be places where impulses are given for diversity, youth culture, attention to vulnerable groups, sense of creativity and enterprise.

Some regional and local youth and music centres also provide music courses and rehearsal rooms for musicians and bands.

## **8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture**

### **Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities**

Formal education emphasizes the link between of creativity in entrepreneurship, but no specific programs or initiatives are set up on cultural activities and entrepreneurship.

In non-formal education and youth work more attention is geared towards the connection between cultural activities and entrepreneurship. The Action Plan for Entrepreneurship Education 2015-2019 mentions support for youth cooperation (see also chapter 3). Youth cooperation schemes enable young people to experiment with their entrepreneurial skills in a supportive and safe environment. This has led to some initiatives. One example is **Haven**. Haven is a cooperative of young people, youth houses and motivated partners. The co-operative was founded in May 2016 by ten youth houses, Format (the Federation of youth houses) and the Artevelde school (more specific ArtePreneur within the Artevelde school). They provide a safe experimental space where young entrepreneurs get the space and time to experiment with their own project. This way they can safely test the viability of their own businesses while developing the necessary entrepreneurship skills. This project is supported by VLAIO, the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

### **Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors**

In July 2017, the Flemish government published a concept note "[Aanvullende financiering en cultureel ondernemerschap](#)" "Additional funding and cultural entrepreneurship" that will provide a basis for a long-term vision regarding additional funding and cultural entrepreneurship in Flanders.

The concept note is geared towards all individual actors and organizations who are professionally active in the arts sector (including the film and literary sector), the cultural heritage sector and the socio-cultural adult and circus arts sectors. This note does not focus on young people. However, some points are of particular relevance to young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sector, since they are at the start of their career when the biggest problems are experienced.

The draft note focuses on 4 spearheads:

#### **1. a 'Cultural Bank' (working title)**

The Cultural Bank will replace CultuurInvest, which was established in 2006 with a double assignment: 1) financial support of cultural sector companies with loans and capital participation, 2) financial advice and business coaching. The Cultural Bank wants to solve the problem that financial products from traditional lenders in Flanders are not aligned with the cultural and creative sectors. Many instruments of traditional lenders are theoretically open to the cultural sector, but demand for guarantees that can be difficult fulfilled by non-commercial players from the cultural field. The traditional assessment framework of a profit environment fails when evaluating cultural business plans. The 'Cultural Bank' will not be a new physical bank or a restart of CultuurInvest, but a network, alliance of finance partners to better access financial products tailored to the culture and creative sector in order to address market failure in this sector.

#### **2. an optimal fiscal policy**

#### **3. CultuurLoket**

Within Flanders there are currently two institutions of the Flemish government who have a specific assignment for services on aspects of cultural entrepreneurship: Kunstenloket

(of the Flemish cultural government) and Flanders DC (of the government agency Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship enterprise):

- **Kunstenloket** is the point of contact for business and legal advice for artists and organizations in the cultural and creative sectors. They provides information and advice to any individual who has questions about the commercial and legal aspects of an artistic activity.
- **Flanders DC**, or Flanders District of Creativity, is the point of contact for entrepreneurs in the creative industries. As an independent non-profit organisation, they act as the 'front office' of the government agency Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship, actively supporting creative entrepreneurs who want to build or grow their business.

In addition to Kunstenloket and Flanders DC there are many other key players such as sectoral support points, the Social Innovation Factory, PMV, CultuurInvest. All offer a combination of (subsector-specific or non-specific) services on certain aspects of cultural entrepreneurship and additional funding.

By means of a sector-wide Cultuurloket, with attention to subsector-specific needs, the Flemish government wants to support the Flemish cultural sector in their entrepreneurial plans by expanding the tasks of the current Kunstenloket to the entire culture sector. Cultuurloket will be a networked organization that, together with the many other players, will help the cultural sector in a more clear way without disrupting the existing market. Cultuurloket will monitor the quality of services offered and match supply and demand.

#### 4. and cross-sectoral cooperation.

## **8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies**

### **New technologies in support of creativity and innovation**

Some of the national subsidised youth organisations focus on the creative use of new technologies, for instance:

#### **Coderdojo Belgium** ([www.coderdojobelgium.be](http://www.coderdojobelgium.be))

CoderDojo Belgium is a digital crafts studio in which children and young people can explore the world of technology. Together with volunteers, Coderdojo Belgium vzw organizes monthly technology free workshops (do-it-yourself classes) called "Dojo's" - for children and young people from seven to eighteen years.

#### **Graffiti** ([www.graffitivzw.be](http://www.graffitivzw.be))

Graffiti youth service wants to provide children and adolescents (6-30 years) the necessary space and resources to experiment creatively with various (alternative) forms of communication (paint, drawing, fashion, theater, film, photo, music and text).

#### **Jeugd, Cultuur en Wetenschap** (Youth, Culture and Science, [www.jcweb.be](http://www.jcweb.be))

*Jeugd, Cultuur en Wetenschap* wants to involve young people in cultural and scientific activities and to stimulate interest in culture and science among young people aged 8 to 25, by providing them with a pleasant leisure activity.

In Flanders, [Cultuurconnect](http://Cultuurconnect) is a lab for libraries, cultural and community centers, looking for solutions to the digital challenges of our society. In 2017, Cultuurconnect organized for instance, sessions on digital culture education, focusing on digital tools (e.g. the use of Augmented Reality (AR), e-books made by pupils, virtual reality, ...).

### **Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

Also in Flanders, online sources and technologies are becoming an increasingly prominent place as a means of communicating and participating in art and culture. Information on cultural opportunities are disseminated online by e.g.:

- apps, e.g. [BILL-app](#) (with the BILL app, young people get access to all BILL and EYCA discounts and have always a handy overview of activities and events in the neighbourhood), [Erfgoedapp](#) (an app for news on cultural heritage, information on cultural heritage in the neighbourhood, and extra information at exhibitions),
- online-databases, e.g. the UiT-database

Besides online information persons can also visit online catalogi and collections of exhibitions and museums in Flanders.

## **8.8 Synergies and partnerships**

### **Synergies between public policies and programmes**

Synergies between different policies have been established by the mechanism of cross-sectorial policy for culture and youth (see: 8.3 Cross-sectoral cooperation).

### **Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers**

As illustrated in the other sections of chapter 8 there are many partnerships between culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers. See also cross-sectoral co-operation on Youth Wiki/Belgium FI [1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries](#).

## **8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture**

### **Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities**

#### **The Participation Decree**

The Participation Decree - in full the Decree on flanking and stimulating measures to promote participation in culture, youth work and sport - aims to support, enrich and strengthen participation in culture, youth and sport policy.

The Participation Decree is a mix of structural and project support, initiatives aimed at the participation of a broad audience and of certain groups of events, existing measures and new initiatives, subsidies for public and private initiatives. However, the various measures can be hung on two central hoods. The Participation Council wants to be a new leverage in many ways for more **community formation** and for more opportunities for the broad public in society to taste culture, youth and sport. In addition, the Participation Council wants to be a strong partner for social disadvantaged groups. There are a number of specific actions for the social disadvantaged groups.

Based on the participation decree, The Flemish Government subsidizes annual participatory projects that help group groups on their way to the cultural, youth or sports offer or valorises initiatives based on groups of people. In this way, the Flemish Government wants to promote a diverse, sustainable and active participation of opportunity groups in culture, youth and sport. Some examples:

**UW Youth radio:** program for young people from disadvantaged groups around radio linked to Urban Words new media coverage, the project aims at young people with a migration background or in poverty with an interest in urban arts, radio (or media), public debate or the activities of Urban Words. Young people receive training, feedback sessions, and create programs and debates about self-chosen themes.

The participation project '**Premier Atelier**' is a dance and theater camp for children of asylum seekers from Ghent.

### **Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities**

In December 2016, The Minister of Youth launched for instance a project call called "**Bridge-builders within and to youth work**". The call aimed to realize youth work for children and young people in vulnerable situations. The intention was to provide financial

support to organizations or groups of organizations that offer a youth work that better reflects the diversity of society. Minister of Youth Sven Gatz decided to grant a subsidy to twelve projects 'bridge builders'. The selected projects focus strongly on reaching children and young people in vulnerable situations or with a different cultural background and show them the way to youth work. This way, these young people can also get to know the youth work and enjoy a suitable leisure time. The selected projects were evaluated by the jury as very strong, innovative, realistic and feasible. Also a couple of cultural projects received a grand, such as the 'Caravan Project' of the Circusplaneet.

See also sections above.

### **8.10 Current debates and reforms**

Until May 2017, a level decree was missing and the legislation consisted of a mess of rules that were often outdated. On 12 May 2016, the new [decree for part-time art education](#) received the first approval of the Flemish Government. The new decree should come into force on 1 September 2018. The new decree entails the following changes:

- Children from 6 years of age will be able to follow all disciplines in part-time art education in Flanders. In the past, for 6-year-olds it is currently only possible to follow dance or visual arts. The new decree states that also music and word-art drama will be offered to young children.
- In the first stage (6 and 7 year olds) an academy can choose to work cross-domain or domain oriented.
- Part-time art education will work more closely with the schools so that all pupils get acquainted with culture and art
- The program stop will be canceled. So, academies will be able to expand their programming in multiple places.
- To date, minimum curricula are being used and end goals are missing. The new decree sets up end goals.
- More flexibility: Students can choose a tailored course, 4h lesson instead of 10h for example.
- The courses will be actualized. New courses will be introduced, such as courses to become a choreographer, director or DJ.

The decree has now been granted a first principle approval. After this initial principle approval of the decree, a few more steps have to follow. The VLOR, Flemish Education Council, has given his advice on 27 June 2017. The VLOR has advised that in order to achieve the full objectives (anchoring, simplification and transparency, updating) a number of important improvements are necessary.

More information on the reforms in part-time arts education:

- The concept note  
<https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Conceptnota-dko.pdf>.

## **9. Youth and the World**

Youth and the world

### **Special feature**

Several Flemish-funded youth organisations take up the task to raise the awareness of young people about global issues such as human rights and sustainable development. On the other hand, different ministries of the Flemish Government carry out a global plan for sustainable development. Many organisations have initiated projects about sustainable development and have developed methods, instruments and campaigns targeting young people.

## Highlights

Sustainability is an interplay between ecological, social, global and economic dimensions. In the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights policy plan the Flemish Government places the emphasis on the ecological component. Children and young people can make their own active contributions to a sustainable living environment. Structural measures are to ensure embedment. Several social actors play a role in this.

## 9.1 General context

### Main concepts

#### Sustainable development

The Flemish Parliament Act of 8 July 2008 concerning the sustainable development ([decreet ter bevordering van duurzame ontwikkeling](#)) adopts the following definition:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Specific attention is paid to the integration of and the synergy between the social, ecological and economic dimension and that the realisation requires a change process in which the use of resources, the purpose for investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional changes should be tailored to the future and current needs."

This definition is the guiding principle for everything which has to do with sustainable development in Flanders.

#### Sustainable development in the Flemish youth- and children's rights policy plan (2015-2019)

The Flemish youth and children's rights policy plan also mentions that sustainability is an interplay between four dimensions:

- ecological: attention should be paid to global warming
- social: attention should be paid to ALL children and young people
- global: attention should be paid to children and young people in Flanders and elsewhere
- economic: aiming at green jobs, circular economy...

However in this policy plan the Flemish Government places the emphasis on the ecological component. Children and young people can make their own active contributions to a sustainable living environment.

#### Youth representatives or youth ambassadors of the Flemish Youth Council

Youth ambassadors of the Flemish Youth Council are young people who think about social themes and represent the Flemish youth in the Flemish policy. These youth ambassadors discuss in working groups and examine social themes, such as social inclusion, work, etc. among young people. Furthermore, they formulate policy recommendations on European, Federal and Flemish level.

### Youth interest in global issues

#### Sustainable development and green patterns of consumption and production

The process for drawing up the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019 completed several participatory stages. In the spring of 2013, an extensive environmental analysis, the Great Priorities Debate, took place. The environmental analysis ([omgevingsanalyse](#)) provide an overview of trends, figures, research and the voice of children, youngsters and experts.

This environmental analysis reported also an overview of the themes sustainability, ecology, environment and "green living" for children and young people. The environmental analysis states that young people do not understand that themes such as environment and sustainability do not have high priority at political level. They believe

that attention must be paid to waste policy, fewer cars, green energy, adapting consumption behavior, protecting nature and making nature more accessible. An advice of the Flemish Youth Council also mentions that young people recognise the need for sustainable consumption ([advies duurzaam consumeren](#)).

The results of the survey of Youth Pact 2020 ([Eindrapport Jongerenpact 2020](#)) mention that young people are aware of the challenges the society face, such as global warming. Young people believe that everyone should take their responsibility. The results of the survey mention that 93% of young people want to use sustainable products, they want to recycle and use more frequently public transport. They also want to purchase common goods and share these products with neighbors. 60% of the young people who did the survey, believes that a system of lending and sharing can ensure that we maintain our current living standard. Rather than consuming less, young people mainly want to change consumption behavior. Just a little more than half of the young people mentions that they will only buy Fairtrade and biological products in 2020. 53,7% of the young people hopes that only sustainable products will be available in shops. Young people look at the government to raise public awareness and to stimulate companies to take the environment into account. 70% of the young people mentions that the energy in 2020 should be from environmental friendly suppliers. Young people mainly mention green energy and energy efficiency, they also ask for more green areas, attention for bikers and public transport. Young people want to move around independently: public transport should be payable, child-friendly, eco-friendly and accessible.

### **Children's rights**

[Globelink](#) runs the project KRAS in the last two years of secondary school. In this project students debate a specific sustainable development topic. In 2013, the topic was Children's Rights. At the end of the school year, the Flemish Parliament invites the students from different schools to a big closing colloquium, where students can present their recommendations.

The recommendations of the KRAS-project on Children's Rights mention that children and young people need to be protected, especially those in vulnerable situations, such as refugee children, children in difficulties... The young people of the KRAS-project also reject child labor.

In addition, young people of the KRAS-project attach great importance to education. They believe in awareness-raising campaigns and schools play an important role in this process. In their opinion schools should raise awareness of the importance of healthy nutrition, the healthcare system and ecological awareness.

Despite the many initiatives, much remains to be done about the right to participate. The young people of the KRAS-project believe that young people should be involved in social debates and their advice should be binding.

### **Entrepreneurship, employment, education or volunteering opportunities with regions outside Europe**

The results of the survey of Youth Pact 2020 mention that one third of young people wants to work or study abroad, particularly if it added value for their job or their training, for a good cause or if they can travel together with someone familiar.

Young people who are not going abroad are afraid to miss their family and friends. Learning another language is no threshold.

## **9.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up, including youth cooperation at the global level is not exclusive a youth policy theme (or any other policy area). The Flemish Government works via both horizontal and vertical

consultation and planning to stimulate youth's contribution to global processes of policy making.

Most relevant policy domains are:

At Regional (Flemish) level:

- Youth policy
- Educational policy
- Sustainable development policy

In the following we focus at the regional level and describe for each of the domains the relevant responsibilities.

## **Governmental authority**

### **Flemish Government**

The Flemish Government works together with other countries and regions in a bilateral context. The Flemish Government has bilateral cooperation for youth work and youth policy. The Flemish Government also participates in multilateral forums, such as the Benelux, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the UN and UNESCO. Discussions and political decisions at European level have impact on the Flemish Youth Policy.

Furthermore, the Flemish Government funds (youth) organisations, who increase young people's competences on sustainability, through the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012.

### **Main public actors at community-level (Flemish Community)**

#### **Minister in charge of sustainability**

The Government of Flanders consists of 9 ministers, who are in office for a 5-year term. Minister Joke Schauvliege (Christian Democratic party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Environment and Nature and Environmental Planning (from 2014-2019).

#### **Department Environment, Nature and Energy**

The Environment, Nature and Energy Department is the environmental administration of the government of Flanders. It is in charge of preparing, following up and evaluating the Flemish environmental policy.

Furthermore, the department promotes policy initiatives through a specific target-group policy. It is in charge of Education for Sustainable Development and ecological engineering. It subsidises projects and it provides for the fixed and regulated subsidies to environment and nature organisations, amongst others.

#### **Minister in charge of Education and Training**

Minister Hilde Crevits (Christian Democratic Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Education and Training (from 2014-2019).

#### **Ministry of Education and Training**

The Department of Education and Training together with the Minister in charge of Education and Training is responsible for the advice, evaluation and follow-up on education policy in Flanders.

The Flemish policy on education of sustainable development is defined in Flemish policy documents, such as Flemish Parliament Act of Sustainable Development and cross-curricular attainment targets in education.

#### **Minister in charge of Youth**

Minister Sven Gatz (Liberal Party) is currently the Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels (from 2014 until 2019).

He is the coordinating minister of the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan.

### **Ministry of Culture, Media and Youth**

The 'Division Youth' – embedded in the department of culture, youth and media – ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights.

'Division Youth' youth together with the Ministry in charge of Youth are responsible for the coordination of a horizontal Youth and Children's rights Policy Plan (leisure, education, well-being, equality, etc.).

The Flemish International Youth Policy is coordinated by Division Youth.

### **Main non-public actors**

#### **Non-profit organisations working on youth and the world**

Several Flemish-funded youth organisations take part in the development of policies, programmes or actions related to youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making.

Many organisations also have initiated projects about sustainable development and have developed methods, instruments and campaigns targeting young people.

#### THE FLEMISH YOUTH COUNCIL

**The Flemish Youth Council takes initiatives in this field (see chapter 5).** One of the aims of the youth council is to represent young people and youth work at national and international forums. By doing so, the Flemish Youth Council sends UN youth representatives to various (inter)national forums.

#### THE AMBRASSADE

The international youth representatives of the Flemish Youth Council are supported by the Ambrassade (see 5.3). It is an association recognised and granted by the Flemish Government and also responsible for development, support and provision of information to the youth sector.

#### GLOBELINK

The youth organisation [Globelink](#) runs the simulation project 'KRAS' in the last two years of secondary school. The students take on the role of a certain country or stakeholder and debate a specific sustainable development topic (e.g. climate in 2011-2012) from that perspective. At the end of the school year, the Flemish Parliament invites the students to a big closing colloquium.

The Flemish youth and children's rights policy also funds children's rights organisations. These non-profit organisations take initiatives that raise awareness of children's rights towards all people, including young people.

#### THE AANSTOKERIJ

The [Aanstokerij](#) is a non-profit youth organisation that consciously chooses game as an educational tool. For more than 40 years now, Aanstokerij has been developing, producing, facilitating and distributing educational games. The educational games inform and sensitise children, youngsters and adults about different social issues such as democracy, intercultural learning, north south problems, the environment and social skills.

#### JNM

[JNM](#) (Jeugdbond voor Natuur en Milieu) is a youth organisation for Nature and Environment. JNM focuses on young people between the ages of 7 and 26 who are interested in nature. It is also a youth organisation for and by young people. Fun and games form a large part of the organisation.

TUMULT vzw

[Tumult](#) is a youth organisation and encourages young people to meet each other, across borders. Tumult learns young people to deal with conflicts in a constructive manner and stimulates young people to be critical. By doing so, Tumult wants to strive towards a peaceful world together with children and young people.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

As mentioned in 1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries, youth policy is a transversal policy. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government.

Besides the Flemish Policy Plan, the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy envisages three more instruments of youth policy:

- Impact study of new legislation on children and youth (JoKER)
- Contact points for youth and children's rights and a coordinating administration
- Youth Progress Report

## **9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues**

### **Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level**

#### **"Kletske" of the Flemish Youth Council**

Youth representatives of the Flemish Youth Council think about social themes and represent the voice of young people in policies. By doing so, the youth representatives questioned young people (online and through focus discussions) and they then started to formulate policy recommendations on European, Federal and Flemish level.

The youth representatives discussed their recommendations in a number of roundtable discussions with experts and national policy makers on the event "Kletske" of the Flemish Youth Council.

In 2012, the Flemish Youth Council organised the event "[Kletske Participation](#)". In 2013, the Flemish Youth Council organised the event "Kletske Youth and Work" and in 2014, they organised the event "[Kletske Social Inclusion](#)". The recommendations of young people are not binding.

#### **Flemish youth representative in FRDO**

The Flemish Youth Council monitors global policy developments and disseminates their opinion at the UN level. It also supports the youth representatives.

The Flemish Youth Council has youth representatives in the Federal Council for Sustainable Development ([FRDO](#)). FRDO advises the Belgian Federal Government on federal policy on sustainable development. The youth representatives represent the Flemish youth on this council. There are also representatives of NGO's, employers, employees, science and the government. Different working groups prepare opinions.

#### **"What do you think?" project of UNICEF**

Since 1999, UNICEF has launched the project "[What do you think?](#)" in Belgium. UNICEF want to make the voices of children and young people heard with this project. UNICEF questions children and young people about their rights and whether or not children and young people experience problems with their rights. UNICEF gathers their ideas, their wishes and their suggestions. Subsequently, UNICEF will make these suggestions known to the Committee on the Rights of the Childs.

In addition, the project "What do you think?" want to encourage policy makers to go ahead with children's rights.

The publications and reports of these questionings can be found on the [website](#) of UNICEF (only in Dutch).

### **KRAS (Globelink)**

Since 1977, the Flemish-funded organisation Globelink runs the simulation project [KRAS](#) in the last two years of secondary school. In this project. The students take on the role of a certain country or stakeholder and debate a specific sustainable development topic from that perspective. At the end of the school year, the Flemish Parliament invites the students to a big closing colloquium. On this colloquium, young people formulate their (non-binding) policy recommendations.

### **J100-top: initiative of youth organisations in Antwerp**

In 2016, the first [J100-top](#), an initiative of youth organisations in Antwerp, was organised. These youth organisations want to bring experts, (regional) politicians and young people together to discuss social themes.

During the first J100-top, the themes media, police, work and discrimination were discussed. Young people exchanged ideas with local policymakers.

### **Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level**

#### **Europinion-project of the Flemish Youth Council (Structured Dialogue)**

The Structured Dialogue is a European project and process for discussions between young people and policy makers about different themes, to make sure the opinions of young people are taken into account in defining the EU's youth policies.

In Flanders, the structured dialogue is managed by the Flemish Youth Council and it is called the Europinion-project ([Gestructureerde dialoog – Europinion](#)). A group of eight young people is brought together in Europinion. The European Council provides guiding questions about a specific theme, such as youth unemployment, rights and political participation of young people. The eight young people of Europinion are looking for answers on the guiding questions by conducting research, consulting young people, policymakers and experts. Furthermore, there are a lot of actions: a kick-off weekend, a meeting with British Youth Ambassadors, a role play in the parliament, etc.

The results of the Flemish consultations and any additional input from international youth organisations are compiled into background documents. The eight Flemish young people will go to the EU Youth Conferences, where youth representatives and policy makers have the opportunity to work together and present a joint message to the EU. The EU Youth Conferences take place twice a year and are hosted by the country that holds the EU Presidency.

#### **Flemish youth representative on the High Level Political Forum of the UN**

The Flemish Youth Council sends a youth representative to the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development. This forum is United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2017, a youth representative will participate in the High Level Political Forum in New York to represent the Flemish youth in global issues.

#### **Flemish youth representative on youth forum UNESCO**

UNESCO is an organisation of the United Nations (UN). Its aim is "to contribute to the building of peace, the [eradication of poverty](#), [sustainable development](#) and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information".

The UNESCO Youth Forum was created in 1999 to provide young people with the opportunity to present their concerns and ideas to Member States and help shape the direction of UNESCO.

Every two years, UNESCO organises a youth forum, that precedes the general assembly of UNESCO. Young people from 195 Member States come together at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris to discuss and debate thematic areas of concern.

The Flemish Government sends a youth representative to the youth forum.

The 9th UNESCO Youth Forum brought together 500 young women and men from all over the world to focus on issues related to Climate Change and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The 9th UNESCO Youth Forum took place at a crucial time for sustainable development – just one month after the UN Summit for adoption of the post-2015 Development Agenda and one month before the United Nations Climate Change Conference. The 9th UNESCO Youth Forum therefore served as a strategic opportunity to ensure that the voices of future generations remain front and centre of the new development agenda.

## **9.4 Raising awareness about global issues**

### **Formal, non-formal and informal learning**

#### **Formal learning**

Sustainable development is a cross-curricular attainment target (VOET), which refers to the definition of the so-called Brundtland report: "development provides in the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation".

Secondary schools are not expected to solve sustainability issues, but they have to offer opportunities for self-development to students. These opportunities enable young people to look for solutions with each other. Regarding the characteristics of sustainability issues, the cross-curricular attainment targets focus on:

- learning to think in terms of systems and to look at problems from different perspectives
- the fact that sustainability issues have local and global characteristics
- knowledge and understanding, but also the development of values and norms
- the importance of an adapted individual lifestyle if young people want to look for solutions for sustainability issues
- participation in the societal debate
- the understanding that sustainable development is a continuous learning process

Furthermore, there is the project MOS ([Milieuzorg Op School](#), Environmental Care on School) of the Flemish Department of Environment, Nature and Energy. The MOS-project supports primary and secondary schools to make schools environmentally friendly and a sustainable learning and living environment.

#### **Non-formal learning**

The Flemish Government will support projects and initiatives in all kinds of areas which will make sure that sustainable choices are deliberate choices. These projects must devote special attention to young people. Either because they (help) implement the project, or because it is specifically targeted on them.

The Flemish Department of Environment, Nature and Energy focuses on (pilot projects regarding) Education for Sustainable Development and care for nature. A platform and working groups for 'green' education in formal and non-formal education exists, a.o. in youth work. A whole series of actions are organised, e.g. to stimulate green camps, green infrastructure, more nature to play in, playing in woods...

## **Educators' support**

In Flanders, there are various types of educational materials on sustainable development that were developed by Flemish-funded youth organisations, such as [Globelink](#), [JNM](#) (Youth Federation for Nature and Environment), [Studio Globo](#), the Flemish Youth Support Centre, Jeugdwerknet.

Furthermore, the project MOS offers teaching materials, information and training to teachers of secondary schools. MOS belongs to a global network of schools who work towards environmental care and sustainability.

## **Informal learning**

### **Youth organisations whose core activities concentrate on topics related to youth and the world**

The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 supports and subsidises different organisations, such as national organised youth associations, associations information and participation and associations cultural education. It also provides the funding of organisations that focus on sustainability. The Flemish Government registers which organisations indicate in their annual report to work on sustainability.

## **Projects**

Music for Life, for example, is an annual initiative organised by the radio station Studio Brussel and the Red Cross Flanders. It is a fundraising event for which many youth organisation organize activities to raise money for developing countries.

## **Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues**

### **Thick Sweater Day**

Thick Sweater Day ([Dikke truiendag](#)) is an awareness raising campaign organised by the Flemish Government.

In 2005, MOS (Milieuzorg Op School, Environmental Care at School) of the Department of Environment, Nature and Energy organised the first Thick Sweater Day in response to the Kyoto Protocol. The protocol's objective was to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change.

Since 2005, Thick Sweater Day has reminded us of the agreements made under this crucial treaty with a few simple activities: wear a warm sweater and turn down the heat, take your bike more often, eat locally grown food, reduce standby power and so on. On Thick Sweater Day Flanders massively reduced CO2 emissions as well as raising the awareness of school-going children, businesses and the authorities.

### **National Children's Rights Day**

Each November, there is a National Children's Rights Day. There are a lot of activities to promote (the understanding) of children's rights.

In Flanders, the Flemish Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner (see 4.2.2) also presents its annual report on this day.

### **Campaign 'Work for Change' by YOUCA**

[YOUCA](#) (Youth for Change and Action) is an organisation, supported by the Flemish Government, for and by young people. YOUCA organises the campaign 'Work for Change' every year.

More than 17.000 Flemish and Brussels students between the ages of 15 and 20 become professionals for one day. Their wage goes to projects of engaged young people throughout the world.

## No Hate Speech Movement

The No Hate Speech Movement is a campaign for online human rights and against fear for young people who want to stop discrimination and hate speech online. The campaign started in 2012 and is initiated by the Council of Europe but it is based on national campaigns run in the member states of the Council of Europe. National committees will operate their own national online Campaign platforms and online tools.

In Flanders, the No Hate Speech Movement Flanders, supported by the Division Youth and youth organisations, calls on young people, youth workers, teachers, parents... and sensitise, train and support them to take actions against hate speech ([No Hate Speech Movement Vlaanderen](#)).

## Information providers

### The Department of Environment, Nature and Energy of the Flemish Government

The Department of Environment, Nature and Energy promotes policy initiatives through a specific target-group policy.

### Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights

The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 ([decreet 20 januari 2012](#)) supports and subsidises organisations (see informal learning) that focus on sustainability.

Organisations that are funded this way are e.g.

- Globelink

[Globelink](#) is a national organised youth association and sets up global and sustainable projects together with young people. Globelink aims at a sustainable, humane and fair world by developing competences among young people. These competences should enable young people to make sustainable choices.

Globelink has projects for schools, youth organisations and everyone who is enthusiastic about the climate.

### The Flemish Youth Council

The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on Flemish Youth Policy sets out a legislative framework for the Flemish Youth Council (Vlaamse Jeugdraad). The Flemish Youth Council is the **official advisory body** of the Flemish Government on all matters concerning children and young people and informs children and young people.

### The Ambrassade

The Youth Council is supported by the [Ambrassade](#), an association recognised and funded by the Flemish Government and also responsible for development, support and provision of information to the youth sector.

The Ambrassade offers, together with other youth information actors, a wide variety of information for children and young people.

## Key initiatives

See also youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues.

### The Department of Environment, Nature and Energy of the Flemish Government

The Department is responsible for environmental education and provides training for teachers and lecturers. It also offers projects such as MOS and Ecocampus. These projects supports schools to make schools an environment-friendly and sustainable learning environment.

## Globelink

The youth organisation Globelink disseminate information and raise the awareness of young people about global issues through different leisure time projects, such as:

- [Kras](#) for schools
- [Ecoshizzel](#) for youth camps
- [9400 Toeren](#), a project on mobility, for youth associations

## The Flemish Youth Council

The UN representatives of the Flemish Youth Council launched the project and toolkit "[Flemish youth 4 global goals](#)" (only in Dutch). The toolkit explains the Global Goals for Sustainable Development to young people and youth organisations. The Flemish Youth Council believes that the Global Goals for Sustainable Development are important for young people and hopes that these goals will motivate the Flemish Government to work towards a sustainable world for young people and youth organisations.

The UN representatives of the Flemish Youth Council also offers a workshop on sustainability to teachers and students of upper secondary education.

## Ambrassade

Youth work fights for social change. In 2015 and 2016, the Ambrassade has launched the initiative "An eye for poverty" ([Oog voor armoede](#)) to stimulate youth organisations to make a difference for children in poverty. Therefore, the Ambrassade organises dialogues among youth workers, child carers and families in poverty. The aim of this initiative is to sensitise the society.

The Ambrassade also launched [Jongerengids](#) (Youth Guide), which consists of three booklets and three websites for different age groups. Jongerengids offers information on different themes for young people, also information on environment and sustainability.

## 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

### Green volunteering

#### Flemish-funded youth organisations

The Flemish Government will support projects and initiatives in all kinds of areas which will make sure that sustainable choices are deliberate choices. These projects must devote special attention to young people. Either because they (help) implement the project, or because it is specifically targeted on them. Creating involvement and enhancing competences are key concepts.

This process involves pilot projects regarding Education for Sustainable Development ([MOS](#)-project) of the Flemish Department of Environment, Nature and Energy and projects as part of Ecocampus. These projects are funded by the Flemish Government.

Furthermore, the Flemish Government supports organisations, who increase young people's competences on sustainability, through the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012. These Flemish-funded youth organisations encourage their participants to do green volunteering and organise activities on this topic. For example Globelink and JNM.

**Globelink** have projects for youth organisations, for instance '[Art D Eco](#)' workshops: creating art with garbage of the youth work organisations. Globelink also co-organises an annual eco-contest for playground initiatives, which receives financial support from the Flemish Government.

**JNM** is a youth organisation for Nature and Environment. [JNM](#) focuses on young people who are interested in nature and stimulates a sustainable and environmental friendly way of living.

## **The Department of Environment, Nature and Energy of the Flemish Government**

As mentioned above, the Department of Environment, Nature and Energy and other Nature and Environment authorities focus on education for sustainable development and care for nature. A platform and working groups for green education in formal and non-formal education exists in youth work ([Milieuvorming en –educatie](#)).

### **Green production and consumption**

In the period 2015-2019, the Flemish Government wants to help make sustainable and ecological products as attractive and accessible as their non-sustainable counterparts. In the following we describe the planned processes of the Flemish Government.

The Flemish Government wants to reduce environmental impacts by giving financial injections and raising awareness of this theme. Making the choice for sustainability is rewarded. When doing so, the Flemish Government keeps in mind that they have an exemplary role to fulfil. They pay specific attention to sustainability in their own projects and communication.

## **9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation**

### **Intercontinental youth work cooperation**

#### **Bilateral cooperation between Flanders and South Africa**

Since 1996, there is a cooperation on youth matters between Flanders and South Africa.

The cooperation between the Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish Community and the National Youth Development Agency ([NYDA](#)) of South Africa focuses on voluntary work of young people and civil society.

They are also working on a publication about 20 years of cooperation.

#### **Funding program global youth projects**

The Flemish Government had an additional funding program for youth projects in the context of North-South cooperation. It provided opportunities for youth groups to run a project with a partner from a country on the DAC list of the OECD.

This funding program stopped in 2012, because the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights did not provide grants for international youth projects.

However, there are funding programs for international projects and youth work cooperation offered by JINT vzw.

#### **JINT vzw**

Since 1989, the Flemish Government supports the Flemish coordinating agency for international youth work, [JINT](#). The Flemish Government subsidises JINT through the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights.

JINT was established to implement the European Youth programmes within the Flemish Community, to promote international exchange and cooperation of, for and by youth and to foster the reflection on youth, youth work a youth and children's rights policy by all actors involved on the basis of international exchange and cooperation.

JINT does not only focus on projects within the EU, but promotes all international learning mobility through its websites, newsletters and publications.

In addition, JINT is the Flemish coordinating body for international youth work and the National Agency for the European Youth in Action Programme in Flanders. The youth section of Erasmus+ is called Youth in Action. It funds projects for and by young people and youth organisations. It has a separate budget and specific project possibilities.

## Development cooperation activities

Several Flemish-funded organisations encourage young people to participate in development cooperation activities either in their country of residence or abroad. For example:

### Go strange

In Flanders, JINT guides young people across borders under the flag [Go Strange](#). Young people with plans to travel abroad can find international exchange possibilities, such as volunteering, volunteering in development cooperation projects, studying and internships, on the website of Go Strange. Flemish organisations involve volunteers in their development cooperation projects. Sometimes, there are calls for volunteers to work in the South.

In 2015, there was a research ([cijferonderzoek](#)) on the numbers of Go Strange. 6442 Flemish young people aged between 14 and 30 went abroad for an international experience via a Flemish organisation. 23% of these young people (1512 young people) did international volunteer work.

JINT supports Go Strange and young people with plans to travel abroad through the Youth in Action-program of Erasmus+. It funds projects for and by young people and youth organisations. It has a separate budget and specific project possibilities.

### Bouworde vzw (Building order)

[Bouworde](#) allows young people to approach the world differently by enabling them to volunteer in social, technical or ecological projects abroad. Bouworde strives for a world where basic rights for everyone will be respected. During a social 'building camp', volunteers will help others. During a technical camp, volunteers will help with building or renovation. An ecological camp focuses on working in and for nature.

Bouworde has different projects for 15-17 year olds, 18-30 year olds, groups and schools and organises active voluntarily trips. Bouworde owns 114 volunteer camps in 38 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

Bouworde is a national organised youth association funded by the Flemish Government.

### Youth service Don Bosco

Youth service Don Bosco ([Jeugddienst Don Bosco](#)) supports young people to do volunteer work and offers training initiatives and various forms of leisure activities. Youth service Don Bosco also offers youth projects, youth exchanges, training projects or individual volunteer work in Europe, Africa, Asia and South-America.

Every year, youth service Don Bosco prepares nearly five hundred young people to do voluntary youth work.

Youth service Don Bosco is a national organised youth association funded by the Flemish Government. The international secretariat of Don Bosco is financially supported by the European Union, through its 'Erasmus+ Youth in Action'-programme.

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

### Political youth movement

Since 2017, political youth movements are no longer subsidised through the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights. These political youth movements only can be recognised through this Flemish Parliament Act.

The Council for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media recommended, in response to the Flemish Parliament Act of 12 January 2012, to stop the subsidisation of political youth movements. In view of the current and existing party funding, separate subsidisations for political youth movements is no longer necessary.

## Glossary

**Administration for youth policy:** the administrative entity of the administrative services who are responsible for the implementation of youth policy.

**Ambrassade:** support centre for youth work and youth information, secretariat of the Flemish Youth Council. Supported by the Flemish Government.

**Better Administrative Policy:** In the frame of a programme for 'Better Administrative Policy' the Flemish public administration has been subjected to a reform in 2006 (Flemish government, s.d.). This programme was designed to make the public administration more efficient, to make Flanders a place where people enjoy working and living.

**Citizen's Cabinet (Burgerkabinet):** this is an initiative of Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Sven Gatz. The goal of this initiative is to give people a voice and discuss cultural and youth policies.

**Commision:** A commission is a group of Flemish representatives, who are specialised in a particular subject, such as education, welfare or economy. A commission has fifteen permanent members and fifteen alternates, divided according to the strength of the political groups. Commissions prepare the decrees, check the Flemish government policy (e.g. through questions or interpellations to the Minister).

**Community fund (gemeentefonds):** this is a source of income for local authorities. Approximately one fifth of the income of local authorities arises from this Flemish fund. The fund is divided amongst the municipalities based on different standards. Municipalities can define the allocation of the fund and can use these financial means as they see fit. It only has to be divided between the local authority and OCMW.

**Community Schools:** schools who have an active cooperation with other sectors to create a rich learning and living environment for children and young people.

**Cross-curricular attainment target (VOET):** Attainment targets are minimum goals which the government deems necessary and attainable for pupils in a certain level of education.

**Division youth:** the 'Division Youth' is embedded in the Flemish department of culture. In short, the Division Youth has five main tasks: preparation, follow-up, evaluation and implementation of legislation (e.g. the Flemish Youth Policy Plan), funding support structures, youth organisations, youth projects, youth hostels and accommodation centers, as well as municipal and provincial youth (work) policy, providing material support for youth work: e.g. the lending service for camping equipment for youth associations, providing information on youth (work) policy (e.g. via website and e-zine) and representing Flanders at international forums.

**EUROSTAT:** statistical organisation of the EU.

**EVC policy (Eerder Verworven Competenties):** Early Acquired Competences policy values competences acquired elsewhere. In other words, EVC provides the opportunity to people to have their relevant experience recognised, independently of the context they acquired these competences.

**Flemish Parliament Act or decree:** Flemish Parliament Acts or Decrees are Flemish laws approved by the Flemish Parliament and are applicable to all persons in the Flemish Region, and to Flemish institutions in Brussels.

**HBSC:** Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children.

**JoKER (Child and Youth effects report):** it is an impact study of new legislation directly affecting the interests of children. This specifies that any draft Act affecting the people under the age of 25 and submitted to the Flemish parliament has to be accompanied by a report regarding its impact on children and youth. By decree of July 18, 2008 (decree on the conduct of a Flemish youth and children's rights policy the child impact report (KER) has been extended to a child and youth impact report (JoKER).

**National Youth Associations:** these are associations engaged in youth work covering the entire Flemish Community. An association can be recognised as a National Youth Association if it offers a sufficiently large range of activities: such as support for local youth associations, an own range of activities for young people, training for youth workers, products specifically for youth work – or a combination of the above. Recognised National Youth Associations receive funding for their operational costs and can apply for additional project subsidies.

**Point of contact:** all bodies of the Flemish government have to appoint one staff member as the contact point for the youth policy. These Contact Persons assess the impact of the regular policy activities of their departments on youth and children.

**Political youth movement:** is a membership association of persons up to thirty years old, which encourages young people to take up active citizenship and that sensitizes and develops young people in view of their participation in political decision-making, in the operation of a particular political party and in public debate.

**Primary education:** Primary education in Flanders comprises both pre-school education and primary education.

**Youth:** The Flemish Community formally defines 'youth' as the group of children and young people up to and including the age of 30.

**Youth ambassadors:** Youth ambassadors of the Flemish Youth Council are young people who think about social themes and represent the Flemish youth in the Flemish policy.

**Youth and children's rights policy:** the comprehensive and integrated vision and a government's resulting systemic and plan-based measures which aim to have a perceptible effect on youth, with a special focus on children's rights, as moral and legal framework.

**Youth Paragraph:** The youth paragraph is an effect report preceding a decision. It is a policy tool that assesses certain municipal decisions on child-friendliness.

**Youth Progress Report:** a scientific report, to be produced every five years, describing the state of the youth in the Flemish community.

**Youth Research Platform (JOP):** JOP is an interdisciplinary and interuniversity partnership of three research groups: (1) Research group Tempus Omnia Revelat (Vrije Universiteit Brussel); (2) Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy (Ghent University); (3) Youth Criminology research group (LINC, KU Leuven).

**Youth sector:** [youth associations](#) subsidised by the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on conducting a renewed policy on youth and children's rights.

**Youth work:** socio-cultural work based on noncommercial purposes by or for young people of three to thirty years, during leisure time, with educational guidance and to promote the general and integral development of the young people who participate in it on a voluntarily basis.

**Youth worker:** any person who takes responsibility in youth work and who has verifiable experience, or makes efforts in the area of education and training in relation to youth (work).

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