



## Youth Wiki national description

# Youth policies in Belgium (German-speaking 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>



**Belgium – German-speaking Community**

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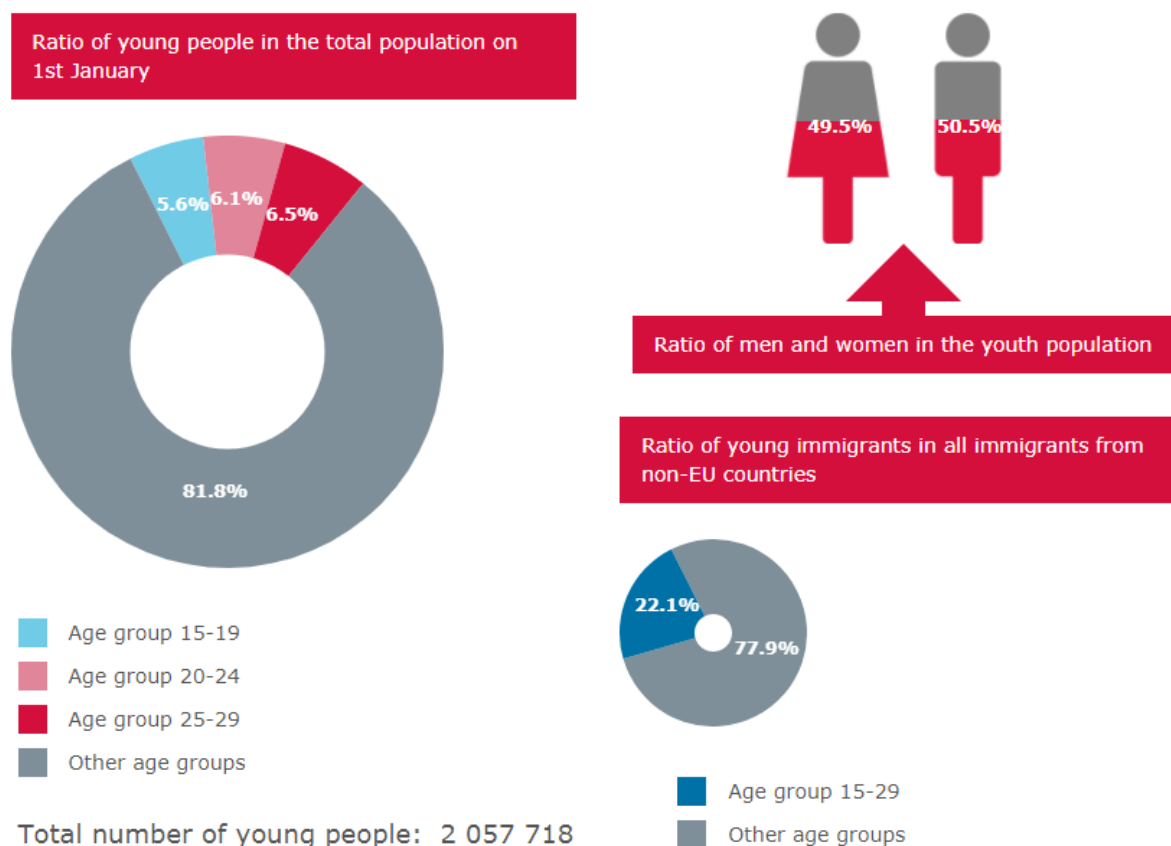
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## Overview

### Belgium (German-Speaking Community)

#### Young People in Belgium



#### References:

Data are for Belgium as a whole, and might not represent the demographic situation in the Belgian German-Speaking 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].

### Young People in Belgium (German-speaking Community)

In 2017, statistics showed that of a total Belgian population of 11.413.049 inhabitants, 76.920 were living in the German-Speaking Community. To frame the specific situation of the German-Speaking Community and their young people, the table below provides information about the total Belgian population, the total German-Speaking Community population and the number of young people between 12 and 30 years old. The data also show the relevant percentages and the gender balance.

## Young people in the German-speaking Community

Population	Men	Women	Total
Belgium 12-30 years	1.292.650	1.262.615	2.555.265
Belgium Total	5.595.585	5.817.464	11.413.049
% 12-30	23,10 %	21,70 %	22.39 %
DG 12-30 years	8.897	8.418	17.315
DG Total	38.269	38.651	76.920
% 12-30	23,25 %	21,78 %	22,51 %

Youth Policy in Belgium (German-speaking Community)

The federal 'Belgian' level of government only has limited competence in youth matters (e.g. some aspects of judicial youth protection), but there is no youth policy at the Belgian level. The Communities are competent for youth and youth policy, so it is on this level that most explicit 'youth policy instruments' can be found.

The Communities 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. Given the fact that every Community has its own Minister for Youth, this means Belgium has three.

**1. Youth Policy Governance**

Youth work is the main agent of youth policy in the German-speaking Community. Out-of-school youth work takes place in youth centres and in youth organisations. Funding and grants are available for the staffing costs of professional youth workers, for the maintenance of infrastructure, for equipment and for the training of youth workers and voluntary youth leaders. There are also functional grants for recognised youth organisations, youth services and youth centres, and additional subsidies for certain activities, innovative projects, international projects or projects with the other two Belgian Communities.

Youth organisations and youth centres are supported by the Youth Office of the German-speaking Community (Jugendbüro der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft), which delivers centre-based youth work and co-ordinates and develops open and outreach youth work.

Young people's access to information is provided and fostered by two youth information points. One covers the north of the Community, while the other one is in charge of the south. Both follow an outreach approach since young people's personal mobility is a major issue, especially in the south. Therefore youth information workers visit schools and try to co-operate with youth organisations, open youth work and the Youth Office.

A main task of youth policy is to enable young people's participation in policy making. The Council of the German-speaking Youth (Rat der deutschsprachigen) is the body representing youth in the DG. It is organised as a platform of individual young people, youth centres, local youth councils, youth NGOs, and youth services, as well as youth political parties. The main goals of the Youth Council are strengthening political awareness of young people and supporting young people and their organisations.

**1.1 Target population of youth policy**

In the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work (*Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*) in the German-speaking Community, youth is defined as time span from 12 to 30 years of age.

**Article 1 – Definitions**

For the purpose of this decree the following definitions shall apply:

1. Children: people from the ages of 4 to 11 years old;
2. Young people: people from the ages of 12 to 30 years old;
3. Children and young people: Both groups 1 and 2;

But since the target group of youth work is not restricted to this age bracket, also children use offers provided by youth work organisations. Therefore the – unofficial but broadly accepted – enlarged target group for youth policy in East-Belgium is from four years up to 30.

In other policy fields (employment, education, social affairs, youth welfare) addressing young people, different age definitions may apply:

- Employment: e.g. min. 16 years in order to get a subsidised working contract;
- Education: e.g. 12-35 years for study assistance;
- Social affairs: e.g. 18-24 years for integration support;
- Youth welfare service or youth court service: 0-18 years.

Even inside these different policy fields, age definitions for youth vary a lot. This is mainly due to the fact that target groups are not defined by decree but are defined for individual policy measures.

## **1.2 National youth law**

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

Youth work is regulated by the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work (*Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*) which sets out the essentials of the youth policy of the German-speaking Community.

The decree includes definitions for “youth work”, “youth workers” and the various categories and types of youth work that are eligible for funding from the government. The decree was a first step towards an integrated and holistic youth approach as well as transversal cooperation between the different sectors regarding youth issues as it foresees the adoption and implementation of a cross-sector strategic plan by the government for each legislative period. It is explicitly mentioned in the decree that the government engages funded youth NGO’s, the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community and young people in drawing up the strategic plan.

The decree provides regulated funding, a legal framework for youth work and ensures anchorage of youth work within youth policy, which offers a certain level of security for the sector.

### **Scope and contents**

The target group of the decree are all young people aged 12 to 30. It also specifically takes into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability.

The decree governs the funding of

- youth centres,
- youth organizations,
- youth information centres,
- open youth work,
- the Youth Office
- the Youth Commission, responsible for basic and advanced training courses for young people, volunteer youth leaders and youth workers,
- the Youth Council

Youth work takes place out of school and during particular leisure activities and is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation.

By providing appropriate opportunities, youth work promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, while taking account of their interests and needs.

A main task of youth policy is to enable young people's participation in policy making. Therefore, multiple consultations with young people have been organised when the 2011 decree was being prepared. Through the whole process, from the preparation to the establishing of the decree and even up to the preparation of the implementation of the decree, participation was a guiding principle. This started with the preparation and the implementation of the P.R.I.M.A. consultations in 2005/2006 where young people and their organisations, youth workers and the youth council contributed. Then came the regular cross-check with the youth sector regarding the pillars of the decree, and the hearings that have been held with young people and the sector in the parliament and the official advise giving of the youth council. This was followed by the adaption of the draft decree in accordance with a lot of remarks made by the youth council and continues in the completely independent legal role that the youth council has since the entering into force of the decree.

The main goals of the Youth Council are strengthening political awareness of young people and supporting young people and their organisations. Its primary task is the representation of the interests of the German-speaking youth. In this regard the Youth Council is quite active in providing expertise and advice on laws concerning young people and it was also involved in the development of the youth policy in the DG.

### Revisions/updates

After numerous debates in the Parliament of the German-speaking Community, the parties forming the government (ProDG, SP and PFF) collaborated with the opposition parties (CSP and ECOLO) and passed on 23 November 2015 the Decree amending the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work. This new decree includes two major innovations:

1. The introduction a new youth report on the living situation of young people in the German-speaking Community;
2. Readjustment of the overall agenda and timeline of the Youth Strategy Plan.

As for the 2011 decree, the youth council has been consulted before the 2015 decree was amended.

### The Youth Report

The new youth report will be carried out every five years and will be conducted by a scientific institute. The first one is expected to be published in late 2018, so that its results may contribute to defining the main topics of the following strategic plan. The newly defined timeline should allow more time for the evaluation of the strategic plan.

While the social space analyses, carried out by trained youth workers, inform specifically on the situation of young people in each municipality of the German-speaking Community, the Youth Report will be based on a broader scientific study and focus on the whole German-speaking community.

Supported youth centres and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community as well as young people will be involved in drawing up the youth report.

The results of both the social space analyses and the youth report will serve as a basis for defining the key issues for the next Youth Strategy Plan.

### The new timing

In order to avoid the overlapping of two consecutive strategic plans and to provide enough time for their evaluation, the duration for the implementation of the strategic plan was reduced by one year. This should allow the government to carry out an evaluation of this strategic plan one year before the end of its actual timeframe. The new

timing also provides allows of a scientific report on youth to the results of the topics are set for the next strategic plan.

### **1.3 National youth strategy**

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

The decree foresees the adoption and implementation of a cross-sectorial youth strategy by the government for each legislative period. It is explicitly mentioned in the decree that the government engages funded youth NGO's, the Youth Council and young people in drawing up the strategy. Article 4 of the Decree reads:

*"For each legislative period the Government will adopt and implement a multidisciplinary Strategy Plan. It will document the environment of young people in the German-speaking Community and lay down targets and tasks which will contribute to improving the situation of young people. [...] The Government will involve the supported youth centres and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community as well as young people in drawing up the Strategy Plan. This will also include the results of the analysis of the current situation and evaluation of the previous Strategy Plan to be carried out once in each legislative period by the Government as well as the social space analyses to be drawn up by the Open Youth Work agencies [...]."*

The Strategic Plan on Youth ([\*Jugendstrategieplan\*](#)) provides the framework in which, thanks to the cooperation with strong partners from the youth and social sector, practicable, future-oriented and sustainable projects can be developed. Nevertheless, it is open enough to enable interested organisations to develop relevant projects. The strategic plan not only involves creating new approaches but also continuing already existing measures or directing them to the youth sector.

Decisive for the successful implementation of the strategic plan continues, however, to be thinking holistically and keeping an eye on the multidisciplinary approach for all projects. The political environment has committed itself to creating appropriate general conditions for the best possible implementation of the strategic plan. For this, however, it needs the support of all organisations and people involved in the development of the strategic plan. They should be deliberate in their authorship and breathe life into the strategic plan jointly with the Government.

#### **Scope and contents**

The Strategic plan on Youth aims to identify actual need, in order to improve the situation of young people in the DG. Here concrete action is to be taken in four stages:

- 1st stage: Analysis of the current life situation of young people in the DG.
- 2nd stage: Identifying the need for improving the life situation of young people and planning appropriate measures.
- 3rd stage: Implementing measures.
- 4th stage: Evaluation.

The first Strategic Plan on Youth bore the title "The Future for all Children and Young People – with the Focus on Disadvantaged Children and Young People" ([\*Jugendstrategieplan 2013-2015 – Zukunft für alle jungen Menschen - Benachteiligte junge Menschen in den Fokus\*](#)) and was devoted to two central themes:

- Planning actions aimed at the target groups for children and young people with a range of problems
- Propensity to violence among children and young people.

The target group of the first Strategic Plan were young people with multiple psychological and mental health problems as well as being in a precarious social and financial situation. These young people usually don't take part in organised youth work and are mostly reached through outreach youth work.

On these two central themes an action plan with seven concrete projects has been drawn up.

In 2014 the 2nd Strategic Plan on Youth covering the period 2016-2020 was drawn up. Bearing the title "Acting respectful" (*Jugendstrategieplan 2016-2020 – Respektvoller Umgang miteinander und mit sich selbst*) it foresees 11 actions in 4 categories:

- "Strong against Addiction",
- "Promoting diversity",
- "Political education",
- "Emotions and self-perception".

These actions include cross-border action days, developing networking, promoting projects, building awareness, offer trainings and supporting mechanisms for young people and youth workers in order to develop e.g. new approaches for drug-prevention, for social inclusion, democracy, political education and participation in the youth field.

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

The Youth Department of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community has the responsibility for the coordination of the strategic plan.

A steering group has taken the lead in supporting the implementation process (selection of the topics, specification of the measures and editing). This steering group is composed of representatives of the youth sector, the Government and the Ministry. In 2014 the following sat on the steering group:

- one member of the staff of the Prime Minister, responsible for external relations, finances and budget, administrative organisation,
- one member of the staff the Minister responsible for culture, employment, local authorities and tourism,
- one member of the staff of the Minister responsible for family, health and social policy,
- one member of the staff of the Minister responsible for education and scientific research,
- two representatives of the Ministry of the DG (Youth Department),
- two representatives of the Youth Council (one for the youth organisations and one for open youth work),
- one representative of the Youth Office,
- one representative of each of the two youth information centres of the DG.

### **Revisions/updates**

The decree sets the time frame of the Strategic plan to coincide with the legislative period. The strategic plan is renewed with each new legislative period, i.e. every five years.

Furthermore, the strategic plan is an ongoing process. Not least for this reason good communication between the participating partners is important. The steering group supervises the implementation of the 2016-2020 action plan and supports with the implementation. Individual topics, actions and procedures will be regularly evaluated and may if necessary be adjusted.

## **1.4 Youth policy decision-making**

### **Structure of Decision-making**

The German-speaking Community (DG) took over some competences from the Walloon Region – for broad-based youth policy, this has been an important development, especially regarding the competence in the labour market, so the DG is now responsible not only for the administration of unemployment benefits and the training concepts but also for checking the efforts of the unemployed to get a job.

The Minister for Culture, Employment and Tourism is responsible for youth policy in the DG. Minister Isabelle Weykmans' responsibilities, besides youth policy, are in the fields of culture, tourism, media, sport, employment, adult education, preservation orders, sustainable development, and community centres. Youth policy in the DG deals with education out of school for organised and non-organised youth and with youth participation.

Looking at "youth policy" in broader conceptual, and less administrative, terms however, other important youth policy topics, such as school education, are in the portfolios of other ministers, in this case the Minister for Education, Vocational Training and Employment, whereas themes like youth aid and rights of the child fall under the duties of the Minister for Family, Health and Social Affairs.

Although the competences on the political fields that have a lot of influence on young people's lives are allocated at two different ministers (belonging to different political parties) the youth policy approach in the DG is transversal, even if the connection with culture and employment is definitely closer than with other fields of policy for youth.

### Main Themes

The decree of the 6 December 2011 on funding for youth work (*Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*) regulates the development of young people, provides support for youth work, youth organisations and the youth council as well as for the organisation of education and training for young people and youth workers.

Youth work takes place in out-of-school settings and within the scope of particular leisure time activities. It is based on non-formal education and informal learning processes and achieved through voluntary participation.

With suitable offers, youth work promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, taking into account their interests and specific needs.

Due to the complexity and variety of young individuals and their personal situations, youth work is a very complex field of work. Consequently, the function of a youth worker and the actions of those active in youth work are reflecting this complexity too. For that reason, the quality of youth work is closely linked to the quality of its youth workers.

The integrated decree of 2011 puts the young person in the centre and focus on their specific capacities. Moreover, this decree also organises training for youth workers and youth leaders. It allows for evaluation which allows for the Government to establish a strategic youth policy plan. The decree allows for:

- a more transversal and a better cross-sectorial approach, which puts young people in the centre (of all efforts) and deals with them more holistically;
- increased participation of young people and the youth sector (also in the design of youth policy and in other decision-making);
- funding based on quality and not only quantity - this comes with quality criteria and quality standards for training and for the evaluation of concepts and work plans, etc.;
- contribution of municipalities to the impact of youth policy;
- the development of instruments and methods to come to a comprehensive and high quality youth policy based on knowledge and information.

### The National Agency for Youth

Besides the above mentioned youth organizations, youth centres, information centres and the Youth Council, the Youth Office (*Jugendbüro der DG*) is one of the most important support structures for youth work in the DG. The Youth Office is in some way the "technical bureau" for youth work in the German-Speaking Community. It is an NGO steered by a general assembly and an administrative board, in which the majority is held by youth organizations and youth centres. The collaboration with the Government of the German-Speaking Community and the funding received are regulated by a management

contract between the Government and the Youth Office. This convention runs over five years and foresees amongst other things the principle of funding by donation, the allocated amount and the mission of the office.

This mission implies:

- the coordination of the Youth Council;
- pedagogical and administrative support for youth organizations;
- the coordination and development of open youth work and street work;
- the promotion of national and international cooperation in the youth field (cross-border cooperation, inner Belgium cooperation and management of the, Bel'J programme, promoting the participation on other programmes as ASA and Quebec-Wallonie-Bruxelles);
- National Agency of the German-Speaking Community for the European programme Erasmus+ in the fields of youth, education, formation and sport;
- the promotion of EUROjuka, the European youth card.

Current Youth Office spending is approx. 1.1 million Euro. That's the annual budget for fiscal year 2016. The Youth Office receives annual funding proportional to its staffing, running and activity costs, agreed upon in a management contract between the Youth Office and the government. In 2016, the Youth Office was granted approx. 600.000 Euro annual funding.

## Policy monitoring and evaluation

### Monitoring committees

Open youth work, outreach youth work, youth information centres and youth organisations relay on so called performance contracts, that are agreed upon between the government, the local authorities and board members of the youth organisation. These performance contracts specify how their concept, that has been approved by the government and assures the funding of the organisation, has to be implemented on the field. The implementation of those performance contracts is monitored either annually (for youth organisations) or twice a year (for open youth work, youth information, outreach youth work).

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

#### Strategic Plan on Youth

Alongside the methodological approach of a knowledge-based youth policy, a second important aspect of the Strategic Plan on Youth is that its implementation is not only an obligation for the youth minister responsible but also for the whole Government of the DG. The focuses and needs identified for improving the life situation of young people will be reflected in all policy areas in the German-speaking Community.

The strategic plan is led by a cross-sectoral steering group, in which all cabinets of the government, the youth ministry, the youth council, the youth information centres and the youth office of the German-speaking Community gather to elaborate the youth strategy plan and the intended actions. The strategic plan is a first try to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation from the youth policy point of view.

#### Case Management

Various studies on poverty carried out in the DG showed that families and young people are often confronted with a variety of problems. It's a huge challenge for institutions to deal with this situation. The cooperation between different service providers doesn't always work efficiently.

Often there is already a lack of regular exchanges. It is important to enhance cross-sectoral cooperation between those services in order to organize tailor-made help and

measures for those families and young people, especially in emergency situations (e.g. emergency shelters). Case Management is meant to improve the cross-sectorial collaboration including the fields of social affairs, outreach work, youth welfare, healthcare, employment and education.

The network coordination is located at the Department of Social Affairs in the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. The coordinator is supported by a steering committee, composed of executives of social services in the DG (employment office, outreach work, service for persons with a disability, social affairs, employment sector, psychiatric association, ...). The steering group meets regularly with other representatives involved in the project. All services signed a binding memorandum of understanding on networking.

As a first result, weaknesses were detected in the youth field (cooperation between outreach work and youth welfare) and first consultations were initiated.

### **Network on poverty**

It is planned that the current steering committee of the Case Management project will evolve into a legally anchored network on poverty in the DG in the near future, which gets structural funding.

## **1.6 Evidence-based youth policy**

### **Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy**

Youth policy in the DG seeks to be evidence and knowledge based. Knowledge of youth workers and practitioners are included in the strategy plans via their direct participation and especially in the concepts for the delivery of the youth policy.

With the development of DGstat in 2010 the statistical work in the German-speaking Community has been systematised. Data on population, education, employment, culture and other areas are collected made available. Pure statistical data is one source of evidence for policy-making, and a second key source is research.

In the past few years various studies have been conducted in the DG to provide information on a range of topics. These have included drugs and addiction, social problems, media, violence and poverty. The DG also participated in international research like the PISA study of achievement in formal education.

For the establishment of an evidence-based policy development it is not sufficient to react on more or less random research issues. To guarantee the proactive making of evidence youth-policy, strategies for evidence production have to be included in the policy. Therefore, a regular youth report –in combination with the five-year evaluation of the operational youth policy concepts – should improve the quality of youth policy development and implementation for the next five years. The first Youth report is expected for 2018.

An evidence-based youth policy requires the development and definition of multidisciplinary indicators on well-being and on the future prospects of the young people. The youth policy needs specific research that collects, coordinates, systematically records and evaluates the data about young people.

### **Youth Strategy Plan**

The Youth Strategy Plan is based on the analysis of the current life situation of the young people in the DG. The quality of the analysis on which it is based is important for the credibility of the strategy. For drawing up the 2nd Youth Strategy Plan a very detailed analysis has been conducted. Before measures can be planned in a second stage, the topics of the Youth Strategy Plan must be defined. The choice of topics builds on knowledge of the youth sector. Specifically this means that the needs of the young people are determined by means of data from the youth sector and corresponding

measures drafted. Both the supported youth organisations and the youth information centres, the Open Youth Work, the Youth Office and the Youth Council have made their contribution. For drawing up the second Youth Strategy Plan the following have been consulted:

- The results of the effectiveness dialogues that the youth organisations have annually with the ministry and during which the implementation of the concept and what has happened in the previous year are discussed.
- The results of the monitoring committees in the Open Youth Work that have been conducted with representatives of the DG, the respective local authority and the agencies of the Open Youth Work.
- The results of the social space analyses that the Open Youth Work agencies have to carry out as well as further various studies, surveys and statistical inquiries.
- The analysis of the current situation of the ongoing Youth Strategy Plan.

### **Social space analyses**

“The purpose of the social space analysis is to better develop and control the provision as well as to organise the Open Youth Work.” (Spatscheck, Christian: [Theory and method discussion](#))

The social space analyses form an important element for the analysis of the life situation of young people from the DG. The Open Youth Work agencies are required by law to submit the social space analyses by 30 April of the year in which the elections to the Parliament of the German-speaking Community take place. The basis of the Decree provides in concrete terms for one social space analysis to be drawn up per local authority. This is based on the concept of social space youth work. This implies that youth work goes beyond the classical “supervisory function” and a more active role is assigned to the participants.

The social space of each local authority is to be opened up by means of available information and data. The places and spaces of young people – their qualities, significances and functions – are investigated and the lives of specific target groups, individual in-crowds and cliques (e.g. foreign girls, younger teenagers etc.) examined. This is just a snapshot of the lives of the young people in the German-speaking Community that has no claim to completeness.

The social space analyses are carried out by specialists from youth work itself. In their observer role they develop a style of enquiry that meets their expectations and aims. This may change, become more precise or be completely reformulated in the course of the analyses and interpretation of the results. The research questions may be something like:

- “How should the provision in the youth clubs be organised so that it is accepted by the young people?”
- “How must the OYW in the local authority organise itself so that both sexes use the provision?”

Together with the use of statistical material on the population structure and other relevant data of the respective social space, in an analysis of their lives, “small-scale” field study methods are used or even activities of the youth work itself that can be made usable (e.g. video surveys). Key actors are questioned such as community leaders, young people, associations or schools.

In this way the social space analysis ensures not only better provision for the target group but also supports the youth workers in acquiring comprehensive knowledge about the social space investigated. In concrete terms this means that using this knowledge youth workers can develop focuses and recommendations for action for the youth work in their local authority that is adapted to the local circumstances and corresponds to the lives of the young people.

By publishing the completed social space analyses the findings from the social space analyses enable in addition optimum representation of the interests, needs and problems of the young people in public and a dialogue with politics.

### **Cooperation between policy-making and research**

The social space analyses were carried out in collaboration with an external expert Prof. Dr. Ulrich Deinet from the Department of Social and Cultural Studies at the University of Applied Sciences Düsseldorf and a supervisor and organisation developer, Georg Nebel. The Youth Office of the DG was commissioned with acquainting the youth workers with the procedures of the social space analysis and equipping them with the appropriate methods. The methods taught (town walks, auto-photography, questioning experts, group discussions, etc.) have already proved their worth in practice and can be carried out by youth workers.

### **National Statistics and available data sources**

As the DG neither represents a statistical unit nor has universities or other research centres, national and international cooperation and networking is of great importance. Initiatives on participatory youth research have started up in the last few years and young people, experts in youth work and youth policy are working more closely together to build up methodical and sustainable reporting about youth in the DG. Furthermore, the reporting of the youth structure has also been correspondingly restructured so that in the meantime a raft of specific approaches for the development of youth reporting is present.

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

There are no specific budgetary allocations supporting research in the youth field. Eventually, studies are commissioned by the Youth minister on specific topics.

## **1.7 Funding youth policy**

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

Basically, the subsidies supporting youth policy in the German-Speaking Community are related to structural funding. The decree of 6 December 2011 ensures structural support for youth work facilities at community level. Funding and grants are provided for the staffing costs of professional youth workers, for the maintenance of infrastructure, for equipment, and for the training of youth workers and voluntary youth leaders. The decree sets out funding conditions for community-level youth work and requires that the youth work facilities operate in line with the community-level priorities. In relation to the 2015 budget for youth, 0.4% (i.e. 1,870,000 EUR) of the total government budget (i.e. 468,000,000 EUR) has been foreseen for the youth work sector.

As mentioned in article 5 of the Decree of 6 December 2011, youth centres have to meet general criteria to be eligible for funding. Those include, amongst others:

- To be constituted as not-for-profit organisations based in the German-speaking Community,
- enable young people to gain self-efficacy experiences and learn shaping skills,
- support the participation of young people in their establishment,
- offer and provide activities that place the needs of the children and young people at the centre of their actions,
- ensure that the activities are supervised by youth workers or volunteer youth leaders,
- regularly inform their members and the population about their activities,
- take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability.

They also have to implement at least four of the focuses of the youth work defined by the Government, which include:

- socio-political and social education to promote interest in socio-political participation, of the ability to form critical judgements of socio-political processes and of the readiness for active involvement in socio-political processes,
- cultural youth work to promote creativity and cultural forms of expression,
- leisure-oriented youth work as a contribution to holistic development through sport, play and movement,
- media work to promote media skills for critical and conscious media use,
- intercultural youth work to promote skills and finding one's identity,
- gender-differentiated girls' and boys' youth work for the promotion of equality of opportunity and breaking down gender stereotypes,
- cross-community and international youth work to promote understanding within Belgium and internationally, peace-keeping and the European identity.

### What is funded?

In 2015, the overall budget for youth work policy was 1,870,000 EUR. With regard to other policy fields targeting young people, it has to be said, that estimations on specific youth related budgets are very difficult to make. In 2015 for example, the overall budget for Education, Employment and VET was 113,928.000 EUR, which is almost 24% of the total budget of the German-speaking Community. There also were 88,139,000 EUR available for Health and social affairs of which 4,857,000 EUR were available for youth care and 3,867,000 EUR for social assistance, admittance and individual life management. 18,086,000 EUR were available for ESF, regional development and external relations. The total budget available in 2015 for health was 5,061,000 EUR. The 2015 budget for sport was 564,000 EUR and the budget for culture was 2,562,000 EUR. All those policy fields are also targeting young people. Nevertheless, the exact amount really dedicated to young people is almost impossible to estimate.

About twenty full time work places are financed in the whole youth field and more than 650 voluntary animators work in youth organisations and youth centres.

### Funding the youth organisations

To be eligible for funding, youth organisations have to:

- meet the general funding criteria mentioned in the decree,
- carry out activities aimed at children and young people mainly at weekends and in the school holidays,
- have a concept approved by the government,
- annually participate in the effectiveness dialogue.

Youth organisations that are eligible for funding are classified into six categories, depending on:

- the number of their annual members (ranging from 50 to 1000 children and young people),
- the number of activities they carry out per month and during the school summer holidays,
- if they are active in several municipalities.

Depending on the category they're assigned to, youth organisations receive an annual lump sum grant ranging from 2,500 EUR to 70,000 EUR. Youth organisations with at least 300 young members may be eligible for an additional annual grant on the employment of youth workers (20,000 EUR for 0.5 full-time equivalent or 40,000 EUR for one full-time equivalent).

Funded youth organisations can receive an additional lump sum of 1 euro per day and per participating child/young person.

## **Funding the youth information centres**

The funding of the youth information centres is carried out by means of a contract for services, which contains practical measures for implementing their concept. The parties to the contract are the government as well as the local authorities and the youth information centre of the respective canton.

Youth information centres receive a grant for covering running and staffing costs. The annual lump sum grant for the running costs amounts to 30,000 EUR. The grant for the staffing costs of the youth workers is split between the DG and local authorities.

## **Funding the Open Youth Work**

Similarly to the funding of the youth information centres, the funding of open youth work at local level is carried out by means of a contract for services. The parties to the contract are the government, the local authority, the open youth work agency and if required the Youth Office of the German-speaking community.

Open Youth Work agencies will receive a lump sum grant towards their running costs, if they

- meet the general funding criteria mentioned in the decree,
- have a concept approved by the government,
- respond to the needs and interests of all young people,
- have premises that are open on at least two days a week and at least eight hours a week, except for four weeks a year,
- use the methods of project work, detached work, outreach work and one-to-one work.

The grant amount for Open Youth Work agencies is calculated based on the number of young people living in the municipality they're located in and on the number of premises they provide (max. 3). The grant provided ranges from 7,500 EUR to 45,000 EUR.

Through the contract for services, the employer (either the respective local authority, the open youth work agency of the respective local authority or the Youth Office) receives a grant towards the staffing costs for youth worker positions. Those positions have to be filled depending on the number of young people living in the municipality the agency is located in (e.g. at least 1.5 up to 2.5 full-time equivalent if they are working in a municipality with more than 4,000 young people). The grant for the staffing costs of the youth workers is split between the DG and local authorities.

## **Funding of a German-speaking Community Youth Office**

The government only supports one single Youth Office. The Youth Office receives annual funding proportional to its staffing, running and activity costs, agreed upon in a management contract between the Youth Office and the government.

## **Funding of basic and advanced Training Courses**

Within the scope of the available budget funds the government provides grants for the organisation of approved advanced training courses that are submitted on the basis of the call for submissions sent out at least once a year by the government. The Youth Commission is charged with the evaluation of the submissions on behalf of the government.

For attending training courses or advanced training courses, the employer of the youth worker affected may be awarded with a maximum of 650 EUR (per budget year and per attendee).

## **Funding of a German-speaking community Youth Council**

As with the Youth Office, the government only supports one single Youth Council. The Youth Council receives an annual lump sum grant of 15,000 EUR. The travel and attendance allowances for the members are included in this lump sum.

## Financial accountability

Youth organisations are granted fundings on the basis of the decree. Conditions regarding the use of granted funds are clearly mentioned in the decree. These are mostly lump sums, subsidies for staff members and specific projects funds. An annual report on the use of the funding have to be provided annually to the Ministry of the German-speaking community.

Eventually, audits can be made by the national Court of Audit. Moreover, the Ministry can oblige youth organisations to commission private or public auditing firms, if obvious irregularities occurred.

Funding can be reclaimed by the Ministry if need be.

## Use of EU Funds

An internal analysis of the Ministry shows, that the German-speaking Community contributes on average with 1,8 Mil EUR per year (11 Mil EUR for the period 2014-2020) to ESF projects with participants aged 30 years old or less.

## 1.8 Cross-border cooperation

### Cooperation with European countries

It goes without saying that international and national cooperation are essential for the German-Speaking Community. On one hand, this is linked to the geographical situation of the DG: in the middle of two European regions and at the border of several language areas. On the other hand, it also has to do with the wide range of competences and the small size of the DG.

To allow young citizens to benefit most of this autonomy, the DG cannot be self-centred. It has to look for national and international cooperation in the field of youth policy in order to open up and to maximise its possibilities.

The DG is active in European initiatives and networks such as the new European framework for cooperation in the youth field, the cooperation in the framework of the Greater-Region as well as some bilateral treaties.

In this context, being part of the Erasmus+ programme and having an own National Agency for this programme is a precious added value for youth policy and young people in the DG. The entire National Agency for Erasmus+ is managed by the Youth Office. The Youth Office also manages several other youth exchange programmes, such as Quebec-Wallonie-Bruxelles (a programme of the French Community), ASA (a German programme on sustainable development) and Bel'J (a joint programme of the three Belgian Communities).

The DG benefits greatly from the cooperation on European youth policy design and has close contacts with its national partners, the partners in the Greater-Region as well as other partner countries.

Regarding European cooperation, the three Belgian Communities work closely together in order to coordinate a single Belgian position regarding the competences under the responsibility of the Communities. The leading role and the role as Belgian spokesperson in the European Council are carried out in turn by all three Communities.

This interaction between the three Belgian Communities in the field of youth policy also exists in its own right at Community level. The DG has cooperation agreements with the French Community and with Flanders. The Communities frequently share information regarding new developments, transfer knowledge or invite each other to participate in events. The three Communities also have a common programme for youth exchanges and projects for active citizenship. This programme is called 'Bel'J' and was initiated in march 2009 by the three Ministers for Youth. It gives young people between 14 and 25

the opportunity to discover the other Communities. Bel'J is managed by the Youth Office in the DG.

The DG is also part of the Greater Region (Großregion), which in brief is the aggregation of Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz (Germany), Luxembourg, Lorraine (France), the Walloon Region, the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community. The countries and institutions of this region are co-operating in many respects to facilitate mobility for their inhabitants. Also the structure of the Euregio Maas-Rhine enables cooperation and exchange in the border region of Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Euregio Maas-Rhine is a public-law foundation comprising the areas of the province Limburg in Flanders, the Walloon province of Liege, the areas of the German-speaking Community, the Regio Aachen in Germany and the southern part of province Limburg in The Netherlands. Moreover, the German-speaking Government is co-signer of the Benelux-Treaty and active partner in this cooperation.

### **International cooperation**

Appart from the youth exchange programme Quebec-Wallonie-Bruxelles (a programme of the French Community), there aren't any initiatives with countries outside Europe in the German-speaking Community at the moment.

### **1.9 Current debates and reforms**

In the German-speaking community, youth workers require a bachelor's degree in the socio-educational field. Most of them have studied as an A1 educator or social worker. However, their training remains very broad. There is no specific training to meet the needs of young people and the youth sector. The government of the German-speaking Community would therefore like to create a specific training or training modules for youth workers.

#### **Youth Worker Certification**

The purpose of this project is to develop a job training for youth workers in the German-speaking Community (DG). Starting point of the project is a noticeable shortage of qualified youth workers in the DG, which the Government wants to tackle within its Regional Development Concept "Living East Belgium - 2025". The development of a professional training has to meet certain criteria in order to ensure that the certificate issued to the participants upon successful completion of the training meets the standards of the National Qualifications Framework. This will ensure the recognition of the certificate outside the youth sector of the DG (target qualification level is level five), particularly on European level.

The result of the project is a module manual, oriented towards jointly elaborated learning outcomes. A specific competence profile of youth workers in the DG will be drawn up as a starting point, oriented according to the Austrian competence framework. This implies that the project will be closely supervised by experts with international experience in drawing up competence profiles of youth workers as well as in validation, recognition and organization of youth worker trainings.

Furthermore, the aufZAQ Office will formulate learning outcomes in-line with the Austrian competence framework of child-care and youth work, which will be either used as such or adjusted if required for youth worker trainings in the DG.

As a first step, this project targets experts, training organizations and advisors who will elaborate on the learning outcomes following consultation with the youth sector. In a second step, the entire youth and education sector will be informed through awareness-raising measures.

## **2. Voluntary Activities**

Volunteering and community life are of central importance in the German-speaking community. Associations and volunteers are active in many areas in the German-speaking community: from youth work to adult education, culture, social and sports, education, development cooperation and the accompaniment of migrants.

In the German-speaking community, every third person works as a volunteer or is involved in community life. This means that the political framework for volunteering has to be improved constantly. This is usually done in direct consultation with those volunteers.

### **2.1 General context**

#### **Historical developments**

The voluntary sector in Belgium is quite varied and complex. Its origins go back to Article 20 of the Constitution (1830), which stated that "Belgians have the right to associate with one another, and this right cannot be submitted to any preventive measure". However, apart from the aforesaid article, no legislation on the matter was developed and no legal framework that guaranteed freedom of association was elaborated until 2005.

Therefore, Belgians had to wait until the beginning of the 20th century before the law on the status of certain types of associations (non profit-making activities) was passed by the Parliament. In that period, mutual-help associations (1894), professional associations (such as those of lawyers, architects, etc.) (1898), non-public universities (1911), international associations (1919) and trade unions (1921) were recognised. The status of non profit organisations was defined by a law approved in June 1921, which provided organisations with a legal status. Following the law, there was a significant increase in the number of non profit organisations.

This trend was especially marked throughout the 1970s due to a renewal of democratic spirit linked to the contestation period of the late 1960s. As a consequence of the growing difficulties of public authorities to respond to the needs of society, and a general crisis of the welfare state, a new wave of associations appeared on the scene. These organisations operated principally at a micro-level, attempting to resolve tangible problems with limited financial resources and ambitions. The Association pour le Volontariat was created in 1972 as an initiative of the Red Cross. The development of the association was based on the need to better coordinate voluntary actions. On the basis of the Anglo-Saxon model, a national structure, has been developed, which was "regionalised" two years later. In order to get closer to local associations and volunteers, six regional centres were established in Wallonia. Also, the non profit organisation Trans-Mission has been created with the mission of organising volunteering abroad. Similarly, in Flanders, the structure coordinating volunteering has been created in 1977 under the auspices of the non profit organisation Het Platform voor Voluntariaat. The 1990s was also a positive decade for associative life. Slowly, the general public became aware of the importance of the associative sector, although the real impact is still difficult to measure as few studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of this sector in society.

However, the main accomplishment in the volunteering sector has been the establishment of the law setting the rights of volunteering (Law of 27 December 2005 on the rights of volunteers), which finally created a clear legal framework both for volunteers and voluntary organisations.

In the German-speaking community, volunteer work plays a central role in all aspects of public life. Voluntary and associative work are closely connected, especially in the sports, culture, leisure, social and educative sector. Based on the action plan on "volunteering" that was one of the main priorities during the 2004-2009 legislature and following a series of consultations of volunteering organizations, the government elaborated different

approaches and set new priorities aimed at promoting volunteering. In order to support volunteer work in associations, the government initiated the project “Acting together” (*Miteinander wirken*) as part of its Regional Development Concept (*Regionales Entwicklungskonzept*, REK). Volunteering remains a priority topic within the REK II with the project “Engagement commits” (*Engagement bewegt*), which focusses on improving the conditions for volunteering. Currently, about 41% of the people in the DG are active in volunteering, of which 10% are involved in youth work and sports, 9% in the social, cultural and musical sector and 8% are volunteers in religious or in leisure activities.

### Volunteering in rural areas

In rural areas of the German-speaking community (mainly in the southern part), the commitment to volunteering seems to be much higher than in urban areas, which could be explained by an increased growth of social structures, a more participative decision-making process on local level as well as a more present associative life in general. The main actor coordinating volunteering in the rural part of the DG is called [Ländliche Gilden](#) (rural guilds) and gets support from the Government through the REK I framework and the Rural development policy 2014-2020 of the EU (e.g. for the project [LAG 100 Dörfer, 1 Zukunft](#)).

### Main concepts

The expressions *Ehrenamt* (*bénévolat* in french) and *Freiwilligentätigkeit* (*volontariat* in French) have been for a long time used as synonyms in Belgium. However, the 2005 law on volunteering (*Loi relative aux droits des volontaires*), has established a distinction between the two notions. The law officialises the term “volunteering” as being an activity defined by the law. All other non-remunerated activities would have to be qualified as *Ehrenamt*. In the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, only the word *vrijwilliger* is used. It corresponds to the Anglo-Saxon terminology designating non-remunerated work. However, the meaning of the term can slightly change according to the context. Sometimes it is interpreted in the sense of the law while sometime is interpreted more broadly or in a more restricted way. Therefore, the notion of volunteering does not always have the same meaning in the current language as well as in literature. The volunteering situations analysed in the main research papers focussing on volunteering are sometimes very different. The law on the rights of volunteers has been created with the intent to set up a common definition which would be shared by all the stakeholders involved in volunteering. The definition intends to reduce to a maximum the risks due to ambiguities and delimit the precise meaning of volunteering.

The 2005 Law on Volunteering (*Loi relative aux droits des volontaires*) describes volunteering as follows:

- Volunteering is unpaid. Volunteers perform volunteering activities without receiving any payment. Although volunteering is unpaid, volunteers can be given a limited amount of money, to reimburse their expenses or as a forfeit, for costs to be made;
- Volunteering does not involve coercion. A volunteer commits him/herself without any obligation; he or she cannot be forced to perform an activity. Although persons cannot be forced to volunteer, the moment they engage in some type of voluntary activity, a kind of (juridical) relationship (with mutual rights and duties) is established;
- Volunteering is undertaken for others or for the society. Volunteering means being of use to others who are not family or acquaintances, in an organisation or for society in general; and
- There should always be a distinction between volunteering and professional activities. A volunteer cannot perform the same activity both as an employee and as a volunteer for the same employer. A person can volunteer within his own organisation provided that a clear distinction is made between the activity he performs as paid staff, and the activity he performs as a volunteer.

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

### **Governance**

Volunteering in the German-speaking Community is only regulated in general. There are no specific programmes or measures on youth volunteering.

According to a survey done in the German-speaking Community (DG) in 2011, 41% of the population in the DG are active volunteers, particularly in the social, educative, sports, cultural and youth sector. In addition, there are many initiatives in other sectors, e.g. development cooperation, mutual aid and rural development.

Based on consultations with volunteers and recent network meetings, concrete approaches were formulated and implemented to promote volunteering in the DG. This includes free insurance for volunteers, offered by the DG for small non-profit organisations, the establishment of a "support point for voluntary work" located in the Ministry of the German-speaking Community, an information portal about volunteering, training for volunteers, various exchange projects, regular information sessions (e.g. "Ich hab da mal ne Frage") and the implementation of an annual information market on volunteering in the DG.

In 2011, the German-speaking Community took part in the European Year of volunteering whereby the Member states agreed to continue their good cooperation for the future. This had also an impact on the collaboration between the three Belgian communities, which intensified. In cooperation with the High Council for Volunteers, the DG wants to improve the conditions for volunteering in Belgium. The DG is involved in European projects to catch up on "good examples" and discuss voluntary initiatives, e.g. the [Grundtvig](#) program.

### **Main actors**

#### **On federal level:**

The **Federal Public Service for Social Security** is responsible for all regulations on the legal status of volunteers. The Federal Public Service supports the High Council of Volunteers, which is also a federal level body.

The **High Council of Volunteers** is the main public institution dealing with volunteering. It has been established at the end of 2002 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and is based in Brussels. This permanent advisory body was formed to advise and inform the Federal Government on issues related to volunteering and to ensure attention to specific problems concerning volunteers and volunteering in different areas such as: social security, tax law, the relation between volunteering and the labour market, etc. The Council is composed by 25 members nominated by the king and whose mandate can be renovated after four years:

- 10 French speaking members;
- 10 Dutch speaking members;
- 1 German speaking member;
- 2 Francophone members appointed on the basis of their scientific expertise on volunteering and volunteers;
- 2 Dutch members appointed on the basis of their scientific expertise on volunteering and volunteers

The composition of the Council mirrors the diversity within the volunteering sector. In fact, its members come from 10 main sectors such as:

- Training and education,
- youth,
- health care,
- social and judicial assistance,
- sports,

- culture (arts, cultural heritage, science),
- humanitarian action and international solidarity,
- religion, philosophy and politics,
- environment, nature, protection of animals, ecology,
- tourism, leisure and other.

The High Council for Volunteers collects, systemises and analyses information on volunteers and voluntary work, undertakes research into specific problems which volunteers and voluntary work may face as well as gives advice with regard to volunteers and voluntary work. The High Council for Volunteers is charged with handling questions and proposals related to the development of volunteering in Belgium. The first question tackled by the High Council was the creation of a legal status for volunteers detailing the rights and responsibilities of individual volunteers as well as of the organisations engaging volunteers. Nowadays, the Council has also an advising role on legal proposals related to adaptations, modifications or specifications concerning the Law on Volunteering.

[The King Baudouin Foundation](#) has a number of publications on volunteer work and lends financial support to 1000 voluntary projects.

### **Decentralised bodies**

The **government of the German-speaking community** is the volunteering main funding source in the DG. The **Department for Culture and Youth of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community** helps create youth volunteer work opportunities through the recognition and funding of youth (work) initiatives.

The **support point for voluntary work** located in the Ministry of the German-speaking Community provides support to voluntary activities and initiatives launched by people in the German-speaking community. Their support consists of advice, information and training. In addition they promote volunteer work by the annual "Volunteer's Market".

## **2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering**

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

#### **Regional Development Concept (REK)**

There is no proper strategy on youth volunteering in the German-speaking community. However, volunteering plays a central role in its [Regional Development Concept](#). The [Regional Development Concept](#) was conceived as a long term strategy by the German-Speaking government, without any kind of legal basis. The process was initiated in May 2008 with a comprehensive stock-taking and regional analysis, whereby the strengths and weaknesses, chances and challenges of the DG were closely examined. On the basis of this study, strategic approaches and concrete recommendations were crystallized into a mission statement which characterized the DG as a Frontier Region, an Economic Region, a Learning Region, a Caring Region and a Living Region. The REK was published in four volumes: the first contains the regional analysis, the second contains the mission statement, development strategy and suggested measures, while the third outlines specific and concrete projects. Volume four looks back on the first implementation period and introduces the future and cross-sectional projects within the framework of the second implementation period, including the project "Engagement commits".

In line with the challenges identified by the European Commission during the [European Year of Volunteering](#) in 2011, among others the changing nature of volunteer work and the discrepancy between the needs of voluntary organisations and expectations of young volunteers due to lack of knowledge and a rising number of organisations, the DG has included one main project, "Engagement commits" in its [Regional Development Concept "Living East Belgium – 2025"](#) (REK: Regionales Entwicklungskonzept). This project sets three priorities in order to improve the conditions for volunteering:

1. Qualification of volunteers
2. Recognition and awareness-raising on volunteering
3. Counselling, information and placement of volunteers

## Scope and contents

### Qualifying volunteers

There are two levels of training and qualification:

1. Training of volunteers to promote and develop their skills in their respective field of activity. These trainings must remain the responsibility of the various volunteering areas. Many appropriate offers already exist.
2. Trainings aimed at all volunteers, regardless of the field of activity. These trainings offer information on legislation, tax, finances and actuarial practice as well as more fundamental issues, e.g. how to win, keep and integrate volunteers within an organisation (volunteer management).

### Workshop on volunteer management

The biggest challenge in volunteering lies in different expectations on forms of voluntary activity and the mismatch between expectations of today's volunteers and what organisations have to offer. To address these issues, the DG organised workshops on volunteer management, with emphasis on organisational and staff development. These training opportunities are aimed at board members and managers in organisations, associations and projects. The workshop "Volunteer Management" is offered every two years.

### Information sessions

Regular information sessions, entitled "*Ich hab da mal ne Frage ...*", are organized every year to advise on NPO legislation, tax law and insurance issues.

### Recognition and awareness of volunteering

According to a Forsa survey commissioned by the DG in 2014, up to 62% of citizens questioned are interested in volunteering (Conclusions of a public opinion survey commissioned by the DG, Forsa Institute for social studies, fall 2014, page 60). In order to further encourage volunteering, there is a need for better marketing at all levels to raise awareness of volunteering in the DG and ensure a high recognition of volunteer work. To raise awareness on the topic "Volunteering in the DG", the DG strengthened media partnerships (broadcasting and press), inter alia by methods of "storytelling", to ease the understanding of volunteering through stories and pictures.

### Counselling, information and placement of volunteers

In addition to regular workshops and information events, the support point for voluntary work located at the Ministry of the German-speaking Community offers personalized advice on request. This also includes the placement of people interested in volunteer work but don't know how and where this is possible.

A dedicated [website](#) offers regular updated information, policy papers, good examples, concepts and methods for volunteering. Organisations can present themselves and their work through a dedicated web-based exchange platform for volunteering, in order to attract new volunteers. At the same time, it provides an overview of the various possibilities of volunteer work in the DG for interested citizens.

### Responsible authority

The government as a whole is responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the REK.

## Revisions/Updates

As the REK outlines future developments in the DG up to 2025, it may undergo revisions and updates over the period of its implementation, in order to deduce and elaborate measures as can best meet the DG's current and future needs.

## 2.4 Laws and regulations on youth volunteering

### Stand-alone law

The federal law of 3 July 2005 on the rights of volunteers has been effective since 1 August 2006. In this law, volunteer work in Belgium is described as follows:

"Volunteering is a non-compulsory activity which is unsalaried and accomplished to the benefit of third parties, set up by an organisation, and which is not carried out by the same person and for the same organisation in the framework of a contract of employment, a contract of service or permanent appointment."

Volunteering is thus distinguished from professional activity (paid), voluntary involvement (unorganised) and paid voluntary involvement (a remuneration exceeding the costs). Liability, insurance, fees for volunteers are now legally defined, as is the ratio between volunteer work, labour and social security. The regulation on liability and insurances has been effective since 1 January 2007.

### Other official documents containing guidelines on youth volunteering

Volunteering is also mentioned explicitly in the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work (*Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*), as youth work relies heavily on support from young volunteers.

### Regulations on standards of quality

The ban on child labour permits voluntary work from the age of 16. Children younger than 16 cannot be active as a volunteer (unless they turn 16 in the same calendar year), except if it concerns "activities with a pedagogic or educational" character. Some organisations further define the minimum age on the grounds of the "target group", "the sensitivity of the material", the responsibility that is required and so on.

Volunteers can never be remunerated for their work, but the expenses incurred by volunteers can be reimbursed. Volunteers can obtain fixed compensation or real compensation for costs incurred. Cost reimbursement is exempt from taxes and from paying social security contributions. Organisations are, however, not obliged to provide a payment but must inform the volunteer of this matter. Both payments cannot be combined for one volunteer. If the volunteer prefers the repayment of real costs, he has to prove the reality and amount of these costs by means of documents with evidential value. If the volunteer prefers a fixed compensation, the amount of expenses actually incurred does not have to be proved if the total amount of allowances received does not exceed 32.71 EUR per day or 1308,38 EUR per year (valid in 2016). However, proof has to be provided for allowances exceeding the aforementioned amounts. The maximum kilometre compensation for work trips with your own vehicle, motorbike or scooter amounts to 0,3412 EUR per km (valid from 1.07.2015 until 30.06.2016) with a maximum of 2000 km a year and each organisation decides who receives this kilometre based reimbursement. These costs must be proven by the volunteer.

Other than that, no additional quality standards or evaluation criteria are applied to organisations and projects.

### Target groups

All young people living in the German-speaking community can take part in youth volunteering. The age range differs from project to project.

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

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

There is no National Programme for Youth Volunteering in the DG. Volunteering is only regulated by the federal law on the rights of volunteers on 3 July 2005 and the decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of Youth Work in the DG.

### **Funding**

There are a number of (semi)public and private organisations that support volunteer work/voluntary activities. One of the major sources is the König Baudouin Stiftung (King Baudouin Foundation), an independent and pluralist foundation that aims at improving the living conditions of the population. This foundation supports some 1,000 projects a year. Its budget – 44,8 million EUR in 2015 – is divided over these organisations.

### **Characteristics of youth volunteering**

As volunteering addresses all young people in the German-speaking Community and no official statistics on the level or trends of participation exist (yet), information on the characteristics of youth volunteering, e.g. on specific target groups or the main fields of activities cannot be delivered yet.

### **Support to young volunteers**

Volunteering plays a significant role in the associative sector, which is why the support to young volunteers is of high priority for the government of the German-speaking community. In the DG, volunteers get a **free insurance**, a lot of **information** and further **training**. The free insurance is especially important for small non-profit organisations, who couldn't afford to insure their volunteers. As already mentioned before, organisations and volunteers are offered personalized advice on request and a lot of information by the support point for voluntary work located at the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. A dedicated [website](#) offers regular updated information, policy papers, good examples, concepts and methods for volunteering and provides an overview of the various possibilities of volunteer work in the DG. Moreover, regular information sessions are organized and a [compendium](#) on volunteering in the DG was issued in 2013. Another important aspect about the support of young volunteers in the DG is the promotion of volunteer trainings and the opportunity to participate in various exchange programs.

Volunteers can never be remunerated for their work, but the expenses incurred by volunteers can be reimbursed. Volunteers can obtain fixed compensation or real compensation for costs incurred. Cost reimbursement is exempt from taxes and from paying social security contributions. Organisations are, however, not obliged to provide a payment but must inform the volunteer of this matter. Both payments cannot be combined for one volunteer. If the volunteer prefers the repayment of real costs, he has to prove the reality and amount of these costs by means of documents with evidential value. If the volunteer prefers a fixed compensation, the amount of expenses actually incurred does not have to be proved if the total amount of allowances received does not exceed 32.71 EUR per day or 1308,38 EUR per year (valid in 2016). However, proof has to be provided for allowances exceeding the aforementioned amounts. The maximum kilometre compensation for work trips with your own vehicle, motorbike or scooter amounts to 0,3412 EUR per km (valid from 1.07.2015 until 30.06.2016) with a maximum of 2000 km a year and each organisation decides who receives this kilometre based reimbursement. These costs must be proven by the volunteer.

### **Quality Assurance**

No proper system of quality assurance for evaluating the volunteering activities available to young people exist in the German-speaking community.

Nonetheless, the German-speaking community participates actively in the Erasmus+ programme, where the [EVS quality standards](#) (support to the volunteer, information and Youthpass) apply. The quality assurance is assured by the National Agency for Erasmus+ in the DG (*Jugendbüro*) and the sending and hosting organisations.

## **2.6 Cross-border mobility programmes**

### **EU programmes**

The DG participates in the Erasmus+ programme. The Youth Office was appointed as National Agency and the DG contributes financially to the programme (596.000 EUR in 2014).

### **Other Programmes**

#### **Bel'J**

In 2009, the youth ministers of the three Communities in Belgium started the [Bel'J](#) Programme. Bel'J allows groups of young people or young individuals between the age of 16 and 30 to meet young people from other Belgian Communities or develop a volunteer projects in the other Communities in collaboration with local organisations. Each of the communities has put an agency in charge of overseeing the activities of Bel'J. The Jugendbüro (Youth Office) coordinates Bel'J in the DG.

#### **ASA**

Every year, the ASA-Program enables up to 250 young people from Europe to take part in its learning and qualification program dedicated to development education. The [ASA-Program](#) promotes exchange and learning about our One World through personal experience. It supports young and dedicated people to expand their skills and to contribute to sustainable global development based on respect for human rights and cultural differences. The ASA-Program is a very diverse program addressing different target groups and fields of activities. No matter what program, the participants are obliged to attend all seminars. Overall, the ASA-Program offers five subprograms: ASA-Basis, ASA-SüdNord, ASA-Kommunal, ASAPreneurs and GLEN.

The ASA-Program offers a learning cycle consisting of training seminars, a practical phase and a follow-up phase including a global activity.

Seminars: In the seminars, which are held prior to, and after their three-month internship abroad, the participants learn about global interdependencies and international development. During the seminars they develop and try out new skills and new methods and get prepared for their internship abroad.

Practical phase: During the practical phase a team of two or three participants take part in a development project for three months. The projects take place within organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America or South Eastern Europe.

Global activity: After their time abroad the participants organize a global activity (e.g. a photo exhibition or a workshop at a school) in Germany or Europe to pass on their experience.

The ASA-Program is part of [Engagement Global - Service for Development Initiatives](#) and is mostly financed by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). ASA is co-financed by the German-speaking Community (on condition that one young german-speaking Belgian can take part). Engagement Global is a politically independent and non-profit organization.

#### **Quebec-Wallonie**

And also is the possibility for young people coming from the German-speaking Community to participate on the volunteering programme Quebec-Wallonie.

## Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

Short-term voluntary work can be taken on in Belgium without the need for a work permit, although the visa/residence requirements apply.

EU, EEA and Swiss citizens can travel freely to Belgium on the basis of their national ID card or passport and do not require a visa to travel to Belgium nor a work permit to engage in economic activities. As a rule, third-country nationals (non-EU/EEA/Swiss citizens) need a visa to enter Belgium and a work permit to engage in economic activities.

## 2.7 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

### Information providers

#### Support Point for Voluntary work

The [support point for voluntary work](#) located in the Ministry of the German-speaking Community provides support to voluntary activities and initiatives launched by people in the German-speaking community. Their support consists of advice, information and training. In addition they promote volunteer work by the annual "Volunteer's Market".

In addition to regular workshops and information events, the support point for voluntary work offers personalized advice on request. This also includes the placement of people interested in volunteer work but don't know how and where this is possible.

A dedicated [website](#) offers regular updated information, policy papers, good examples, concepts and methods for volunteering. Organisations can present themselves and their work through a dedicated web-based exchange platform for volunteering, in order to attract new volunteers. At the same time, it provides an overview of the various possibilities of volunteer work in the DG for interested citizens.

#### The youth information centers

Providing information about (inter)national mobility for young people is part of the tasks that the two youth information centres have. So there is always a lot of comprehensive and updated information for young people on this topic available.

The youth information centres are non-profit organisations with an administration council. They function as sending (since 2000) and hosting organisation (since 2004) for EVS.

Their target public consists of young people between 12 and 30, but also of youth workers (with whom they have a direct and regular contact), parents, teachers and non-governmental organisations.

Their field of activity focuses on different areas: work, profession, leisure time, social matters, sexuality, rights, media and European matters. Besides that, they write and edit their own information material in form of brochures and leaflets. The content of this material is always up-to-date and relevant to youth matters.

In their offices, they inform about these topics, but also go out to run workshops in schools, youth houses, etc.

With their participation in the Erasmus+ programme, they offer young people of the DG the chance to go abroad as well as foreign young people the chance to get to know the DG.

#### The Youth Office

The youth office has a central role in informing on (inter)national mobility for young volunteers. The Youth Office (*Jugendbüro der DG*) is a non-profit organisation situated in Eupen. As a service provider for the youth sector in the DG, it advises youth organisations on an administrative and pedagogical level and deploys staff for the youth

council and youth work. It administers national as well as international programmes and provides training opportunities for specialised staff in the youth sector.

The Youth Office was appointed as the National Agency for Erasmus+ and the eTwinning National Support Service in the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

## Key initiatives

### Workshop on volunteer management

The biggest challenge in volunteering lies in different expectations on forms of voluntary activity and the mismatch between expectations of today's volunteers and what organisations have to offer. To address these issues, the DG organised workshops on volunteer management, with emphasis on organisational and staff development. These training opportunities are aimed at board members and managers in organisations, associations and projects. The workshop "Volunteer Management" is offered every two years.

### Information sessions

Regular information sessions, entitled "*Ich hab da mal ne Frage ...*", are organized every year to advise on NPO legislation, tax law and insurance issues.

## 2.8 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

In the decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding youth work in the German-speaking Community, training, skills and quality play an essential role. Article 50 foresees the creation of a Youth Commission. This commission has the task to coordinate, organise and evaluate training and further training for young people and youth leaders in the DG. Moreover, the Youth Commission gives advice to the government with regard to funding and recognition of training activities.

Young people, who participate in and successfully achieve the basic training for voluntary youth leaders (*Grundausbildung für ehrenamtliche Jugendleiterinnen und Jugendleiter*) organised by the Youth Commission, are issued a certificate that attests the skills acquired through their training. This certificate can be used, for example when applying for a job but is not linked (yet) to an European credit system such as ECTS and ECVET.

Currently, there are no other policies, mechanisms and tools for the recognition and transferability of skills gained in volunteering.

### Existing arrangements

In addition to the Youth Commission, the Youthpass is used by youth workers within the Erasmus+ programme. Currently, there also are reflexions about the documentation of skills acquired via volunteer activities in the Bel'J programme. Europass is regularly used in the context of the EU-LLL programme.

## 2.9 Current debates and reforms

### Guidelines for a common form of recognition

Guidelines for a common form of recognition (e.g. an honorary prize) have been drafted and are being discussed.

### Tax reform regarding the individual compensation of volunteers

From 2018, employees, self-employed persons and retirees can earn up to 500 euros per month for occasional voluntary work without incurring any taxes. This tax reform tries to value more neighbourhood assistance and volunteer social work, thus strengthening interpersonal contacts and the social fabric. In most cases, such tasks are done voluntarily and free of charge. But those who are paid for small services had to pay high

taxes on the extra earnings. Added to this is the administrative work on both sides. This will change in 2018: additional earnings up to 500 euros won't need to be taxed anymore.

With this reform, workers who work at least four-fifths as well as self-employed and retired people can benefit from a tax exemption of up to 6,000 euros a year.

This new rule only applies to services that are occasionally provided by citizens to citizens and are not of a commercial nature.

### **3. Employment & Entrepreneurship**

The labor market of the German-speaking Community has much to offer, especially in the craft and manufacturing sector. Consisting of mostly small and medium-sized companies, the German-speaking Community has a high variety of jobs to offer.

The health sector, the education sector, tourism, administrations and non-profit organizations also offer good career prospects. In addition, due to its proximity to the country border, many people work in the neighboring countries of Luxembourg, Germany and the Netherlands.

The Employment Office of the German-speaking Community supports employees in their search for a job and employers in their search for new employees or suitable employment subsidies.

The labor market of the German-speaking Community is characterized by a relatively low unemployment rate. Compared to Wallonia, the German-speaking Community has proportionately less young unemployed people.

#### **3.1 General context**

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

Based on statistics from the employment office ([\*Arbeitsamt der DG\*](#)) and the official statistic portal of the German-speaking community ([\*Ostbelgien Statistik\*](#)) the German-speaking Community (DG) currently counts 21,671 employees and 4,272 full-time self-employed and freelancers (as of 2014). Together they form the group of the people in work in the DG (whereby multi-jobbing is however possible). However, because of the border location between Germany, Luxembourg and the French-speaking part of Belgium commuter flows also play a large role for the DG. So the number of people commuting outwards to Germany and Luxembourg alone amounts to around 7,000, while those commuting inwards come principally from inside Belgium.

As a consequence of the economic crisis the employment situation in the DG in 2009 and also 2011 suffered somewhat more than in Wallonia or Flanders, though the employment rate in the DG at 63.0% is still higher than the Belgian average.

Compared with 2013, unemployment in the DG has risen by 3.2%.

Predominantly small and medium-sized enterprises have established themselves in the German-speaking community. 85% of the private employers each employ fewer than 10 workers and fewer than 1% of the businesses employ more than 100 people.

The primary sector is characterised by a clear reduction in the number of self-employed farmers and has decreased in importance because of this. The number of employees and self-employed in the secondary area (industry and building trades) is constantly subject to fluctuations but in 2013 is still further below the level before the crisis. Around 27% of people in work are still to be found in these sectors of the economy. The service sector has also become the largest employer in the DG and now, after a significant rise in the 90s and a slow down in growth after 2001, covers 70% of total employment.

This development is also accompanied by an increasing proportion of women in work. Since 1990 the number of women in work in the DG has risen by around 47% whereas the number of men in work has only risen by 2%. The only moderate development among men is partly also caused by the fall in the number of blue-collar workers (compared with the number of white-collar workers) between 2001 and 2006 as well as in 2009 and 2012-2013. 47% of the dependent jobs in the DG are occupied by female employees of whom the majority however (around 69%) are part-time.

Like many other regions of Western Europe the DG too is affected by increasing ageing of the working population: more than every fourth wage earner is older than 50 and among the self-employed the proportion is as high as 49%.

### **Young people in the labour market**

In the last few years the number of young people in the DG has significantly increased and the number of young people surging on to the labour market has, unlike the other regions, still slightly increased (up to 2012).

The DG is seeing a comparably high employment rate of young people, which may not least be caused by the importance of the SME training (particularly for boys).

But the development of the employment rate of the young people is, like in the other regions, declining. In future the upcoming generations will no longer be able to replace those leaving.

Most young people are employed in the building trade, commerce and in the manufacturing trade. The majority of the workers are being trained in the building trade and hospitality industry. The proportion of young people to workers in total is around 12% and has in the meantime been dropping slightly since 2000.

### **Youth unemployment**

The youth unemployment rate in the DG is at 14.0% (2015) lower than in Flanders. It is significantly higher than the unemployment rate in Belgium (total 8.4%).

Around 530 young people are unemployed (average 2015). Among them is a high proportion of school leavers, few foreigners and hardly any long-term unemployed.

Young people with few qualifications often have additional obstacles to finding employment.

A large number of young people are in education and training (250 school leavers in 2015) including IBU [individual company training] and integration measures Art. 5.

## **Main concepts**

### **The dual medium-sized education system**

The German-speaking Community, which has been responsible for education for 20 years, has developed an education system that meets its specific requirements. Thus, even in classical crafts practice-oriented French courses are a part of the curriculum. In combination with the well-known strengths of the dual education of the German-speaking partner countries and regions, the DG developed a dual-level apprenticeship tailored to its own marginal situation. Here, apprentices and prospective masters in a vocational training center are given general and technical knowledge, while at the same time comprehensive occupational competence is assessed in certified training companies. In addition to providing intensive vocational counseling for young people, this unique training system in Belgium makes a decisive contribution to the fact that the employment rate of young people between 15 and 24 in the DG is higher than the national average.

### **Youth unemployment in the German-speaking Community**

In the DG, solid basic training is considered the best tool to ensure low youth unemployment. Thus, 94% of graduates of a dual SME education (average 2000 to 2011)

are placed directly into work. On average, these young people found employment within 45 days. With more than 800 apprentices (average 2004 to 2011) in over 600 active training companies, their share of the total population in the DG is ten times higher than in Wallonia or Flanders. The widespread use of dual training and its high labor market integration rate contributed to DG's having the lowest youth unemployment in Belgium between 2003 and 2012. Nevertheless, this was 13.3% in 2012. There is therefore further need for action here.

### **Cross-border education and certification**

The actors of the dual medium-sized training of the DG - whether the IAWM as supervisory authority or the ZAWM as education centers - use cross-border partnerships and European projects for the exchange of experience and knowledge with VET partners such as Chambers of Crafts, Chambers of Industry and Commerce, Vocational Colleges and inter-branch organizations. In addition to European apprenticeship exchanges, joint training offers and cross-border certifications (so-called bi-diplomation) are realized together. The Leonardo da Vinci pilot project "Border Competences" led by the IAWM has developed the essential aspects of vocational training that allow graduates to acquire the necessary skills for a cross-border economic and labor market. The term "Euregio competence" refers in particular to foreign language competence, intercultural competence and information literacy. On the basis of many years of cross-border educational partnerships and a training adapted to the particularities as a border region, the DG has been able to implement several model schemes for European vocational training:

- Since 2007, trainees as automotive mechatronics technicians with only one apprenticeship and final exam have been able to obtain the German and Belgian journeyman's certificate. This gives them the best conditions for employment on both sides of the border. Since 2010, the retailers trained in the DG or the *Städteregion Aachen* can also obtain the certificate of the neighboring region, and from 2013 on, this possibility of bid certification has also been opened to trainees in the hairdressing trade. Further professional areas are to follow.
- In addition, the ZAWM as an education center and the Aachen Chamber of Skilled Crafts (*Handwerkskammer Aachen*) offer joint cross-border master classes for butchers and bakers, who take on both culinary and business features of the respective partner region and thus represent a high added value for participants, for cooperating teachers and trade guilds.

## **3.2 Administration and Governance**

### **Governance**

The areas of responsibility for general labour market policy are spread over various levels of government. The federal level is responsible as part of its labour market policy for working conditions, collective wage agreements, equality of opportunity and wage guarantees as well as naturally all aspects of conciliation of the social partners. The payments of pensions and unemployment benefits are matters for the social insurances and likewise lie completely within the area of responsibility of the federal authorities.

Also the three regions and communities exercise areas of responsibility in the area of labour market policy. These are predominantly in the area of employment services and vocational training. The responsible authorities of the regions and communities are in addition carrying out actions to promote and create work and vocational training places and are also responsible for issuing work permits.

### **In the German-speaking Community**

In 2000 the Walloon region transferred certain responsibilities within the labour market policy to the German-speaking Community, among them professional basic and advanced

training, employment services, qualification measures or vocational guidance. Since this transfer supply and demand can be better tailored to the specific labour market.

Since 1 January 2000 after the transfer of the area of responsibility laid down by [Article 139 of the Constitution](#) by the Walloon region, the German-Speaking Community has authority for employment policy. This area of responsibility covers three large fields of activity:

- Finding employment for and vocational guidance of job-seekers

The job centre of the German-speaking Community (*Arbeitsamt der DG*) and some private temporary employment agencies find employment for workers in the DG.

The employment activity of the job centre covers:

- general job placement,
- placement of difficult-to-place persons,
- placement in temporary employment contracts,
- placement in job creation measures,
- outplacement,
- placement of workers not from the EU economic area.

The placement activity is wide-ranging. It includes

- establishing direct contact between employers and the unemployed or job-seekers,
- vocational guidance,
- careers advice,
- identifying vocational aptitude,
- labour market guidance,
- labour market and careers research,
- retraining and basic and advanced professional training courses.
- Work permits for non-EU citizens

The federal authorities are responsible for monitoring the compliance with standards applicable in the employment of foreign workers. Regional civil servants may, if they are authorised to do so, identify breaches of the standards.

Since 1 January 2000 the German-speaking Community is authorised to issue company employment authorisations and personal work permits for citizens who are not from the EU economic area.

- Job creation measures and employment aid

The job creation programme is in general directed towards fully compensated unemployed and equivalent persons. In Belgium job creation measures with financial incentives for employers are financed by the federal, regional and community authorities.

Since 1 January 2000 the German-Speaking Community manages a range of job creation measures, among them:

- Subsidised contract employees (BVA),
- Inter-ministerial budget fund (IHF),
- Professional transitional programme (BÜP),
- Activation of the unemployment benefit,
- Employment of persons on a subsistence level income.
- Training programme for job-seekers
- Solidarity economy
- Professional integration for people with disabilities

## Effects of the 6th state reform in the employment area

On 1 July 2014 the [6th state reform](#) entered into force. This resulted in among other things various employment measures going from the Federal State to the regions. After a transition period, since 1 April 2015 the regions exercise the administration of the following measures:

- paid educational leave: It offers workers the opportunity to follow various recognised off-the-job further training courses. During the further training the workers continue to receive their salary. After the further training the employer can submit a request to the Ministry of the German-speaking Community for reimbursement. Since 1/1/2016 the specialist area for training and teaching organisation of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community is responsible: [www.dglive.be](http://www.dglive.be)
- Target group reduction for tutors: An employer who enables a young person to have professional training or an internship may apply for a reduction of the employer contributions to the social security (LSS reduction): see link
- Training fund services vouchers: Recognised service voucher companies can have the costs of the further training of the service voucher company workers reimbursed.
- vocational experience fund: This fund enables the employer to adapt the quality of the job to the needs of his worker. The worker must be at least 45 years old.

For citizens and businesses in the German-speaking Community this means that since 1 April 2015 the Walloon [FOREM](#) is responsible for applications and file administration for these four measures.

### Main actors

#### Ministry of the German-speaking Community

The [Ministry of the German-speaking Community](#) is responsible for:

- job creation measures (ABM): these aim to enable the long-term unemployed and welfare recipients to have a regulated employment. With subsidies towards the wage costs to associations and authorities who carry out additional recruitment as part of projects of benefit to society as a whole, the German-speaking Community contributes in a targeted way to the increase in the employment volume. After the transfer of the employment competence to the German-speaking Community in 2000 the existing ABM were fundamentally reformed to meet the needs of the local labour market in the best possible way.
- work and employment permits: since 1 January 2000 the German-speaking Community has been responsible for granting work and employment permits in favour of foreign workers and local businesses. In principle, to employ a foreign worker, a work or employment is needed.
- The self-employed card for foreign self-employed persons: if a foreigner wishes to exercise self-employment in Belgium, he needs a so-called self-employment card (Berufskarte).
- temporary work and private agencies

#### Social and solidarity economy

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

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

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

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

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

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

The recognised preparation-for-work programmes and integration projects are funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

### **The DG Job Centre**

The Job Centre of the German-speaking Community (*Arbeitsamt der DG*), a para-communitarian institution, administers an independent system and an autonomous budget for the support of the citizens and companies in the area of job placement and vocational training. In individual consultations the service for vocational guidance provides help with decision making in the choice of a profession, training or degree course. This service has a comprehensive stock of information about the world of work and business. Of particular interest to job-seekers, pupils, school leavers and parents.

### **Kaleido-DG**

The centre for the early support of healthy physical, mental and social development of children and young people, [KALEIDO](#) for short, advises young people and parents among other things on the transition from school to training or into the world of work. In the German-speaking Community there are four hubs in Bütgenbach, Kelmis, Eupen and Sankt Vith.

### **Department for People with Disabilities**

The vocational development of people with a physical or mental disability is often a challenge. The experts of the Department for People with Disabilities (DPB - [Dienststelle für Personen mit Behinderung](#)) are familiar with the particular requirements and help in the search for suitable provision.

### **Institute for basic and further training in SMEs, in small and medium-sized enterprises (IAWM)**

The apprentice secretaries of the IAWM ([Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand](#)) give information among other things on skilled trades, admission requirements, on specialist and general teaching in the centres for basic and further training in SMEs (ZAWM - [Zentrum für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand](#)) or via vacant apprenticeship places.

### **Youth information centres**

Alongside the facilities already mentioned, of course the [youth information centres](#) also provide information on vocational guidance. Anyone who would like to change careers by further training can obtain advice from the DG further training service.

### **School and Business study group**

Also the School and Business study group ([Studienkreis Schule & Wirtschaft](#)) keeps offering children and young people the opportunity to get to know the world of work better.

## The East Belgium Business Development Agency (BDA)

As a non-profit organisation (NPO) the BDA (WFG - [Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft Ostbelgiens](#)) has the aim of developing East Belgium into an ideal competitive location for industry, commerce and trade. This is done in cooperation with the various partners. The BDA initiates, coordinates and supports numerous business projects. The BDA promotes local companies, helps outside companies to establish themselves and supports start-ups in their projects.

## ESC - Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council (WSR - [Wirtschafts- und Sozialrat](#)) is the consultation body of the social partners in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. Here representatives of the workers and employers examine together the development of the work and training market within the German-speaking Community and propose improvements in the labour market, economic and social policy.

## 3.3 Skills Forecasting

### Forecasting system(s)

#### An analysis of the job market

The Economic and Social Council ESC (WSR - [Wirtschafts- und Sozialrat](#)) has already been conducting an [evaluation of the job adverts](#) in the local press since 2001. This evaluation should shed light on what occupational categories are being sought at which location and what the job specifications for the potential applicants are. Only those job offers that can be clearly allocated to an employment subject to social security contributions at an employer's are collected. However, employers often place ads simultaneously in all three newspapers. These identical ads are however not evaluated several times. The procedure used by the ESC enables a variety of criteria on the situations vacant to be evaluated.

#### Shortage occupations

Having a labour shortage at the same time as high unemployment seems paradoxical. However, the imbalance between supply and demand on the labour market has a great variety of causes – quantitative and qualitative – and is therefore only partially contradictory.

Each year the regional employment services determine a list of the [shortage occupations](#), i.e. in which a (quantitative) labour shortage prevails on the regional labour market. Recording occupations in which there is a "skills shortage", takes place against a background of labour market policy objectives that aim to reduce the imbalance between supply and demand. The method to filter out the shortage occupations involves in principle determining a relationship between the number of job-seekers on the one hand and the number of job vacancies on the other.

In the DG occupations for which there are at least 5 vacancies (from the DG) in which the vacancy filling rate in the previous year was below the average for all job vacancies and/or in which the time up to the vacancies being filled was above average are considered as shortage occupations. Furthermore, consideration is made of how many job-seekers are registered in the respective occupation groups (potential applicants per job vacancy) and the assessment of the employment agencies and other labour market experts are taken into account.

### Skills development

On the basis of the existing legislation (under certain conditions (duration of unemployment, qualifications etc.) it is possible for unemployed persons to go into school-based training, a degree programme or an SME apprenticeship leading to one of these occupations while retaining unemployment benefit.

Based on the list of occupations, a list of training and degree courses will then be drawn up that could be considered for the following school year for this provision. For German speakers it means that a degree course can be started in Belgium or under certain conditions in Germany.

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

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

The basis of the current education policy in the German-speaking Community, which was introduced during the 2004-2009 legislative period and further developed by the Regional Development Concept (REK - *Regionales Entwicklungskonzept*) and the government statement of 15 September 2009 (*Gemeinschaftspolitische Erklärung der Regierung der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*), is the overall education policy concept, whose core areas, with regard to outcome-based and practical education/training, promote quality development in schools, increase fair access to education and create opportunities to learn professional skills. The aim of the overall education policy concept, with regard to the individual school pupil, can be summed up as follows: the young person should be provided with a basis for lifelong learning and personal, social and professional development. Various projects and sub-projects serve to implement the overall concept. In the field of employment, the German-speaking Community is also responsible for supporting and finding jobs for unemployed people, as well as careers information and advice, job creation schemes (including professional retraining and further training) and work permits. Due to the fact that powers relating to employment and youth fall within the responsibility of a single minister in the current government, employment and youth policy measures can be even better coordinated for the benefit of young people.

In particular, the policy aims to train as many young people as possible and ensure they are even better equipped to choose the right career. It also aims to recruit low-skilled or inappropriately qualified job-seekers for shortage occupations and find employment more rapidly for qualified job-seekers. A particular attention is therefore given to counselling and guidance where both, schools and the employment office are involved. But also the youth sector plays an important role in counselling and guidance - in particular the [youth information centres](#) which give also information on employment topics. Moreover, they carry out "future projects" in schools. This projects have the aim to raise consciousness at young people for their own "life planning".

#### **The DG Job Centre (*Arbeitsamt der DG*)**

- **Vocational guidance department**

The [vocational guidance department](#) provides a range of services to do with the subject of career choice and career (re)orientation, both for young people and for adults (job-seekers, workers, etc.). Here the spectrum goes from the provision of career-related materials via information event for pupils and young people up to individual consultations. Also the self-information zone and the activities dealing with application training have been allocated to the department. The range of advisory services is supplemented by medical and psychological consultations for adults that are not least for determining the suitability of a person for certain professions.

The department

- draws up, updates and publishes information on careers and training paths (more than 110 career information packs, brochures such as "Training for pupils and young people in the DG", etc.)
- provides assistance in the career choice preparation in collaboration with the PMS centres, schools, parents and other people involved: Organisation of the BIZ mobile weeks for pupils in St.Vith and Eupen, class activities in the schools, lectures and attendance at events etc.

The aim is to provide young people and adults with information so that they can independently make a choice of career that is in keeping with their inclinations and abilities. If possible this information also contains the realities of the labour market.

- **Career and training advice**

The individual career advice pursues the aim of promoting the permanent integration of the person seeking advice into the labour market.

The career advice contains guidance for persons seeking advice so that they can make a realistic choice of training and career starting from their interests, abilities and knowledge and with the help of the available information and instruments.

- **Psychological and medical services**

If need be, the psychologist at the job centre advises and supports job-seekers in their career guidance and socio-professional integration taking particular account of the medical, social and psychological aspects.

By means of psychological examinations the suitability of job-seekers for a training course or of applicants for a particular job is assessed.

- **Application & coaching**

The staff of this service offer consultations and training activities to support job-seekers in searching for jobs independently by giving them the required information, knowledge and abilities.

- **Self-information services**

The *interAktiv* meeting point ("TIAK" for short) was designed as a self-service zone that enables job-seekers to carry out their job search individually and independently. The display of the current ADG job vacancies, situations vacant from the press, free internet access, information on careers, helpful information leaflets and employer documentation as well as free use of the whole infrastructure (phone, fax, copier, PC etc.) is available to those attending. The TIAK staff are responsible for updating the documentation available, explain the use of the self-service zone to the job-seekers and help with practical problems. In addition, they advise users on request about writing CVs, application letters etc.

### **The Kaleido-DG service**

The job of [Kaleido-DG](#) is to provide support to schoolchildren in their intellectual, mental, physical and social development. They also provide sex counselling as part of their activity.

The staff are psychologists, nurses, doctors and social workers who work together in a team and thus ensure an integrated approach. In the German-speaking Community there are four hubs in Bütgenbach, Kelmis, Eupen and Sankt Vith.

Kaleido-DG offers schoolchildren, parents and teachers various services:

- Readiness for school examinations and consultations on the transition from nursery into school Year 1
- Information and advice on the transition from primary school to secondary school
- Group activities in consultation with the school to promote the personal development of the pupils and living together in the class group
- Support in the development of a learning technique as well as in the choice of degree course or career.
- Preventive healthcare: preventive examinations, health education (dental prophylaxis and healthy nutrition, sex education and aids prevention, safety in the workplace and in the playground etc.)

## Department for People with Disabilities

For people with physical or mental disabilities there is a specific range of advice services. The corresponding requests are made as a rule via the Department for People with Disabilities (DPB - *Dienststelle für Personen mit Behinderung*).

## ReferNet - The Belgian network of reference and expertise in the area of vocational education

The careers advice of the DG job centre is part of the [ReferNet Belgium](#) network. ReferNet is a structured, devolved, networked system for recording and disseminating information. ReferNet was set up by Cedefop to meet the growing demand for information enabling comparisons between the developments and political procedures in the member states. It supplies high quality information on a wide spectrum of developments in the area of vocational education and learning in the European Union by bringing together the specialist knowledge of important organisations.

ReferNet includes one national consortium in each member state composed of organisations that representatively reflect the institutions there in the area of vocational education. The network brings together organisations that have a common interest in promoting vocational education and learning. It stimulates the reciprocal exchange of information and promotes the forming of partnerships. It offers the members of the consortium the opportunity to expand their contacts to other international organisations in Europe and also outside Europe.

Each consortium is led by a national coordinator that is responsible for setting up the consortium and ensures that the tasks with which the network is entrusted are satisfactorily carried out. In Belgium the consortium is led by Bruxelles Formation.

The tasks of the network are divided into three areas:

- Documentation and dissemination
- Gathering and analysing information
- Research

## Euroguidance

[Euroguidance](#) is the European network for careers advice and since 1992 has supported professional and educational mobility within the European Union. In each member state of the EU and of the EEA and in Turkey and Switzerland there are one or several Euroguidance centres available which are promoted by the European Commission as part of the Lifelong Learning Programme. In Belgium the career guidance department of the DG job centre is a Euroguidance Centre.

The Euroguidance network pursues in particular the following aims:

- promoting mobility in Europe by creating and disseminating information material and for advising people interested in a degree course or further training abroad.
- the development of a European dimension in the system of education and career information and advice by exchange and further training with the aim of reinforcing the skills of the advisers in this area and of supporting innovative advice approaches.

## Institute for basic and further training in small and medium-sized enterprises

The apprentice secretaries of the [IAWM](#) give information among other things on skilled trades, admission requirements, on specialist and general teaching in the centres for basic and further training in SMEs ([ZAWM](#)) or via vacant apprenticeship places.

## The youth information centres

Alongside the facilities already mentioned, of course the [youth information centres](#) also provide information on vocational guidance. Anyone who would like to change careers by further training can obtain advice from the DG further training service.

Also the [School and Business study group](#) keeps offering children and young people the opportunity to get to know the world of work better.

### **Funding**

In 2016, 27,927,000 euros have been earmarked in the budget of the German-speaking Community for the area of employment and solidarity economy.

For exercising its tasks the job centre has incurred expenditure of 5,590,329 euros in 2015.

### **Quality assurance**

No specific quality assurance systems exist for career guidance and counselling in the German-speaking Community.

## **3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships**

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

Since 1 January 2012 new regulations apply that are intended to simplify the system for young workers and employers.

To be able to perform a student job, young people must be 15 years of age and have finished the second secondary school year or else be 16 years of age.

The number of days on which young people may work on a student contract is 50 calendar days. The days may be used all year round in the school-free periods as desired. Any day on which work is performed counts as a working day regardless of whether it was e.g. eight or only two hours. Anyone who exceeds 50 days loses the right to reduced social security contributions.

The young workers benefit for the whole year from one and the same reduced scale of social security contributions (8.13% = 2.71% paid by the student and 5.42% by the employer).

A student contract must not exceed 12 months. It is immaterial whether the young person works for one or several employers in the course of the year. The contract guarantees among other things that young people are insured and have the right to payment of wages.

Up to 18 years of age children and young people have the right to child benefit without restriction. Young people over 18 may work in the 1st, 2nd and 4th term for a maximum of 240 hours to retain their right to child benefit. In the summer holidays (July, August and September) there is no limit. If the hours are exceeded, the young person loses the benefit for the term.

If the wage of a young worker exceeds a certain limit, young people are no longer dependent on their parents for tax purposes and they must pay more tax.

### **Student@work**

The website "[Student@work - 50days](#)" helps young people calculate how many days they may still work. With the aid of their electronic ID they can register on the website and access their data. In addition, the website offers the opportunity to print out an official certificate showing the current status of days worked and days still available. The website also helps in the job search and offers all information to do with the subject to read.

## Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

### Job centre (*Arbeitsamt der DG*)

- **Individual on-the-job vocational training (IBU)**

The “individual on-the-job training” (IBU) is aimed at job-seekers and is completely tailored to particular work or a particular job. If an employer does not find a suitable worker for a particular position and would like to train someone, he can apply to the job centre for an “individual on-the-job training” plan. Conversely a job-seeker can also apply for an IBU. By the way, in the advice and placement interviews our staff draw attention to this option.

- **Industrial placement (or work experience placement)**

These measures are aimed at job-seekers with little experience of work and few qualifications. The placements offer them the opportunity to get to know the everyday world of work, to gather work experiences and to find out for what type of activity they are most suitable. Those interested should if possible find themselves a work experience placement. However, the job centre can also suggest a business. The work experience students enter into a training contract.

- a. **Internships for school leavers**

The internship offers school leavers the chance to gather professional experience and thus to improve their opportunities on the labour market. The internship offers young people the opportunity to get to know a profession or a company better over a longer period to thus facilitate entry into the world of work.

The internship may be completed in a company, a NPO or a public entity and lasts a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 months. The young person is employed full time in the business and also receives financial remuneration for this. Together with work in the company, the internship may also include courses, training events or projects recognised by the job centre.

During the internship young people receive various financial payments (monthly bonus of max. €200 or internship support by the LfA - Landesamt für Arbeitsbeschaffung)

- b. **Vocational guidance placement**

The vocational guidance placement offers young people the opportunity to become acquainted with the business environment and the requirements of the world of work.

They can find out whether they are suitable for their chosen profession and gain experience. Such an internship always takes place in connection with a vocational project or a vocational integration measure.

- c. **Work experience placement**

The aim of the measure is to give job-seekers a glimpse into everyday professional and business life and to allow them to gain professional experience. Those interested should if possible find themselves a work experience placement. However, the job centre can also suggest a position. The work experience students enter into a training contract (not an employment contract).

### **Start Service of the Department for People with Disabilities (DPB)**

The [Start Service](#) is the DPB service for training and employment. It promotes the training and employment of people with disabilities in private businesses, in public bodies and in sheltered workshops and daycare.

- **Training placement**

The training placement (AP) is for the purpose of socio-professional integration of people with disabilities who are paid a replacement income, are at least 21 years of age and for whom there is (still) no prospect of a contract of employment. This takes place as needed with the support of professionally trained persons, the supporters of the training and long-term placements. The employer does not bear any wage costs but only the reimbursement of the expense of the placement student as part of his placement. The occupational accident and public liability insurance for the placement student is covered by the DPB. This measure is intended for a maximum period of 12 months but can be extended as long as necessary.

- **In-company orientation**

"In-company orientation" (OIB) gives the placement student the opportunity to gain insight into his vocational abilities and interests. This measure enables the employer to assess the placement student's existing abilities and knowledge and those that may be developed.

The orientation placement can be a component of vocational guidance and is aimed at school leavers or young people without other professional experience and to persons who are seeking professional retraining.

## **Recognition of learning outcomes**

### **REK II future project "Recognising skills"**

Children and young people do not only learn at school but also in the professional life, on a further training course, in voluntary organisation work or when working on hobbies. With each challenge in everyday life their specialist, social and personal skills are continuously enhanced. They also use much of what they assimilate in their professional career. The knowledge that they acquire outside the classical educational institutions is however neither recorded nor certified. It is not visible although in many cases it is of great significance for the ability to act at work.

However, we shall only be able to deal with the demographically caused skills shortage in the EU if we exploit all work-relevant skills of the working population by taking into account all forms of learning and enable the framework conditions for lifelong learning. This applies to career changers, returners, older workers as well as for the low-qualified and migrants.

In its recommendation of 20 December 2012, the Council of the European Union called upon the member states to create by 2018 validation systems for skills acquired formally and informally. Validation systems should enable vocational skills acquired outside the formal education system to be made visible.

A first survey of East Belgian companies and guilds showed that the acceptance of the validation process for skills acquired non-formally and informally is still very low. So, because of the small size of the DG, it is important to also develop a concept that in the first instance benefits priority groups of people and professional fields.

The internal considerations on a validation system in the DG are still in the starting phase. Conceptual steps are to be covered jointly with the local actors. The concept is now being developed as part of the REK project in collaboration with the most important actors of the DG (representatives of the education area of school, vocational training, university training and adult education, representatives of various guilds, the job centre, union delegates, the Department for People with Disabilities, staff of the National Agency for Erasmus+ and the EPALE platform as well as also the Council for Adult Education).

Against this background the announced launch event for the REK II future project "Recognising skills" took place on 21 October 2016.

The aim of the event was to inform all actors in the DG (German-speaking Community) concerned on already existing validation approaches in the DG, to present various validation systems in Belgium and abroad and to stimulate discussion between relevant actors in the DG.

### **Funding**

In 2016, 27,927,000 euros have been earmarked in the budget of the German-speaking Community for the area of employment and solidarity economy.

For exercising its tasks the job centre has incurred expenditure of 5,590,329 euros in 2015.

By 2019 a sum of around 27.7 million euros has been agreed to implement and coordinate the 24 future and 3 horizontal projects of REK II. This money will be invested in the future of the DG. The REK "Ostbelgien leben 2025" ("East Belgium Life 2025") contains long-term visions that are intended to shape life in the DG sustainably, innovatively and inclusively for the population.

For costs not covered there are options to obtain third-party funds. So in many projects for example attempts will be made to obtain European funding or to participate in programmes of the Walloon region. Finding sources of finance is an integral part of the project work in the REK.

The costs arising from the overall management of the REK, the global coordination and communication of the concept as well as associated scopes of functions amount to just under EUR 380,000. Apart from in the period between 2010 and 2014 the European Social Fund (ESF) does not share in co-financing these costs.

A total budget of EUR 274,070 is planned from the German-speaking Community for the project implementation of the REK II future project "Recognising Skills" In addition ESF funding is to be requested. The costs covered are still to be defined as they are dependent on the results of the concept development.

### **Quality assurance**

As also already in the first implementation phase of the REK (REK I) there will be regular progress reports. These enable those responsible for the project to update and adjust the measures. New objectives may result from the experiences in the project implementation. As also in REK I (2009-2014) new work stages may therefore be added or work stages that are no longer regarded as reasonable may be discontinued. New statistical bases are to be developed for the DG that are intended to help further develop the impact indicators and measured variables and thus to make the objectives of the project more measurable. Also new best practices are to be sought as it is helpful and important to learn from other good examples. Finally the funding necessary for the implementation of the projects are to be made transparent as in the previous years.

During the first implementation phase the REK coordination presented the "East Belgium Life 2025" strategy to many organisations, service providers and advisory bodies. Interested parties may also register in future for such a presentation.

Over and above that, any interested citizen will have the opportunity to become involved in events to do with the REK. The intensive citizens' dialogue from the first implementation phase is also to be maintained in REK II.

## **3.6 Integration of Young People in the Labour Market**

### **Youth employment measures**

#### **Vocational integration period**

The Vocational integration period enables young people to seek work after their apprenticeship or degree.

During their vocational integration period they can pursue paid activity.

### **Youth Guarantee**

In April 2013 a recommendation of the European Council on the introduction of the so-called "Youth Guarantee" was passed. The aim of the Youth Guarantee is that all young people under 25 years of age – whether registered at the job centre or not – will receive a concrete and high quality offer within four months of the end of their training or after they have become unemployed. This offer – of a job, a training place, an internship or further training – should be tailored to the personal situation and needs of the person.

In the German-speaking Community the job centre has been charged with the coordination of implementing the Youth Guarantee. The roll-out plan for the DG was drawn up at the end of 2013 in close cooperation between the cabinet of the employment minister and the job centre. Also the participating partner organisations (IAWM, Department for People with Disabilities, various departments in the ministry as well as a range of other organisations/institutions in the areas of youth, teaching and social partners) have been integrated into the development of the plan.

After the EU Commission analysed the Belgian action plans and made a range of recommendations for improving the plans, in March 2014 the adjusted action plans were submitted. Alongside actions and projects that are to directly promote the training and employment of young people (integration concept of the job centre, entry placements, JuGa project of the department for young people with disabilities, module teaching for apprentices with learning difficulties, the creation of the Kaleido service etc.), the EU also attaches great importance to structural reforms. In this area for the DG e.g. the introduction of skills validation or the reinforcement of the synergies between professional/technical education and training in SMEs was defined as a project.

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

The organisation of the labour market in Belgium is a federal matter. The same federal legislation applies to the Flanders, but also to the French and German-speaking Communities. 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. In 2006, the Federal Government set up a system of financial rewards to prevent the drop-out of these part-time students (through start premiums) and to encourage companies to employ them (via internship premiums). Other measures protect minors from heavy job demands. For young people between 18 and 25 years old, specific legislation makes their entry into labour market easier: certain employers are obliged to hire a number of young people and labour costs are reduced when hiring young starters with fewer qualifications/opportunities. Belgium also has a youth vacation law. The number of vacation days in Belgium is determined by the time you have worked the year before. Because young people often start work when the calendar year is almost over, this would mean they would have almost no vacation days in the year after that. The youth vacation law allows young people to have extra vacation in return for a small income reduction. Within the Belgian framework, the German-speaking Community also pursues a particular labour market policy that aims to inform and 'activate' people.

Young people receive counselling and guidance services adapted to their individual situation. (e.g. individual job training in enterprises, Schnupperwochen, ...) Moreover, the German-speaking Community via its autonomous arrangement with regard to education, (vocational) training and employment within the Belgian framework, strongly supports and refines the "dual-system", which comprises education at a training centre and working as an apprenticeship in smaller or bigger enterprises at the same time.

Additionally, the German-speaking Community tends to enhance permeability of curricula, so that pupils from different schooling and vocational training systems can get access to higher education.

**REK I: Facilitating the transitions into the labour market**

It is extremely important to enable young people to make a seamless transition from school into work as this life phase is as sensitive as it is decisive. The project includes measures to actively support young people both in the preparation for the choice of profession and also in their entry into the world of work. Children must already be prepared at their level for the world of work at primary school. Company visits and practical phases in everyday school life play an important role in this. Schools and pupils are thus sensitised to the needs of the world of work. Up to now only selectively organised by school, company visits and company contacts must be systematised in future.

Transitions also concern the transition from unemployment into employment. Here care must be taken that the job-seekers "close to the labour market" are placed in jobs again as quickly as possible as spending a long time unemployed reduces the chances of reintegration. For this, effective job placement is needed. The findings and recommendations for action gained from an external organisational analysis of the job centre of the DG are implemented within the budgetary possibilities.

The cooperation between private and public job placement is optimised in favour of job-seekers by for example linking together information about job vacancies. The same applies to the collaboration with the public welfare centres as well as the [Department for People with Disabilities of the DG](#). A smooth transition between the system must be ensured.

For acquiring employability by further education and training the qualification opportunities must be expanded. Here cooperation with the various sector funds should be consolidated with the support of the local social partners.

In addition the reform of the so-called national support plan for the unemployed will decisively shape the future activities of the job centre of the DG. This reform is being developed in cooperation with other entities of the country.

**Reconciliation of private and working life for young people****REK I: Adaptation of the labour market to the changing demographic structure of the working population**

In its first [Regional development concept, the government of the German-speaking Community](#) (REK) launched a specific project to improve the "Adaptation of the labour market to the demographical structure of the labour force".

Demographic change is one of the most significant societal challenges of the future. In the next fifteen years the age profile of the workers will change noticeably and new customer needs will arise. It is important to face demographic change now to also in future be competitive and able to act. The planned measures concern businesses, workers and job-seekers equally. Also newcomers and migrants will play an important role in this connection.

Particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises regard should be paid to the age pyramid of employees. On the one hand the renewal of the members of staff who are just about to retire is dependent on this. On the other hand the transfer of professional experience from older workers to younger ones can thus be organised.

The transformation of the labour market requires the adaptation of the job offers both for job-seekers and for employers. For older job-seekers adapted qualifications must be offered. In addition the funding criteria for job creation schemes must be adapted to need. Specific groups of job-seekers, such as women returners, should be specifically supported. Also adapted job offers must be developed for newcomers and migrants. For the employers, after an awareness-raising and consultation phase, corresponding further training offers can likewise be created.

## Family-friendly companies

Career and family can be significantly better combined if the employers offer their staff family-friendly working conditions. Not only the employees benefit from the family-friendly focus of a business or an organisation. Also for the company appropriate measures are worthwhile as a good balance of work and family increases the motivation and performance of the employees, reduces absences from work and strengthens company loyalty. In addition a family-friendly staff policy is an important showcase and decisive competitive factor to gain new qualified employees. Family-friendly policy at work is essentially concentrated on two target groups or areas which are of great importance to all: staff with children and employees with relatives requiring care. In close dialogue with interested companies, the German-speaking Community would like to raise awareness for more family-friendly measures in the world of work and create the necessary framework conditions to give this important subject more attention and recognition. Guiding principle: family-friendly measures are to contribute to shaping the location of the German-speaking Community to be more attractive and worth living in for local and foreign workers.

## Childminders

In Belgium and the German-speaking Community, there exists the system of day nannies/childminders. In the German-speaking Community, childminders take care of children from 0-12, when parents are working. A person who wants to work as a childminder in the German-speaking Community has two options for being allowed to do so. Either she joins the regional centre for toddler care ([RZKB](#)) or she works as an independent childminder and agrees to apply for that job at [KALEIDO-DG](#) (which will be responsible for guiding and supervision). Childminder jobs are partially subsidised and parents also pay their share of the fee to the childminder. This gives the childminder a proper income. One objective of the government of the German-speaking Community is to meet 100% of the demand for childcare. In the German-speaking Community there are several options for childcare. To reach the "100%-objective", there is a need for optimisation and further development of the childcare system in the German-speaking Community. In relation to that there also is a need for additional childminders. So public information on the profile of a childminder will be improved.

## Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

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For exercising its tasks the job centre has incurred expenditure of 5,590,329 euros in 2015.

By 2019 a sum of around 27.7 million euros has been agreed to implement and coordinate the 24 future and 3 horizontal projects of REK II. This money will be invested in the future of the DG. The REK ("Ostbelgien leben 2025" ["East Belgium Life 2025"]) contains long-term visions that are intended to shape life in the DG sustainably, innovatively and inclusively for the population.

For costs not covered there are options to obtain third-party funds. So in many projects for example attempts will be made to obtain European funding or to participate in programmes of the Walloon region. Finding sources of finance is an integral part of the project work in the REK.

The costs arising from the overall management of the REK, the global coordination and communication of the concept as well as associated scopes of functions amount to just under EUR 380,000. Apart from in the period between 2010 and 2014 the European Social Fund (ESF) does not share in co-financing these costs.

## Quality assurance

### **REK I: Further development of the employment policy instruments**

Never before has employment policy been faced with such great challenges as today. It must in future achieve more with the same funds. It is clear that this is not the sole task of the social partners. There is only one way: The instruments must be more efficient. A self-critical look and reforms are needed. What tools must be honed? What tools should be replaced by contemporary equipment?

For this for example a forceful employment service is needed that in times of a liberalised labour market does not shy away from cooperation with the private actors.

The further development of the employment policy instruments demands as much decisiveness as careful consideration. So that this balancing act succeeds, cooperation with professional institutes and the conciliation of the social partners is indispensable. The developments of the economy also have far-reaching consequences for the labour market requiring new working methods. The demands on the employment service have changed and its organisation must therefore be reconsidered. A renewed alliance for work and employment (GABB IV) between the DG government and the economic and social council may show profitable stimuli for employment and further training. Existing instruments for observing and analysing the labour market can be further harmonised and coordinated. At the current time it cannot yet be foreseen how the institutional landscape of Belgium will develop. What is sure however is that it will change and this change will have wide-ranging consequences for the future arrangement of employment policy.

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

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

For several years, the German-speaking Community has been working quite successfully on cross-border mobility. There exists for example cross-border cooperation with Germany for the mutual recognition of training and education but also for common training in master classes (to achieve the Meisterbrief). This fosters the mobility of graduates. But also within the framework of EU programmes like Erasmus+, where the German-speaking Community has its own agency, young people can enhance their vocational and professional abilities and language skills. Moreover the German-speaking Community participates via the youth office in the German ASA-programme and in the Quebec-Wallonie programme. There also is cooperation in the field of professional and vocational mobility as part of the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion and of the Großregion (Greater region). Of course the employment office of the German-speaking Community ([www.adg.be](http://www.adg.be)) is a partner in relevant networks.

### **Greater Region**

Agreement between the German-speaking Community of Belgium, the [DG Job Centre](#), the [IAWM](#), the [ZAWM](#) St. Vith and the state of Rhineland-Palatinate, the Regional Authority of Rhineland-Palatinate-Saarland of the Federal Employment Agency, the Chamber of Craft Trades of Trier, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Trier and the German Trade Union Confederation of Rhineland-Palatinate for the implementation of the framework agreement on cross-border professional training in the Greater Region.

The framework agreement is to be implemented e.g. in bilateral agreements between partner regions and actors. Thus consideration can also be given to the respective peculiarities and details of specific needs be given.

The German-speaking Community and the state of Rhineland-Palatinate have been maintaining trusting cooperation for many years in numerous areas of work whether at bilateral level or at multilateral level as part of the Greater Region.

Focuses of the agreement are the cooperation between the public employment agencies and other actors to overcome obstacles for mobility on the labour market like the introduction of dual diplomas in joinery and the joint creation of a range of further training "Wood & Design". Furthermore the possibilities of an exchange programme for cross-border internships during training (in co-operation with Trier CCI) as well as a closer exchange between administrative authorities of the European Social Fund should be examined. For monitoring the agreement, a regular exchange between the parties and a biennial report to the respective heads of government is agreed.

### Legal framework

Cross-Border Mobility in Employment, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Opportunities is regulated by the EU in article 45 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#), which states that

1. Freedom of movement for workers shall be secured within the Union.
2. Such freedom of movement shall entail the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment.

## 3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence

### Policy Framework

Sustainable development is one of the key pillars of the REK. This considers in particular projects developing the German-speaking Community as a region for the economy and projects investing in education, vocational training and youth work. With regard to the economy, there are projects planned, that foster innovation and projects that tackle "housekeeping with nature". These projects clearly have a connotation of entrepreneurship and sustainable development. Regarding youth work and non-formal and informal learning, the future project "youth is future" can be highlighted. It contains the reformation of training and further training of young people and youth leaders as well as the establishment of a new framework for youth policy which has been achieved with the new decree on funding for youth work. This decree entered into force on the 1st of January 2012. Main objective is to foster young people's inclusion and active participation.

### Formal learning

#### **Harmonization and systematization of the vocational-technical education and "Mittelständischen Ausbildung"**

The main objective is to promote interchange between vocational training in vocational and technical secondary education and training in the dual education.

The vocational-technical education is an important part of secondary education in the GC, which integrates in particular two schools: the Robert Schuman Institute (RSI) in the north and the Technical Institute of the Episcopal School (TI) in the south and the affiliated part-time education centres (TZU). Many courses offered in vocational-technical education can be found at the same time in the "mittelständischen" teaching, so that there are several parallel deals that need to be examined on the currently progressing interchange and tested for their actual need or in terms of building on each other of vocational education system that must be realigned.

Infrastructure, teaching materials and the expertise of teachers and companies have to be used together. With the major infrastructure projects of the government, the so-called PPP, the school learning sites of the dual medium education (ZAWM) and the vocational-technical instruction (RSI) will move together on a shared campus in Eupen. In St. Vith, the workshops of TI and ZAWM will also be shared and equipped together. These new conditions promote the material and personal cooperation of both training systems. This should be followed by a review of the structure and organization of the various

authorities to use existing resources together and efficiently and to create new synergies. This includes to determine who will be responsible for the new concepts or the concepts to be revised.

### **Transversal Key Competences, Entrepreneurship Education, e-Literacy, Media Literacy, Innovative Learning Environments**

By the transition from school to training it is to be observed that not all young people reach the primary school certification or the upper secondary school certification and thus do not have the necessary academic training maturity. Others have deficits in social skills or have vague ideas of their career choice. For them, the transition to the professional training is difficult, because sufficiently basic school skills, concrete ideas of professional intentions, motivation and ability to integrate into an operational learning environment are provided. Both the novice into vocational and the novice into technical professional education must be offered adequate incentives at the transition from general education to professional education, because it is not only a social obligation but also an economic must to qualify all young people for the labour market.

For this project, a detailed analysis of the problem of this critical transition must be performed and new programs should be developed and implemented.

The co-existence of school and dual vocational training in the GC offers young people two ways to reach vocational skills and a certification. In order to enable the transition from one training system to another during training without friction, learning outcomes and professional skills have to be mutually recognized. Because now a requirement in almost all professions is to combine good theoretical knowledge with informal practices, professional technical education and dual teaching can complement each other. As vocational training careers aren't necessarily linear and natively, so-called Konnex rules are used, leading to the shortening of the training when appropriate academic knowledge is attained. These rules need to be further developed and expanded on the transition from vocational professional training in the master training. First steps to permeability, such as the issuing of the certificate 6B for medium apprentices by the Institute for Education and Training in the medium and in the small and medium enterprises (IAWM), have been taken. Thereby apprentices can first obtain a secondary education certification and a full recognition of their operational learning achievements. However, to achieve higher education, a 7B year must be completed successfully in vocational education. Deals of the 7B must be adapted to the needs of the journeyman, as full-day courses aren't compatible with their professional life. These offers may not be limited to professional skills that already most of the trainees possess. To meet the needs of colleges and universities, a specific offer must be created to prepare graduates for higher education.

### **Non-formal and informal learning**

No specific policy measures or large-scale public initiatives to encourage young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and attitudes through youth work and volunteering exist in the German-speaking Community.

### **Educators support in entrepreneurship education**

No specific policy measures or large-scale public initiatives providing facilities to support educators in entrepreneurship education exist in the German-speaking Community.

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

### **Access to information**

### **Business start-up and securing XISTENCE of the business development agency of East Belgium (BDA)**

The business start-up initiative of the BDA was launched in October 1999. As part of the community training and employment alliance (GABB) of the German-speaking

Community and with the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) several partners in eastern Belgium have joined together to take action jointly for a business start-up offensive.

The aim is to support potential self-employed people to start up a business. If they wish, the young entrepreneurs will be supported in all stages of the start-up of their businesses. Over and above that, the founder has the opportunity to be supported during the first three years after the start of his business activity. The aim of this continuing support is to put the business on a secure footing.

In addition to the offer of advice, all information to do with the topic of business start-up is published on its [website](#). Every three months there is also a free "e-newsletter" with short informative texts, current news and tips and dates on aspects of starting up a business. Alongside these direct interventions, another aim of the business start-up initiative is the creation of a start-up-friendly infrastructure in the German-speaking Community. Thus was formed the group Belgian Senior Consultants, today [B.S.C. East Belgium](#) ("Business Solution Counsellors"). This NPO is composed of retired persons who come from different specialisms (finances, accounting, bank, plant manager, lawyers etc.) and want to make available their collective experience to the young entrepreneurs.

### **Access to capital**

The simplest variant for financing their independence is using their own funds either in the form of cash or fixed assets. Perhaps it is possible to fall back on financial support from family or friends.

Very often financing by own funds is however not sufficient and sources of finance must be sought elsewhere.

After abolition of the contribution fund, [Sowalfin](#) assumes its roles for granting public credit in Wallonia. Requests are made via the partner banks. They can likewise apply for microloans and securities of [Socamut](#). The BDA provide assistance in the preparation of the credit file.

Microloans can be requested from the cooperative [Crédal](#) by people who have no access to normal bank loans and cannot produce any guarantees. Likewise microloans can be requested from [Microstart](#). Here too the BDU can be of assistance as the files must be submitted in French.

In addition to the usual bank loans and those mentioned above, if the business sector allows it, a request can be made to the venture capital company [Ostbelgieninvest AG](#) (OBI) This makes available venture capital and management know-how to SMEs in East Belgium and the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion. Particular attention is drawn to the funding of young, expanding and innovative businesses where the size of the business only plays a subordinate role. During the whole period of financing, OBI advises and supports the business, makes its contact network available to it and in important decisions stands by it as a partner.

A final alternative for financing are the so-called business angels who provide their project on the one hand with capital and on the other with their knowledge and contacts.

## **3.10 Promotion of Entrepreneurship Culture**

### **Special events and activities**

#### **Young companies ([Miniunternehmen](#))**

The principle of young companies, also called mini companies, is based on founding a company formed by the students of the upper years of secondary school and who start their business for one year.

They set up their own limited company with their own business idea. The shares (five euros) are normally sold to parents and relatives. The young people can then run their

company with the seed capital. Within the “companies” there are, as in reality, workers and various directors whose areas of responsibility go from production monitoring and staff support to finances. A CEO forms the head of the company and is the representative to the outside world.

Such projects are taking place all over Belgium under the direction of “Jeunes Entreprises”. This organisation supports the small companies and assumes the role of the state. This means that social security contributions and taxes are paid to this organisation.

In return the mini companies receive support in the form of documentation about the areas of responsibility of the directors as well as printed forms for share certificates that form the seed capital of the company. The aim of the project is to give the students a practical impression of the professional world and the functioning of a business.

The payment of wages and taxes is as much part of everyday life as constant meetings and drawing up balance sheets. During the project they are supported by their subject teacher and a supervisor of the “Jeunes Entreprises” organisation. The mini companies set up by the students are intended to exist for one year. After that the profits earned are paid out to the shareholders.

### **“How I met my idea” - cultural and creative economy in the DG**

As part of the Interreg project [Creative Drive](#) the media centre is a partner of the ambitious undertaking to offer the sector a lobby and to drive forward the creation of the sector in the DG. This initiative is also a part of the regional development concept and is integrated into the future project “Stimulating innovation”. The data collected so far on the cultural and creative economy show that with 500 positions the DG is already home to a strong creative potential - the ideal foundation for a creative and entertaining evening.

How can the combination of creative ideas with traditional economic sectors be enabled? In the globalised world economy innovation will in future be the guarantee of growth and stability. This simple finding seems to apply increasingly also in the businesses of the DG. And creative ideas for modern products, services or processes will for certain experience stronger demand in the near future than was previously the case.

### **Networks and partnerships**

#### **School & Business study group**

The School & Business study group (*Studienkreis Schule & Wirtschaft*) is a combination of committed representatives from educational and training establishments, companies, public and private institutions and organisations, associations and private individuals whose main aim is to promote voluntary cooperation between schools and business.

The study group would like to achieve this by

- promoting mutual understanding between school and business;
- enabling a continuous exchange of information;
- stepping up the cooperation of school and business by practical activities.

The study group offers a framework for these objectives and is open to interested representatives of all disciplines and all sectors of the economy. In the study group the participants become cooperation partners who can achieve their interests with equal rights and based on meeting as partners.

The School & Business study group stands at the interface between the educational and employment system.

In our everyday life increasingly complex issues arise whether in the choice of profession, in the daily routine, when shopping, when entering into contracts or dealing with authorities. So it is an important task to prepare children and young people in our

society, to exercise their rights and duties autonomously and responsibly, among other things in economic life.

The School & Business study group is collecting tips and help as to how the cooperation of School & Business can be successfully designed, as well as initiatives supporting the education providers and companies in setting cooperation in motion.

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

#### **New responsibilities at IAWM**

- Starting and internship bonus

The so-called starting bonus is a premium paid to a young person who successfully completes a dual training course during part-time compulsory education. Apprentice are entitled to this bonus. The internship bonus is a premium that the employer receives if he employs a young person on an apprentice contract.

- Target group reduction for tutors:

The employer who enables a young person to have professional training or a placement may apply for a reduction of the employer contributions to the social security (LSS reduction) for the "tutor" (trainer).

- Exemption rules (states on what conditions the unemployed may start a training/degree course and at the same time be paid unemployment benefit)

## **4. Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion covers a wide range of tasks, and many organizations and institutions are active in this sector. The majority of these activities are supervised by the Department of Family and Social Affairs of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community. The Ministry is also responsible for the development of legal provisions in the social sector, improving the coordination in social work and the expansion and consolidation of the socio-psychological care network.

Each municipality in the German-speaking Community has a public welfare center. These centers are the first point of contact for people in need, especially when financial aid is needed. Several assisted living communities have been implemented for young people in difficult social situations who can't be adequately supported with outpatient help.

The Department for self-determined life offers people with disabilities a comprehensive accompaniment. Children, young people, adults and also senior citizens can take advantage of the extensive services of the Center and its service providers.

A new integration pathway has been set up in 2017 to allow asylum seekers and foreigners with a valid residence permit to live in the German-speaking Community. This pathway consists of language courses, integration courses and an assistance in job search and leisure activities.

### **4.1 General context**

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

##### **Poverty**

For a person in Belgium affected, poverty means having to manage on a net household income under the poverty threshold of 878.00 euros/month. The poor have limited access to basic rights and basic needs (healthcare, work, education, housing etc.)

## Integration

According to the UN Refugee Council almost 60 million people are fleeing worldwide. They are fleeing from civil war, terrorist violence but also from the general lack of prospects in their home country. In Belgium the federal state is responsible for accommodating and distributing refugees and checking asylum applications. The DG is only indirectly concerned in this first phase – except schooling for the children and issuing work permits for asylum seekers. When a refugee obtains a residence permit and decides to settle in one of the nine DG municipalities, this is when the task of the German-speaking Community in the area of integration officially starts.

## Living with a disability

After the assumption of the responsibilities in the area of disability in 1990, it very quickly became clear that in the DG there was a lack of facilities, instruments and options to respond to the different needs but also the abilities and interests of people with disabilities. At this period the only existing form of housing consisted of residential homes for people with learning difficulties and multiple disabilities. And in the area of employment there were no alternatives to the day centres and sheltered workshops.

From an international convention in Quebec/Canada in 1993 the then managing director of the Department for People with Disabilities (DPB - *Dienststelle für Personen mit Behinderung*) brought back some ideas for the disability area of the DG: housing resources, training placements and a few other things. Likewise the conviction that the provision for people with disabilities must be reconsidered to the effect that it must be customised to enable people to a large extent to make decisions about their own lifestyle and to participate actively in the life of society. The development potential of people with disabilities and particularly those with learning difficulties are still much too often underestimated by society but also by professional staff. The concept of housing resources first had to be rewritten and adapted to the circumstances of the DG.

Thus first of all people had to be found who wanted to work as housing resources, families had to be found who were prepared to entrust their disabled adult sons or daughters to other people in this new form of housing, a compensation system and a subsidy procedure developed, etc.

Thus arose a new individually adapted and inclusively addressed concept promoting the self-reliance and self-determination of the person concerned – which even then corresponded to the present-day spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The whole thing was embedded into the social network of our society with strong partners such as the social housing companies and Wohnraum für Alle [living space for all] and supplemented by advisory, support and assistance services.

A standard that has enabled the disabled area in the DG – by the way, as the only one in Belgium – up to now to provide all people with high support and care needs with appropriate housing and not to build up waiting lists.

## Main concepts

**Community meeting place:** association or public facility recognised under the decree of 5 May 2014 on the recognition and promotion of community meeting places that, by community and group work, reinforces the social cohesion of people who live within its sphere of influence.

**Social cohesion:** a sense of belonging to a social environment arising from social ties, solidarity and involvement in networks.

**Community work:** method of social work that, starting from the resources and needs of the inhabitants of a sphere of influence, pursues the aim of improving the living conditions of the inhabitants – particularly people who can only access with difficulty the

rights mentioned in [Article 23 of the Belgian constitution](#) – expanding their opportunities for action and empowering them for self-organisation.

**Social group work:** method of social work that helps the individual to recognise his social functioning through meaningful group experiences.

**Fragility:** "Social fragility describes the lack of strength or the weak stability of social ties (at work, in the family, to the state and to communities) by which the subject is connected with his environment" (S. Paugam, 2009).

**Precarity:** "Precarity is the lack of security in one or several areas that enable people and families to meet their fundamental obligations and exercise their basic rights. The situations of economic and social precarity are different and often cumulative. They can be accompanied by other factors that in combination run the risk of the precarious situation developing into a situation of poverty or extreme poverty." (S. Paugam, 2009).

**Poverty:** "Poverty represents a network of forms of social exclusion that extends over several areas of individual and collective existence. It separates the poor from the modes of existence generally accepted by society. They are unable to bridge this gap on their own" (J. Vranken, 2013).

**Great poverty:** "Great poverty is used to designate a network of forms of social exclusion that has led to a rupture of ties that is at the same time permanent and deep-seated. These ruptures are integrated into the objective, subjective and social realities that people in great poverty maintain with the surrounding world and infect all relationships." (B. Humbeeck, 2012).

**Vulnerability:** "Vulnerability designates the exposure to more or less foreseeable external threats that put pressure on resources that a subject or a community has available." (R. Castel, 2003).

**Social exclusion:** Being poor means not seldom finding oneself in a network of social exclusion. Socioeconomic status, gender, proximity to education, family structure and origin significantly co-determine how high the risk of poverty is and how difficult participation in society in all its facets.

**Integration:** Integration pursues the aim of equal participation of all groups of the population in civic life in all its facets.

- **Structural integration:** This denotes equal-opportunity access for example to the education system or to the labour market. People with a migration background acquire rights and access to positions in subsystems of society such as work, education, health, the economy and politics.
- **Cultural integration:** This involves cultural adaptations and changes both among people with a migration background and among the host society (cognitive behaviour and attitude modifications). These include language acquisition, development and admission of biculturalism, recognition of values and norms of the host society, getting acquainted with and appreciating migrant cultures, interreligious dialogues.
- **Social integration:** Social integration means the development of social contacts, membership of associations, social ties at the workplace, in the neighbourhood and in leisure activities as well as friendships and encounters at all levels of society also among immigrants.
- **Identificatory integration:** By this is meant the readiness to identify with the place where one lives. Only a person who is accepted as an immigrant and feels as if s/he belongs will be prepared to participate and help to shape society at all levels.

## **4.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

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

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

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

### **Integration**

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

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

### **Housing**

The transfer of the responsibilities for housing, which is currently exercised by the Walloon Region in the German language area, has already been pursued by the German-speaking Community (DG) for several years. Housing – and particularly public housebuilding – offers profitable regulatory instruments to prepare the DG for the demographic challenges of the future. An active housing policy can encourage young families for example by acceptable rental or land prices to settle in the DG or else approach old-age poverty and the isolation of senior citizens. Social housebuilding in particular complements the already existing social services that are offered and funded in the DG.

### **Protecting democracy against violent extremism**

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

### **Main actors**

#### **Youth sector**

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

Intercultural youth work is one of the main vehicles mentioned in article 5 of the funding decree ([Dekret zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit](#)) to foster intercultural competences and

identity finding. Intercultural youth work is almost provided naturally in the German-speaking Community as it is a border region, close to Germany, the French-speaking Community and the Netherlands. Moreover the German-speaking Community is situated quite close to several urban agglomerations, which makes, that pedagogical concepts of youth work and non-formal learning automatically consider the acquiring of intercultural competences.

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

### **Public Social Welfare Centres (ÖSHZ)**

The Public Social Welfare Centre is an organisation created by the organic [law of 8 July 1976](#) which has existed since then in every municipality. The objective of the ÖSHZ is to support people from the municipality in question who have got into difficulties. However, a check is carried out first to see whether the person can make any other claims. The help may be in the form of e.g. financial support. The two most important forms of financial help are:

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

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

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

The ÖSHZ must treat all enquiries in confidence.

Each municipality has its own ÖSHZ.

### **DSBE (Service for Socio-professional Integration)**

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

The Public Social Welfare Centres are charged with ensuring this right. More than 10 years ago this Act on the right to social integration in the form of work and/or integration income gave the Public Social Welfare Centres the starting signal to deal intensively with the socio-professional integration of integration income or equivalent welfare recipients. The Services for Socio-professional Integration (DSBE) were given the statutory task of supporting the integration income or equivalent welfare recipients by individual and targeted funding in their search for training and/or adapted work. Currently all 9 ÖSHZ of the German-speaking Community provide such a service in their municipality. All the services work closely together – across the DG to harmonise the working methods with each other and discuss common subjects. The Service for Socio-professional integration works in the 2nd line. After clarification of the right to integration income or foreigner allowance from the general social services, persons to be supported who in the

estimation of the ÖSHZ social workers are ready for socio-professional integration are directed to the DSBE. These persons are to be prepared for the local labour market by intensive support and if applicable specific training and qualifications. For younger people the path to a professional qualification can also be enabled via an apprenticeship or degree programme.

If integration via employment or via a classical training course proves to be difficult, the DSBE can direct the person to a preparation-for-work or integration measure, e.g. in the case of people with socio-psychological problems, with multiple employment barriers, with a lack of professional skills or with a need for stabilisation of social skills. These measures help people to acquire more self-confidence and a self-assessment of their abilities and weaknesses, to recognise and process psycho-social problems and to gain the motivation to change their situation for the better.

### Community meeting places

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Special attention is paid by the community meeting places to people who are threatened by social exclusion or live in social exclusion. These persons have a more difficult access to the basic rights such as education, culture or the right to information.

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

### DPB (Department for People with Disabilities)

The Department for People with Disabilities (DPB - [Dienststelle für Personen mit Behinderung](#)) is a public institution for exercising duties in the disabilities area.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **VHS (Eupen Adult Education Centre)**

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

Focuses of the VHS:

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

### **Frauenliga (Women’s League)**

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

## **Social enterprises and preparation-for-work programmes**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

### **Networks North and South**

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

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

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

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

#### **Regional Development Concept (REK II): Horizontal project - "DG Inclusive 2025"**

There is no proper strategy on social inclusion in the German-speaking community. However, social inclusion plays a central role in its Regional Development Concept. The Regional Development Concept was conceived as a long term strategy by the German-

Speaking government, without any kind of legal basis. The process was initiated in May 2008 with a comprehensive stock-taking and regional analysis, whereby the strengths and weaknesses, chances and challenges of the DG were closely examined. On the basis of this study, strategic approaches and concrete recommendations were crystallized into a mission statement which characterized the DG as a Frontier Region, an Economic Region, a Learning Region, a Caring Region and a Living Region. The REK was published in four volumes: the first contains the regional analysis, the second contains the mission statement, development strategy and suggested measures, while the third outlines specific and concrete projects. Volume four looks back on the first implementation period and introduces the future and cross-sectional projects within the framework of the second implementation period, including the project "DG Inklusiv 2025".

In the first implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK I) there were already sub-projects on the subject of Inclusion.

In 2009 the parliament of the German-speaking Community (DG) accepted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into their legal framework. The guiding principles of the UN convention are among other things accessibility and inclusion that enable all people to participate in the life of society regardless of their impairment.

This resulted in the responsibility of the whole of society to actively involve people with disabilities in all areas of life whether in politics, administration or society. In Article 1 the UN Convention defines people with disabilities as follows: "People with disabilities include people who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Inclusion must, however, be accompanied by supporting measures. The action plan "DG Inclusive 2025" flags up concrete measures and approaches that are intended to lead to the implementation of the UN Convention. This action plan has been drawn up with the involvement of the authorities, the service providers inside and outside the disability area and citizens and above all the people with disabilities. The UN Committee for the Rights of People with Disabilities has meanwhile examined the first Belgian state Report on the implementation and on 3 October 2014 published its closing observations with suggestions for further implementation. These observations complement the action plan "DG Inclusive 2025" and represent the guiding principles of the aspect of inclusion in the REK.

The creation of an inclusive society within the meaning of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is an overarching task on which the public and private institutions and actors should be involved. In this connection, no one can decline jurisdiction. Therefore within the scope of REK II the implementation of the action plan "DG Inclusive 2025" is being commenced. All part subject areas of the REK are to contribute quite specifically to more inclusion in our community.

In the implementation of the action plan great importance is attached to people with disabilities being able to be involved as experts in their own matter.

### **Scope and contents**

For the implementation of inclusion as a horizontal task the corresponding coordination opportunities must be created.

The Department for People with Disabilities (DPB - [Dienststelle für Personen mit Behinderung](#)) makes its expertise as the specialist department for the disability area available to other organisations, services and authorities. Furthermore the DPB gives information and awareness raising on the rights of disabled people.

For the coordination of the implementation, the government strives for the actualisation of legal bases that govern the role of the "focal points" on the coordination of the implementation of the UN Convention provided for in the UN Convention and embedded at the DPB. Furthermore rules are also to be found for the Forum, the Monitoring

Committee and the other authorities and organisations in the implementation of the UN Convention. This takes place through the use of classical control instruments such as the management contracts and through the consolidation of the involvement of people with disabilities in decisions concerning them through different forms of participation.

Within the meaning of the UN Convention all authorities and organisations are to design their services step by step to be inclusive. As the specialist "People with Disabilities" department, the DPB supports the project managers of the future projects and horizontal projects as well as the organisations, services and authorities in the DG in an advisory capacity on request.

In the concrete actualisation of REK II people with disabilities, representatives of the authorities and institutions and also the social interest groups work together in the DG in a Monitoring Committee. This Monitoring Committee has the aim of enabling a coordinated implementation, supporting and advising the future and horizontal projects as well as involving the persons with disabilities in this as experts in the own matters.

### **BORDER REGION DG**

People with disabilities are to be able to participate without restriction in all society and social provision. We want to contribute to all people with or without disabilities being promoted together in the discovery and exercise of their individual cultural, artistic and social skills. This applies for example to all services of the public libraries and media libraries or to events of all kinds. We must learn that it is normal to be different. The subject of inclusion is accordingly an important horizontal subject for many voluntary projects, particularly in the sports, youth and social area. Awareness raising, accessibility and further education are important fields of action.

Trainers and instructors in sport must have the necessary information to also be able to best supervise people with disabilities in everyday training. For this barriers and anxieties must be reduced and inclusion skills developed. In the basic training of the trainers in the sport area a module will be introduced that is devoted to inclusion skills for people with a disability.

As part of the cross-border pilot projects, the DG is involved in addition in the evaluation and labelling of barrier-free access to public buildings and those accessible to the public and in the introduction of an EU Mobility Card for people with disabilities. To achieve the aim of an inclusive society, in addition intensive exchange and collaboration with partners domestically and abroad is needed. An example of good practice for this is the "inclusion mainstreaming" approach of the Landschaftsverbandes Rheinland [Rhineland Regional Council].

### **ECONOMIC REGION DG**

[Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) is specifically devoted to the work and employment of people with disabilities. Under this article 27 the contracting states recognise the same right to work of people with disabilities. This also includes the right to the opportunity to earn a living by work.

To promote this right the partners undertake to take appropriate steps. Among other things Article 27 provides for acts of discrimination because of disability to be prohibited in employment matters. This ban also concerns the selection, recruitment and employment conditions.

Furthermore the contracting partners commit themselves to the same right of people with disabilities to fair and reasonable working conditions, the same wage for equivalent work and effective access to job placement and further training.

In this connection, the UN Convention requires that people with disabilities are employed in the public sector. These aspects that are intended to achieve equal opportunity on the labour market are also taken up in the DG action plan on the implementation of the UN Convention "DG Inclusive 2025". Together with other measures, the action plan campaigns for inclusive application procedures. The recommendations of the Economic

and Social Council of the DG (ESC) go in the same direction with its current study “Diversity on the labour market as opportunity for the economy” of June 2014. In this study the authors have identified people with disabilities as a target group that has difficulties getting a foothold in the economy and on the labour market. The ESC points out that discrimination tendencies in recruitment procedures towards people with disabilities continues to be the reality.

In this connection reference must also be made to the future project “Increasing employment and securing skilled workers” of the “Economic Region DG” that likewise takes into account the group of people with disabilities.

As a horizontal project of the Economic Region the DG would like to press ahead with the inclusion in the area of employment for persons with disabilities and counter or prohibit discrimination against this group of people.

The action plan “DG Inclusive 2025” on the implementation of the UN Convention proposes, alongside other measures for promoting equality of opportunity on the labour market, the introduction of a minimum employment rate for persons with disabilities in the public sector as well as inclusive recruitment procedures. As part of the present project, the DG aims to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the public authorities of the Community. For this a steering group and if necessary working groups will be set up. The members of the steering group will be representatives of the government, the Ministry, the public interest bodies, the services with separate rules of procedure, the local authorities and the ESC. The steering group will discuss and develop the various work stages. Adapted to the respective need, working groups composed as required can meet. It is planned to invite people with disabilities as experts in their own matters to the working meetings of the steering group and to the working groups.

In a first stage the actual situation at the public authorities of the DG concerned is to be recorded, i.e. the current employment rate of persons with disabilities in the respective authorities. Furthermore the steering group should stimulate checking of the recruitment procedures of the individual authorities for their inclusive, equal-opportunity character. Is there still not optimisation potential in the recruitment procedures that might increase the chances of a job for people with disabilities in the public services?

Based on these work stages the steering group will develop targets that may if required be presented and concerted in the working groups. If needed the working groups will also assist in the execution of these targets.

## **EDUCATION REGION DG**

Participation in mainstream education provision is to be aimed at whenever possible. If this is not the case the Community will ensure individually adapted education provision. Thus tailor-made resources must be available for inclusive teaching so that all pupils can receive high or low-threshold support to meet their needs. In this connection the teachers both in SME and in school-based training should use special needs educational methods in their lessons. In this connection the future project “giving individual support to pupils” is already planning measures at the level of the overall system, the school and the lesson in the classroom.

Particularly training and further training at the Autonome Hochschule [Autonomous University] (AHS) must reflect this increased training need so that teaching and non-teaching staff, school managements and coordinators can meet the new requirements. Here continuing education courses within the school can represent important solution approaches to anchor the idea of inclusiveness into mainstream schools. The area of initial training and continuing education will be further differentiated in the future project “supporting teachers”.

In addition the adaptation and opening of the provision aimed at as well as the methods and concepts of lifelong learning is to enable all people to acquire additional qualifications and be able to continue in education according to their personal interests, abilities and needs. The future project “recognising skills” will particularly meet this target.

Support must also benefit the young people who are just about to make the transition from special education into professional life. This also applies to young people who do not have the level necessary for training and neither pass the professional technical secondary education nor succeed in direct entry into the dual apprenticeship training. The future project "Evaluating technical professional training" will look in more detail at this level necessary for training and flag up options for action.

### **SOLIDARITY REGION DG**

In the Solidarity Region the future project "Living diversity" will promote the inclusion of people with disabilities by measures of awareness raising and accessible information. Furthermore also in the other future projects of the Solidarity Region people with disabilities and their equitable participation in society will be supported.

### **LIVING REGION DG**

It is important to the DG to enable all people to have access to the life of society and thus also to private and public buildings. This is also important with respect to demographic change. Most people would like to remain living at home as long as possible. For this purpose these buildings should be planned barrier-free as far as possible right from the start. Being barrier-free in the public space is not only useful for people with disabilities and the many senior citizens who use a wheelchair or rollator to get about but also people with short-term impairments such as a broken leg, people with toddlers or people who have to carry heavy loads and are helped by a lift. With the consistent implementation of the Decree on Barrier-free Building we are planning long-term and thus sustainably so that our buildings are open to as many people as possible. In our guiding principle, this means: "We want to set up barrier-free standards for new housing developments and restoration work, actively promote and fundamentally ensure a barrier-free standard for social housing development." After the first experiences with the Decree of 12 July 2007 on the accessible design of subsidised infrastructures ([Erlass der Regierung zur Festlegung der Bestimmungen zur behindertengerechten Gestaltung von bezuschussten Infrastrukturen](#)) it has turned out that in some points it has been necessary to make adjustments. These revisions and improvements to the Decree are intended to lead to the accessibility of buildings and thus the inclusion of people with an impairment being constantly optimised.

Furthermore, after the transfer of the responsibilities for housing development, initiatives on the barrier-free design of living space are possible. These possibilities are to be used single-mindedly. Because of the fact that the scope of the transfer of competence has not yet been specified, concrete measures cannot currently be defined.

Over and above that, a concept is being developed to give a special award by the introduction of a label to buildings designed to be barrier-free, to create positive stimuli and the give persons with disabilities inspected information on accessibility that meets the different needs. In a first phase, the DPB has drawn up questionnaires to check the conditions in the area "Accessibility" on site. The questionnaires are being tried out in a test phase. After that, the DPB plans to train two persons with disabilities so that they can conduct surveys on site. The results of the surveys conducted by the two persons will be published on the website [www.eurecard.org](http://www.eurecard.org). A link between this website and the website of the [Tourismusagentur Ostbelgien](#) [East Belgium tourist agency] (TAO) is to be recommended.

### **Responsible authority**

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

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

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

### **Revisions/Updates**

As the REK outlines future developments in the DG up to 2025, it may undergo revisions and updates over the period of its implementation, in order to deduce and elaborate measures as can best meet the DG's current and future needs.

## **4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people**

### **Programmes for vulnerable young people**

#### **Youth Strategy Plan 2013-2015 "Future for all children and young people – disadvantaged children and young people in focus"**

The reports of the DG detached youth worker, the recommendations of a future conference on the subject of youth welfare and the report on the KFN study "Gewalterfahrungen und Medienkonsum bei Jugendlichen in der DG [Experiences of violence and media consumption among young people in the DG] have shown that there is a need for action in the areas of violence prevention, fairness (fair access and equality of opportunity) an right to special help or support for children and young people with a variety of problems.

In conclusion the government has therefore decided that based on the title of the future project "Youth is the Future", the 2013-2015 strategy plan should be drawn up under the motto: "The Future for all Children and Young People – with the focus on Disadvantaged Children and Young People." Because of the political prioritisation in the strategy papers REK ("Regional Development Concept 2025") and LAP ("Ongoing Work Programme") the government has decided on the following two focus areas:

- Planning actions aimed at the target groups for children and young people with a range of problems
- Propensity to violence among children and young people.

The action plan on these two focuses consisted of seven projects carried out in cooperation with various organisations. Among others there were

- further training module for "Violence Prevention" or "Dealing with young people's worries"
- provision for experiential education in the DG
- awareness-raising campaigns on the topic of "Violence in the Media and Dealing Critically with Media"

### **Oikos**

For many years, on behalf of the youth court and in collaboration with the youth court services oikos has been monitoring and supporting young people with behavioural problems or drawn into criminal activity in the IPPGs (closed educational centres) or in a closed centre in St. Hubert (French-speaking Community).

As part of this oikos provides a German-speaking social worker who regularly conducts interviews in German during the young person's stay to work on future prospects.

Alongside regular interviews, the content of the support by oikos is

- developing educational projects
- creating a social history
- developing "possible proactive solutions"

This is carried out for the benefit of the young person. The proposed solutions developed will then be presented to the court for re-evaluation of the situation.

### **Time-Out**

In 2011, "Time-out", the educational pilot project for pupils of all mainstream and special secondary schools in the DG was launched. The essential project aims are the avoidance of an imminent exclusion from school and the successful re-integration into school by comprehensive socio-educational measures during a limited period. When pupils with considerable behavioural problems suddenly detach themselves from the class, become disaffected from school and keeping them in school represents an intolerable burden on the lesson and the school climate in spite of comprehensive internal school measures, the "Time-out" project is an option of averting imminent exclusion. The pupils receive limited "time out" from school attendance and transfer into the care of the "Time-out" project. Designed as a full-day school, the project enables the individual socio-educational support of the pupils with the aim of re-integrating them back into the class of the original school. This time-limited time out from the lesson is to be regarded as a bridging variant that, by extended support and advisory structures, is intended to give young people the opportunity to be guided and stabilised. This possibility of intervention includes special socio-educational measures that in the end are to enable the re-integration of the pupil into the original school. Here particular importance is attached to experiential education and creative expression.

### **Funding**

All programmes and institutions for vulnerable young people are organised as non profit organisations and as such rely on public fundings issued by the German-speaking Community.

### **Quality assurance**

In many areas (youth welfare, recognised social enterprises, etc.) the government uses so-called monitoring committees in which the implementation of the management contracts is monitored. Generally representatives of the organisations as well as the municipalities also join in the meetings. Furthermore the annual activity reports of the enterprises, enable a picture to be formed of the development of social integration in the German-speaking Community and to direct policy accordingly. No least numerous studies are likewise being written and statistics collected such as the poverty report of the DG in collaboration with the University of Mons.

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

### **Social inclusion through employment**

The applicant is entitled to social inclusion through employment appropriate to his personal situation and abilities and this should be within three months of the date of application.

The right to social inclusion through employment can be implemented by:

- a contract of employment;
- an individually adapted project for social inclusion that leads within a certain time to a contract of employment;
- a contribution by the ÖSHZ to the costs associated with the professional integration.

During the negotiations with the ÖSHZ on the proposed contract of employment or the proposed project the applicant may be accompanied by a person of his choice. In addition he is entitled to a period for reflection of 5 calendar days before signing the contract and may request to speak to the welfare council.

**Social inclusion through being granted the integration income**

A person waiting for the start of a contract of employment or acceptance into an individually adapted project or who cannot work for health reasons or other particular circumstances, can receive an integration income.

However, for people under 25, integration through employment or training is the absolute priority.

The award or continued payment of the integration income may be linked with the condition that the person concerned takes part in an individually adapted integration project.

The age of majority is not synonymous with the right to financial independence.

If an 18-year-old moves out of the family home, he is not automatically entitled to financial support from the ÖSHZ.

Also marriage does not automatically confer the right to autonomy that makes his own home absolutely essential.

The maintenance obligation after the age of majority is fulfilled if the parents allow their student offspring to live at home and provide for him. Only if there are objective criteria such as a remote place of study, that the parents are separated or there is parent-child conflict, can the adult offspring demand maintenance. The level of maintenance does not depend on the standard of living of the parents but on the level of training and the abilities of the student.

In the event of marriage the claim is from the spouse first of all. Only if the latter cannot support his spouse do the parents have to pay for their offspring.

Thus the payment of an integration income is reduced by the amount of the maintenance to be claimed if:

1. the young adult refuses to accept or request his family's help or his family do not have the financial means to support him in his independence;
2. the young adult moves out because he is striving for his autonomy without family conflict making this necessary.

Full-time students are not available to the labour market and thus do not in principle meet the statutory condition for claiming the integration income.

The ÖSHZ has however the option for reasons of fairness to accept a degree programme. Here it is checked whether the degree course will contribute to improving the opportunities for professional integration. The choice of degree course depends on the young person but must be discussed with the ÖSHZ.

The individual obligations of the student are laid down in a contract between student and ÖSHZ.

In the case of persons 25 and over the right to social integration can be implemented differently, i.e. by:

- being granted the integration income;
- an employment (contract of employment or sharing in the costs for professional integration).

Even if it is not compulsory for persons over 25, the granting or continued payment of the integration income may be linked with the condition that the person takes part in an integration project.

## Intercultural awareness

### Youth decree

As mentioned in article 5 of the Decree of 6 December 2011 (*Dekret zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*), youth centres have to meet general criteria to be eligible for funding. Those include, amongst others:

- offer and provide activities that place the needs of the children and young people at the centre of their actions;
- take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability;

They also have to implement at least four of the focuses of the youth work defined by the Government, which include

- socio-political and social education to promote interest in socio-political participation, of the ability to form critical judgements of socio-political processes and of the readiness for active involvement in socio-political processes;
- cultural youth work to promote creativity and cultural forms of expression;
- leisure-oriented youth work as a contribution to holistic development through sport, play and movement;
- media work to promote media skills for critical and conscious media use;
- intercultural youth work to promote skills and finding one's identity;
- gender-differentiated girls' and boys' youth work for the promotion of equality of opportunity and breaking down gender stereotypes;
- cross-community and international youth work to promote understanding within Belgium and internationally, peace-keeping and the European identity.

### Youth Strategy Plan

In 2014 the 2<sup>nd</sup> [Youth Strategy Plan](#) (YSP II) covering the period 2016-2020 was drawn up. The second and actual Youth Strategy Plan 2016-2020 (YSP2) "Acting respectfully" foresees 11 actions in 4 categories:

- "Strong against Addiction",
- "Promoting diversity",
- "Political education",
- "Emotions and self-perception".

These actions include cross-border action days, developing networking, promoting projects, building awareness, offer trainings and supporting mechanisms for young people and youth workers in order to develop e.g. new approaches for promoting diversity, for social inclusion, democracy, political education and participation in the youth field.

## Intercultural and interfaith dialogue

This is the focus theme for school year 2016-2017 in the German-speaking Community (DG). The government decided on a corresponding action plan for pupils and trainees in all educational institutions.

The chosen theme is no accident as East Belgium too is becoming more varied. As in many places in Europe, here too we come across languages, cultures and religion from all over the world. This reality must move us to action:

- to set up cultural and faith dialogue
- to get to know and respect each other
- to deal with each other impartially

and to also do this not least in view of the increased number of refugees.

Reducing prejudice, designing better coexistence, establishing togetherness. This is at the centre for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. It is intended to promote dialogue between people from different cultures in the schools of the DG.

### Info-Integration

The aim of [Info-Integration](#) is on the one hand to give immigrants the information and support that they need to be able to make decisions and to determine their own lives (consultations) and on the other hand to support social actors, volunteers and civil society to dismantle barriers to the equal participation of people with a migration background in the life of society. This takes place by means of the organisation of further training (also on request), involvement in various working groups and networks, dialogue with the policy makers, awareness raising, etc.)

### Young people's rights

On 20 November 1989 the United Nations adopted the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). By the act of 25 November 1991 Belgium approved this Convention.

The Convention contains 54 articles and the signatory countries undertake to uphold the children's rights among other things in the following areas on

- prohibiting discrimination,
- protecting and safeguarding children's interests
- developing their abilities
- names, nationality and protecting identity
- contact when parents separate
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- freedom of expression and assembly
- protection of private life
- access to appropriate information
- protection from abuse
- adoption
- healthcare, medical services and disability
- social security
- education
- Leisure, play and cultural activities
- child trafficking
- armed conflict
- Re-integration and re-socialisation
- Youth justice

Compliance with the provisions of the Convention is monitored by the UN treaty body, the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, which receives and evaluates the reports of the signatory countries every five years.

On 19 September 2005 a cooperation agreement between the federal state, the communities and the regions of Belgium was adopted which creates a [National Commission for the Rights of the Child in Belgium](#). The German-speaking Community is represented in this Commission.

The main tasks of this Commission are coordinating of the periodic reports to the UN Committee in Geneva, monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of this Committee and promoting the exchange of information between the various authorities and bodies concerned with children's rights in Belgium.

### Structured Dialogue: "[Really boring, legally complicated](#)"

As part of the EU Structured Dialogue in 2014 around the theme of "Empowerment of Children and Young People" the question was how children and young people can be empowered and supported in such a way that they lead an independent life and can integrate themselves on their own responsibility and with self-determination into society.

During this the Council of the German-speaking Youth organised a consultation on the following themes:

- How access to political education and to the participation of young people can be reinforced. Do they exercise their right to have a say? If not, why not?
- Addressing the right to their own values. In our society are you really free to live out the values that you consider as important or are limits set? Or are we limited by the dictates of conventions or the generally required neutrality?
- Right to one's own body, to self-determination and sexual freedom.

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

**Strategy for the prevention of violent radicalism in the German-speaking Community of Belgium 2016-2020** (*Strategie zur Vorbeugung von gewaltsamem Radikalismus in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*)

The government of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (DG), in consideration of its areas of responsibility, decided, based on the increasing violent radicalism in Europe, to devote appropriate attention to the matter of radicalism.

Consequently the government appointed a coordinator for the prevention of violent radicalism whom the prime minister charged with the formulation of a strategy for the prevention of violent radicalism in the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

This strategy describes the framework conditions within Belgium and cross-border of the policy for the prevention of violent radicalism in the DG. In addition it includes details on political control and thematic action focuses in the form of "pillars" that can have influence on concrete proposals for action. Finally the author offers a medium-term outlook on the prevention policy in the DG.

This strategy relates to the period 2016-2020 and was coordinated with the relevant services of all political and administrative levels before publication. Systematic consultation with the same partners is to accompany the whole implementation of the planned measures.

Taking account of the political competences of the DG, the strategy for the prevention of violent radicalism in the German-speaking Community of Belgium forms part of the guiding principles of the federal framework plan for integral security 2016-2019 as well as the federal action plan on radicalisation "[Plan R](#)".

## **4.6 Access to quality services**

### **Housing**

#### **Supervised residential communities for young people and young adults**

For young people and young adults who are in a difficult social situation there are several supervised residential communities in Eupen.

These residential communities accept children and young people who find themselves in difficulties and need help with social integration. So people who had problems getting on with their families, who come out of a treatment unit (because of drug or alcohol consumption or mental health problems) or who have been in prison live there for a temporary period.

These residential communities are operated by the two organisations OIKOS and SIA.

For young people under 18 the request to live there must be made to the young people's welfare services. In principle the parent or guardian must consent to the project.

For young adults in most situations working together with the Public Welfare Centre is necessary for financial reasons.

The [S.I.A. Wohngemeinschaft](#) sees itself as a therapeutic residential community and has a special application process. To be accepted there, a project must be drafted with the person responsible in which the objective of his stay in the community is specified. In addition, before acceptance an interview takes place with the residents of the residential community who must agree to a new resident.

This residential community also accepts young mothers with children.

The staff (psychologists, social workers and childcare workers) support the residents both in their professional and in their social integration, they accompany them to visits to authorities, find therapy places where needed and prepare the transition into an independent living situation together with them. The Wohngemeinschaft S.I.A. has 7 places. 5 places are intended for adults and 2 places for young people from 16 years of age on the request of the youth court or the youth welfare service. A waiting period of a few weeks is to be expected.

[OIKOS](#) operates several residential communities, the Jordan house in Nispert being reserved for young people from youth welfare. Here an application must be made via the youth welfare service and it must be demonstrated that it is no longer possible for the whole family for the young person to continue living at home.

The two other houses in Eupen and Raeren are reserved for young adults. The staff (social workers and childcare workers) support the residents in their professional and in their social integration, they accompany them to visits to authorities, find therapy places where needed and prepare the transition into an independent living situation together with them. The various residential communities have a total of 4 places for young people and 8 places for young adults. A waiting period of a few weeks is to be expected.

Alongside the residential communities, OIKOS also organises off-site family support on behalf of the youth welfare service or the youth court and social support of young people and children in difficult situations who live alone or with their families on the request of the court of first instance, of the social services or of the person concerned himself throughout the area of the German-speaking Community.

## **Social services**

Between June 2015 and December 2015 community meeting places in the German-speaking Community (DG) were set up. The government recognised them officially or gave them a provisional recognition.

The basis is the decree of 5 May 2014 on the recognition and promotion of community meeting places in the DG. The community meeting places are intended to encourage the participation of all citizens of the DG in economic, political, social and cultural life and promote the exchange of knowledge and experience and active citizenship.

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

Special attention is paid by the community meeting places to people who are threatened by social exclusion or live in social exclusion. What does this mean in reality? These persons have a more difficult access to the basic rights such as education, culture or the right to information.

Specifically the community meeting places pursue the following aims:

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

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

## Health care

### Kaleido-DG

The job of [Kaleido-DG](#) is to promote the healthy mental, physical and social development of children and young people in the DG. This starts right with caring for expectant mothers and ends in advising and supporting young adults up to the age of 20. The staff are psychologists, nurses, doctors and social assistants who work together in a team and thus ensure an integrated approach. In the German-speaking Community there is a Kaleido-DG head office as well as 4 Kaleido-DG hubs in order to be able to provide what may be low-threshold support.

Kaleido-DG offers schoolchildren, parents and teachers various services:

- Advice and support at nursery, on the transition nursery-primary school
- Information and advice on the transition from primary school to secondary school
- Group activities in consultation with the school to promote the personal development of the pupils and living together in the class group
- Advice and support in the choice of degree course or career.
- Preventive healthcare: early childhood medicals, school medicals, range of vaccinations, promotion of health literacy (dental prophylaxis, healthy nutrition, promotion of sexual health, safety in the home, at school, in the workplace etc.)

Kaleido-DG is also the contact for preventive healthcare for schoolchildren and also offers vaccinations. The aim of the medicals is the early identification of health problems. The pupils are required to undergo the examinations. In the years in-between additional partial examinations (e.g. sight and hearing tests, growth etc.) may be carried out.

The parents are not obliged to accept the offer of free vaccinations. They can also have their children vaccinated by the family doctor or paediatrician. But it is important that the school doctor is informed about their child's vaccinations (those already carried out, not yet carried out, any reasons for missing vaccinations, etc.)

In the event of certain diseases, the staff of Kaleido-DG make an effort to avoid the spread of infection in the school area. So all parents are requested to inform the school if their child has an infectious disease. If another child in a child's class is suffering from a specific infectious disease, the parents will be informed in writing.

### Advisory Board for Health Promotion

Organisations from the healthcare area and the Ministry of the DG develop concepts and projects for health promotion. Examples: healthy nutrition and movement, tackling obesity (EU-wide topic), promotion of mental health, awareness-raising for the situation of children of mentally ill parents. The Board also works on reports that are e.g. fed into the Regional Development Concept.

## Financial services

### Debt Advisory Service

A person in difficulties with debt can claim help from the Debt Advisory Service centres.

The number of over-indebted households is also on the increase in the German-speaking Community: Separation or divorce, unemployment, illness or poor household management often lead to the debt trap.

"Over-indebtedness" occurs when the income or replacement income available is no longer adequate to meet all financial obligations in time.

The German-speaking Community has recognised the debt advisory centres by law and laid down their work.

The staff of the recognised debt advisory services first listen carefully to the person/s concerned and together with them try to draw up as detailed an analysis as possible of the situation: a complete list of all incomings and outgoings, including credit repayments, mortgages and amounts of debt with the respective creditors.

Then they the debt advisers support those concerned during the whole process of debt reduction, talk to the creditors, etc. You can find more information in the booklet that you can download below.

Recognised debt advisory service centres in the German-speaking Community:

- the [Public Social Welfare Centre of the municipality of St. Vith](#)
- the joint debt advisory service centre of the municipalities of Eupen, Kelmis and Lontzen
- the [consumer protection centre](#) of Eupen is the debt advisory service for the municipalities of Amel, Büllingen, Burg-Reuland and Bütgenbach

### Quality assurance

There is no overall quality control for the services offered. Each service conducts its own quality control.

In many areas (youth welfare, recognised social enterprises, etc.) the government uses so-called monitoring committees in which the implementation of the management contracts is monitored. Generally representatives of the organisations as well as the municipalities also join in the meetings. Furthermore the annual activity reports of the enterprises, enable a picture to be formed of the development of social integration in the German-speaking Community and to direct policy accordingly. No least numerous studies are likewise being written and statistics collected such as the poverty report of the DG in collaboration with the University of Mons.

## **4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion**

### **Policy/legal framework**

Youth work is regulated by the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work ([Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit](#)) which sets out the essentials of the youth policy of the DG.

The decree includes definitions for “youth work”, “youth workers” and the various categories and types of youth work that are eligible for funding from the government. The decree was a first step towards an integrated and holistic youth approach as well as transversal cooperation between the different sectors regarding youth issues as it foresees the adoption and implementation of a cross-sector strategic plan by the government for each legislative period. It is explicitly mentioned in the decree that the government engages funded youth NGO’s, the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community and young people in drawing up the strategic plan.

The decree provides regulated funding, a legal framework for youth work and ensures anchorage of youth work within youth policy, which offers a certain level of security for the sector.

Youth work takes place out of school and during particular leisure activities and is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation.

By providing appropriate opportunities, youth work promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, while taking account of their interests and needs.

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

#### **Youth Strategy Plan**

The decree foresees the adoption and implementation of a [cross-sectorial youth strategy](#) by the government for each legislative period. It is explicitly mentioned in the decree

that the government engages funded youth NGO's, the Youth Council and young people in drawing up the strategy. Article 4 of the Decree reads:

For each legislative period the Government will adopt and implement a multidisciplinary Strategy Plan. It will document the environment of young people in the German-speaking Community and lay down targets and tasks which will contribute to improving the situation of young people. [...] The Government will involve the supported youth centres and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community as well as young people in drawing up the Strategy Plan. This will also include the results of the analysis of the current situation and evaluation of the previous Strategy Plan to be carried out once in each legislative period by the Government as well as the social space analyses to be drawn up by the Open Youth Work agencies [...].

The Youth strategy Plan provides the framework in which, thanks to the cooperation with strong partners from the youth and social sector, practicable, future-oriented and sustainable projects can be developed. Nevertheless, it is open enough to enable interested organisations to develop relevant projects. The Youth Strategy Plan not only involves creating new approaches but also continuing already existing measures or directing them to the youth sector.

Decisive for the successful implementation of the Youth Strategy Plan continues, however, to be thinking holistically and keeping an eye on the multidisciplinary approach for all projects. The political environment has committed itself to creating appropriate general conditions for the best possible implementation of the Youth Strategy Plan. For this, however, it needs the support of all organisations and people involved in the development of the Youth Strategy Plan. They should be deliberate in their authorship and breathe life into the Youth Strategy Plan jointly with the Government.

The Youth Strategy Plan aims to identify actual need, in order to improve the situation of young people in the DG. Here concrete action is to be taken in four stages:

1. Analysis of the current life situation of young people in the DG.
2. Identifying the need for improving the life situation of young people and planning appropriate measures.
3. Implementing measures.
4. Evaluation.

The first Youth Strategy Plan (YSP1) bore the title "The Future for all Children and Young People – with the Focus on Disadvantaged Children and Young People" and was devoted to two central themes:

- Planning actions aimed at the target groups for children and young people with a range of problems
- Propensity to violence among children and young people.

On these two central themes an action plan with seven concrete projects has been drawn up.

In 2014 the 2nd Youth Strategy Plan (YSP II) covering the period 2016-2020 was drawn up. The second and actual Youth Strategy Plan 2016-2020 (YSP2) "Acting respectful" foresees 11 actions in 4 categories:

- "Strong against Addiction",
- "Promoting diversity",
- "Political education",
- "Emotions and self-perception".

These actions include cross-border action days, developing networking, promoting projects, building awareness, offer trainings and supporting mechanisms for young people and youth workers in order to develop e.g. new approaches for drug-prevention, for social inclusion, democracy, political education and participation in the youth field.

## Young people with disabilities

- The “Mowglis” are a group of the St. Martin scout troop in which mentally and physically impaired persons are given the opportunity to take part in scouting life. It was set up in 1983 by Johann Pitz the then troop leader. It contains an average of 15 people, age being of no importance.

The leaders are young volunteers who are particularly passionate about supporting, supervising and integrating people with disabilities. Ideally they also have appropriate training. The group organises woodland and meadow games, they cook and do crafts together or go on excursions such as visiting wildlife parks.

- The rock group Exchange consists of eight musicians - with and without disabilities. The band arose from a project of the Inside Eynatten youth club. The young musicians play by ear and each individual can bring in his own ideas and suggestions. So far the band has 5 compositions of its own of which 2 songs can be found on the second RockInside CD. There is a rehearsal every other week. For the young people it is important to appear at concerts with other bands. This facilitates getting to know each other and gives everyone the opportunity to approach each other.

In the summer holidays the Inside youth club organises summer workshops aimed at young people with or without disabilities. From one of these a new rock band was formed in which a young blind girl and two boys play.

- The project “What I never tried before” is an international youth exchange scheme. It originated at the Kettenis youth centre. With their supervisor groups of 8 young people between 15 and 25 visit a country participating in the project for a week. Among the group there are always some people with physical or mental disabilities. The young people of the host country prepare a programme of visit with a varied mix of culture, creative activities, sport and fun. Here the young people are the actors as they plan the activities themselves and also run individual programme items. Everyone can bring their own strengths where they feel comfortable. During all activities team and confidence building are essential prerequisites. The experiences from the exchange visits and the workshops are integrated into the “No Barriers, No Borders” guidelines. In it there are also a lot of suggestions, ideas and concrete implementation steps for projects in which people with and without disabilities can take part.

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

### The Youth Council “Council of the German-speaking Youth” ([RdJ - Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend](#))

The RdJ is an association representing the young people of the DG domestically and abroad. It is composed of representatives of youth organisations, Open Youth Work agencies, youth information centres, young parties, youth advisory committees and individual young people and thus unites many different views. The representatives give their opinion (report) on resolutions of the youth policy and advise the minister in important decisions. Here they make sure that youth work retains an important role and is constantly further developed.

Projects by young people for young people are developed in various working groups. Projects and initiatives give members the opportunity for active involvement, self-realisation and further development.

### The Youth Commission

Its main aim is to further develop training and further training in the youth area of the DG. The conception of a further training programme for young people, volunteers and youth workers is an important aspect.

In addition, the Youth Commission writes reports for funding applications for training and further training in the youth area as well as on general themes in the area of the training and further training of young people.

The Youth Commission is composed half each of members of the youth organisation and the Open Youth Work.

### **The Ministry**

The Department of Youth and Culture of the ministry handles the files on the funding of function costs, staffing costs, material procurement, special projects, training and further training, etc. In addition, the ministry also provides support such as consultations, information events, etc.

At the material loan department of the Ministry organisations can borrow technical equipment and tents for their events.

### **Youth organisations**

Out of school youth work takes place in youth centres and in youth organisations. Similar to the Flemish Community youth organisations such as the Scouts, Patro and Chiro are important stakeholders in youth work. Eight youth organisations are acknowledged in the DG – beside Patro, (St. Raphael and St. Nikolaus), Chiro, the Scouts and the Girls Guides, there are the Catholic Rural Youth (Katholische Landjugend), the Royal Rangers and Jugend und Gesundheit.

They provide group sessions for children and young people two to four times a month in the individual localities of the DG. The young people are registered as members of the organisation.

Youth organisations such as Jugend & Gesundheit (Youth & Health) offer sporadically events and camps on various subjects and are open to all children and young people.

### **Youth information centres**

Young people's access to information is provided and fostered by the two [youth information](#) points: the youth information centre (JIZ) in Sankt Vith which also serves as EURODESK in the DG and the Infotreff in Eupen. The latter is also a member of the ERYICA network, and both work according to the European Youth Information Charter. Both structures are independent non-profit NGOs according the Belgian law. The Infotreff Eupen covers the north of the Community, while JIZ Sankt Vith is in charge for the south. Both follow an outreach approach since young people's personal mobility is a major issue – especially in the south. Therefore the youth information workers visit schools and try to cooperate with youth organisations, open youth work and the Youth Office. Furthermore the youth information provision offers a newsletter which now has 1,100 subscribers. Moreover, the two information centres also are sending and hosting organizations for the European voluntary service (EVS). In both information points, access to the internet is provided for young people as well as individual information and consultation.

The youth information centres provide information in the areas of study abroad, employment, leisure opportunities, sexuality, the rights and obligations of young people and media.

The information and activity provision of the youth information centres is free of charge and is regularly updated. The youth information centres are independent of any other interests and are bound to confidentiality. The privacy and anonymity of the visitors is respected.

### **Open Youth Work – OJA**

Youth centres exist in nineteen villages (spread over 8 municipalities), and there are two youth information centres, in Sankt Vith and in Eupen.

Music, internet café, table football, etc. - the youth clubs in the DG offer these and much more: The "Open Youth Work" involves young people experiencing community, involvement, taking responsibility. The youth clubs are open to all young people.

The club is a leisure and meeting place where young people are given a communal experience. The OJA gives the young people a communal experience and shows them ways into the adult world. It teaches them that the acquisition of rights also involves taking on obligations.

It develops in young people the strengths that lead to a free, independent and self-reliant personality.

For this the youth clubs have regular opening times and activities for all young people. In addition, the youth clubs and youth centres are supervised by paid youth workers who have a sympathetic ear for the interests, queries and problems of the young people.

Open Youth Work refers to:

- openness of the content: the activities are from the outset not tied to political, religious or ideological orientations
- openness of the public sphere, i.e. the activities of the youth centres are transparent to the public.
- openness to the interests of the young people: Open Youth Work responds to the needs and interests of the young people.
- openness in the organisation and social form: the activities are directly accessible to the young people and not necessarily linked to registration.
- openness towards young people who are not visitors to the youth centres: provision of a wide range of activities to the wider public.

### **Detached & outreach youth work**

Two detached youth workers look after the detached youth work. They approach young people who mainly hang around on the street and on public squares and have a sympathetic ear for their needs.

Together with them they take actions that improve their life situation and develop future prospects. The idea is to maintain and promote the self-reliance of the individual and to develop joint approaches that also give support and security during future difficulties.

The detached workers help in a personal consultation or through projects with problems that are as varied as unemployment, jobseeking, housing search or hidden homelessness, drug problems, problems with the justice system, violence, mental health problems right up to problems in the family environment.

MOBY has been deployed since May 2015. MOBY is a mobile home that has been labelled, decorated and redesigned into a mobile youth centre in joint work with young people from the art department of the RSI and young people from several youth clubs. The mobile youth centre adds to the previous provision of the consultations and detached work in public places. Thus young people can take advantage of help in their living spaces in an uncomplicated and direct way.

The detached youth work is the task of the [Youth Office](#).

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

### **Youth Commission basic training**

The tasks of the Youth Commission are the organisation or coordination of further training provision for young people, volunteer youth leaders and placement supervisors as well as the organisation of the basic training. In this basic training the volunteer youth leaders learn to plan and carry out activities and to lead a group in a responsible capacity and to carry out first aid. A specific part is aimed at the integration of children and young people with impairments.

Programme items such as teaching through play, communication, prejudices and discrimination, conflict resolution, important of youth work, project management and much more are fixed components of the theoretical training.

### **Jugend & Gesundheit [Youth & Health] playworker training**

Training to be a playworker takes two years. In the first year young people learn active methods and techniques for responding to children (learning through play, songs, child psychology, first aid, storytelling etc.). In addition they are trained in physical and verbal expression. After the theoretical training a placement as part of a play session takes place.

In the second year – the advanced training year – importance is primarily attached to creativity and exchange of new play ideas. Here great emphasis is placed on the integrative sessions particularly promoted by Jugend & Gesundheit.

### **Financial support**

Basically, the subsidies supporting youth policy in the German-Speaking Community are related to structural funding. The decree of 6 December 2011 ensures structural support for youth work facilities at community level. Funding and grants are provided for the staffing costs of professional youth workers, for the maintenance of infrastructure, for equipment, and for the training of youth workers and voluntary youth leaders. The decree sets out funding conditions for community-level youth work and requires that the youth work facilities operate in line with the community-level priorities. In relation to the 2015 budget for youth, 0.4% (i.e. 1,870,000 euros) of the total government budget (i.e. 468,000,000 euros) has been foreseen for the youth work sector.

As mentioned in article 5 of the Decree of 6 December 2011, youth centres have to meet general criteria to be eligible for funding. Those include, amongst others:

- To be constituted as not-for-profit organisations based in the German-speaking Community;
- enable young people to gain self-efficacy experiences and learn shaping skills;
- support the participation of young people in their establishment;
- offer and provide activities that place the needs of the children and young people at the centre of their actions;
- ensure that the activities are supervised by youth workers or volunteer youth leaders;
- regularly inform their members and the population about their activities.
- take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability;

They also have to implement at least four of the focuses of the youth work defined by the Government, which include

- socio-political and social education to promote interest in socio-political participation, of the ability to form critical judgements of socio-political processes and of the readiness for active involvement in socio-political processes;
- cultural youth work to promote creativity and cultural forms of expression;
- leisure-oriented youth work as a contribution to holistic development through sport, play and movement;
- media work to promote media skills for critical and conscious media use;
- intercultural youth work to promote skills and finding one's identity;
- gender-differentiated girls' and boys' youth work for the promotion of equality of opportunity and breaking down gender stereotypes;
- cross-community and international youth work to promote understanding within Belgium and internationally, peace-keeping and the European identity.

## Quality assurance

Joint committees monitor the implementation and the evaluation of the contracts on performance of open youth work on the local level. Representatives of the DG, the respective local authority and the agencies of the Open Youth Work are represented in these committees.

Youth organisations meet annually with the ministry for an effectiveness dialogue during which the implementation of the concept and what has happened in the previous year are discussed.

## 4.8 Current debates and reforms

### **Integration track: The entry track for migrants**

The DG is responsible for integration. Together with many individual measures and initiatives, the government has deployed a working group. Its task is to develop an integration track for the migrants in the DG.

This is a track that the migrants have to pass along. The path contains four stages:

First of all a reception is required offering them first guidance. Then it is necessary to teach the people the language but also the rights, obligations and values of the receiving society by means of integration and language courses. The conclusion is the successful integration into the labour market as well as social inclusion into society. This too requires a certain support.

The working group is working on a concept for this that is based on best practice examples of integration paths in Belgium and abroad. Nonetheless the integration track must also be adapted to the DG and its peculiarities must be considered.

Integration concerns many fields of action. In the working group there are decision-makers from all relevant competence areas of the DG.

Setting up a working group is one of the first measures of the future project "Strong Together" (Regional Development Concept, second implementation phase). Alongside the adoption of an integration decree, the development of a compulsory integration track is one of the planned work stages in this project.

In May 2015 the WG was set up. In the second half of the year the WG dealt primarily with the analysis of the integration paths in Flanders and Walloon and also met the actors on site. Also the content of the language courses is largely set up. The next steps are

- the integration course
- the analysis of the existing and lacking provision in the DG so that the track can be implemented

The initial basis of the work is the integration concept of the Integration WG of the Council for Development, Solidarity and Integration [Rat für Entwicklung, Solidarität und Integration] RESI for short. The task of the working group is to voice concrete recommendations to the government for an integration track by summer 2016. Following on from the work of the working group, the government will present the draft of an integration decree to the parliament before the end of the legislative period.

### **Case management for improving the cooperation of the services with the aim of strengthening social cohesion in the German-speaking Community**

Various analyses conducted in the DG on poverty in the DG show that families and thus also young people are often burdened with a great number of problems. This "multiple problems burden" represents a great challenge for the institutions responsible and cooperation does not always function smoothly.

Often there is a lack of regular exchange of information. It is important to optimise the cooperation of the services across the sectors to jointly organise help adapted to the

needs of the family and/or the young person and to find appropriate measures (e.g. emergency accommodation) in crisis situations. The case management methodology should improve cooperation here.

From the present control level of case management a structurally promoted poverty network anchored in law is to be created in future.

## **5. Participation**

Participation is a key element in the youth policy of the German-speaking Community. The youth decree anchors many instruments for participation and dialogue of young people and the youth sector in youth work and policy shaping. They contribute to evidence and knowledge based policy making in the DG.

Participatory youth involvement ensures that the needs and wishes of young people are reflected in policy development and evolution, as well as the priorities and concerns of the policy makers.

The Youth Council of the German-speaking Community aims to promote all activities which are useful to enable the participation of young people in the German-Speaking Community on decisions and measures which concern them. The Youth Council considers itself as a platform that gives young people the opportunity for active participation in the design of youth policy, for developing projects and for experiencing (European) democracy.

### **5.1 General context**

#### **Main concepts**

During the P.R.I.M.A. process that was organized in 2005/2006 to elaborate recommendations for youth policy in the German-speaking Community, participation was defined as such:

Participation means, that all stakeholders have a say, take part in the decision-making process and share responsibility. Youth policy at community level requires an efficient partnership and involvement of all participants, so that young people can develop their personality and their identity according to their age. Young people are encouraged to bear responsibility. In order to initiate this general culture of co-determination and self-administration, we need a reflection in all structures and organisations in which young people take part.

#### **Institutions of representative democracy**

At the top level, we find the Federal State, the Communities and the Regions, all three of which are equal from the legal viewpoint. They are on an equal footing but have powers and responsibilities for different fields.

The next level down is still occupied by the provinces. Before the state reform of 1993, the provinces were only under the supervision of the central state. Now they are supervised by all the higher government authorities, in the context of the federal, community or regional powers.

At the bottom of the pyramid, we find the communes, which is the level of administration that is closest to the people. Like the provinces, they are under the supervision of the higher authorities. Depending on the powers exercised, they are supervised by the Federal State, the Community or the Region. In general, they are financed and audited by the Regions.

## The federal state

Since Belgium became a federal state in 1993, the [federal level](#) has retained a number of powers that concern all Belgians and which are executed over the whole territory. These are: foreign affairs, defence, justice, finance, social security, an important part of public health and internal affairs.

The legislative power is executed:

- by the federal parliament which consists of two chambers: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate
- by the king. The king is relieved of all responsibility. His ministers sign the bills elected by parliament and royal decrees, and bear full responsibility for this.

The executive branch is in the hands of the federal government.

## The communities

The communities are political entities which are based on language. Because Belgium has three official languages, there are also three communities. These are authorised within the language areas:

- The [Flemish Community](#) is authorised for the Dutch language area and also exercises authority in the bilingual Brussels-Capital area.
- The [French Community](#) is authorised for the French language area and also exercises authority in the bilingual Brussels-Capital area.
- The [German-speaking Community](#) is authorised for the German Language area.

The communities are authorised for all matters that concern the Dutch-speakers, French-speakers and German-speakers. This includes for example: language, culture, the audiovisual sector, education, care for those in need.

Each community has a parliament and a government.

## The regions

Belgium is divided into three regions:

- the [Flemish Region](#)
- the [Brussels-Capital Region](#)
- the [Walloon Region](#)

The regions are territorial entities. The Flemish Region territory coincides with the Dutch language area. The Walloon Region territory covers the French and German language areas. The Brussels-Capital Region is authorised in the bilingual Brussels-Capital area.

The regions manage everything that concerns the interests of Flemish people, people from Brussels and Walloons. They exercise their authorities with regard to the economy, employment, housing, public works, energy, transport, the environment and environmental planning in their territory.

The regions are also authorised for international affairs within their authority domains.

Each region has a parliament and a government. In Flanders, the region and community authorities are merged into one government and one parliament.

## The provinces

The country of Belgium is divided into three regions. Two of these regions, the Flemish Region or Flanders, and Walloon Region, or Wallonia, are each subdivided into five provinces. The third region, the Brussels-Capital Region, is not divided into provinces, as it was originally only a small part of a province itself.

The division into provinces is fixed by Article 5 of the Belgian Constitution. The provinces are subdivided into 43 administrative arrondissements, and further into 589 municipalities.

- [Provincie West-Vlaanderen](#)
- [Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen](#)
- [Provincie Antwerpen](#)
- [Provincie Limburg](#)
- [Provincie Vlaams-Brabant](#)
- [Province du Brabant-Wallon](#)
- [Province du Hainaut](#)
- [Province de Namur](#)
- [Province de Liège](#)
- [Province du Luxembourg](#)

### The municipalities

Belgium comprises 589 municipalities grouped into five provinces in each of two regions and into a third region, the Brussels-Capital Region, comprising 19 municipalities that do not belong to a province. In most cases, the municipalities are the smallest administrative subdivisions of Belgium, but in municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, on the initiative of the local council, sub-municipal administrative entities with elected councils may be created (e.g. Antwerp).

### Elections

Elections are an important tool for the operation of a democratic state. They ensure that the population is represented by political parties in legislative bodies of various levels of governance, such as parliaments and councils. Participation in elections, i.e. voting, is mandatory in Belgium.

In Belgium, you can vote in five different elections:

- European elections: representatives for the European Parliament
- federal elections: for the federal parliament (the Chamber of Representatives)
- regional elections: for the legislative bodies of the federated regions, e.g.:
  - the Flemish Parliament
  - the Walloon Parliament
  - the Parliament of the Brussels Capital Region
  - the Parliament of the German-speaking Community
- provincial elections: for the Provincial council
- municipal elections: for the Municipal council.

On certain conditions, also non-Belgians can vote in a number of elections.

Level of governance	Frequency	Right to vote of non-Belgians
Municipal	every 6 years	EU citizens non-EU citizens
Provincial	every 6 years	no right to vote
Regional	every 5 years	no right to vote
Federal	every 5 years	no right to vote
European	every 5 years	EU citizens

## 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

### Young people as voters

Since 1981, every Belgian from 18 years of age has the right to vote, and since 1993 one can be elected for the federal Parliament from age 21.

## Young people as political representatives

### Jugend für Freiheit und Fortschritt (JFF)

The [JFF](#) is a liberal oriented youth movement in the German-speaking Community of Belgium for young people between 15 and 35 years. They are linked to the political party [Partei für Freiheit und Fortschritt](#) (PFF). Their aim is to inspire young people, to develop ideas and, above all, promote critical and innovative thinking.

### Junge Mitte

The [Junge Mitte](#) is a self-organized youth movement with a political character (central democratic) in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, which is open to all interested young people. They are linked to the political party [Christlich Soziale Partei \(CSP\) Ostbelgiens](#). Its aim is to represent youth interests and problems in its activities and to be open to all political issues.

### Pro DG-u30

[ProDG-u30](#) is a political movement of persons who want to think about the social challenges of the ideology as a whole, as well as on democratic principles. The aim of the association is to contribute to political education. Anyone between 16 and 30 years can be a member.

### SP-Jugendgruppe

[Jusos Ostbelgien](#) are a group of young socialists and social democrats who want to actively shape politics in the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

### Youth parliament

The [Youth Council of the German-speaking Community](#) (*Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend - RdJ*) has developed the project "[Youth Parliament](#)". This project gives young people the opportunity to reflect on social issues, to research, to engage in a dialogue, to make demands, to argue for their ideas in a parliamentary debate. The creation of a youth parliament in the German-speaking Community offers young people an active form of participation. The young people live democracy and become active partners in politics.

The pilot project "Youth Parliament" was launched in 2004 and was not intended to remain a one-time action but to become an recurrent project, integrated into the curriculum of secondary schools. Unfortunately, this never happened until now, due to many different reasons.

### Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

#### Youth Council

The [Youth Council of the German-speaking Community](#) (*Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend - RdJ*) was established by royal enactment on 30 December 1983. It is the independent federation of individual young people, youth centres, local youth councils, youth organisations of the political parties, youth organisations and youth services in the German-Speaking Community. The general aim of the Youth Council is to promote all activities which are useful to enable the participation of young people in the German-Speaking Community on decisions and measures which concern them. The Youth Council considers itself as a platform that gives young people the opportunity for active participation in the design of youth policy, for developing projects and for experiencing (European) democracy.

The Youth Council is steered by a Steering Committee and a General Assembly. Members must not be older than 35 years by the time that they are nominated. Different working groups develop projects and contribute to the overall work of the Youth Council. To fulfil its tasks, the Youth Council receives attendance fees and the secretarial and

organisational work is done by a person working for the Youth Office. Moreover the Youth Council can get funding for specific projects.

The Youth Council gives young people the opportunity to actively shape their future. To this end, it helps creating further possibilities for participation and promoting political education. For this reason, the Youth Council encourages the creation of student councils in secondary schools and the inclusion of new members. The Youth Council tries to strengthen its own membership in other committees, such as administrative boards and advisory bodies.

### Youth Advisory Board

There is only one youth advisory board (*Jugendbeirat*) in the municipality of Eupen ([Jugendbeirat der Stadt Eupen](#)). The youth advisory board functions as a link between the municipality of Eupen, the youth organizations, the youth centers and the non-organized young people in and around the city of Eupen.

Tasks of the youth advisory board:

- To represent the interests of young people in the municipality of Eupen and to submit regular opinions on the municipalities projects in the youth field.
- The advisory board may, at the request of municipal authorities, submit opinions on the moral, educational and legal aspects of problems faced by young people in Eupen.

The youth advisory board may have recourse to the assistance of competent experts for certain matters and for a limited duration.

There are also a few children's councils in some municipalities (Raeren and Lontzen), either supported by the local youth work (e.g. in Raeren) or the municipality itself (e.g. in Lontzen). A trained educator and the local youth worker support the children's council.

The first project, in 2007, was subsidized with EU-Funds. Since the end of the EU project, the children's councils are financed entirely by local authorities.

### Higher education student union(s)

There are four student unions representing students from the German-speaking Community towards the different universities and high schools in Belgium and Germany. These student unions are located on the nearest campuses in Belgium and Germany:

*Destuna* (Deutschsprachige Studenten in Namur) for german-speaking students studying in Namur.

[Eumavia Lovaniensis](#) (Eupen-Malmedy-St. Vith) for german-speaking students studying in Louvain-la-Neuve

[Paludia](#) for german-speaking students studying in Liège.

[Ostana](#) for german-speaking students studying in Brussels.

### School student union(s)

Article 55 of the Decree of 31 august 1998 regulating the organisation of formal education in the German-Speaking Community (Dekret vom 31. August 1998 über den Auftrag an die Schulträger und das Schulpersonal sowie über die allgemeinen pädagogischen und organisatorischen Bestimmungen für die Regel- und Förderschulen) states:

„The pupils are involved in school life through elected pupil unions. The school principal is obliged to allow for a pupil union from the 2nd level of secondary education on. The pupils' representatives have an information and consultation right. The pedagogical project of each school contains provisions on the form of the participation of pupil unions. These provisions are elaborated together with the pupil's representation in the so called Pedagogical Council and presented to the principal for approval.“

In some schools of the German-speaking Community, pupil unions are accompanied by a trained youth worker from the youth information centres. This allows for a link between formal and non-formal education.

### **Other bodies**

There are no other youth representation bodies in the German-speaking Community.

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

### **Formal Mechanisms of Consultation**

The decree anchors dialogues on efficiency with youth organisations, analysis of the social space and monitoring committees for open youth work as well as a strategic plan for youth in the legislative procedure. All those instruments are instruments for participation and dialogue of young people and the youth sector in youth work and policy shaping. They contribute to evidence and knowledge based policy making in the DG.

The decree states that every five years a strategy plan has to be developed by the government, which should be the basis for the evaluation of the performance in youth policy. It foresees to involve young people, youth organisations and youth services in the strategy planning at both local and Community level.

The Government will involve the supported youth centres and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community as well as young people in drawing up the Strategy Plan. This will also include the results of the analysis of the current situation and evaluation of the previous Strategy Plan to be carried out once in each legislative period by the Government as well as the social space analyses to be drawn up by the Open Youth Work agencies [...].

Since the strategy plan is developed for periods of five years it is important that they are flexible enough to react on ongoing developments without attracting financial sanctions. All bodies working with young people – youth organisations, open youth work and youth information centres – have to develop a five years concept on how to work within the framework of the strategy. These concepts are the basis for an evaluation at the end of the five year period. Youth NGOs have an annual dialogue with representatives of the government on the activities and efficiency of the organisation in order to, if necessary, revise their goals. For open youth work and youth information centres the concepts will also be assessed by a supervisory committee – including members of the institutions and government – and after acceptance by the government performance contracts are concluded between the youth work institutions and government and municipalities.

A youth strategy allows the government to prioritize certain topics within an overall approach to youth policy. Participatory youth involvement ensures that the needs and wishes of young people are reflected in policy development and evolution, as well as the priorities and concerns of the policy makers.

### **Actors**

A main task of youth policy is to enable young people's participation in policy making. The Youth Council of the German-speaking Community (RdJ - Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend) is the body representing youth in the DG and is organised as a platform of individual young people, youth centres, local youth councils, youth NGOs, and youth services, as well as youth political parties (which normally are the youth sections of the political parties). The Youth Office (Jugendbüro) supports the Council of the German-Speaking Youth with a secretariat and expert monitoring.

The main goals of the Youth Council are strengthening political awareness of young people and supporting young people and their organisations. Its primary task is the representation of the interests of the German-speaking youth. In this regard the Youth Council is quite active in providing expertise and advice on laws concerning young people and it was also involved in the development of the youth policy in the DG.

## Information on the extent of youth participation

The strategic plan of the government aims to facilitate this multi-disciplinary approach. Through the whole process, from the preparation to the establishing of the decree and even up to the preparation of the implementation of the decree, participation was a guiding principle. This started with the preparation and the implementation of the [P.R.I.M.A.](#) consultations in 2005/2006 where young people and their organisations, youth workers and the youth council contributed. Then came the regular cross-check with the youth sector regarding the pillars of the decree, and the hearings that have been held with young people and the sector in the parliament and the official advise giving of the youth council. This was followed by the adaption of the draft decree in accordance with a lot of remarks made by the youth council and continues in the completely independent legal role that the youth council has since the entering into force of the decree. But the principle of participation doesn't stop there.

It continues through the joint preparation of user-friendly templates and the participation of the youth council and the youth sector in the youth commission which is responsible for the organisation and managing of training for youth workers and youth leaders and where they have the plurality.

Moreover, this principle is also fostered by the active participation of young people and representatives of the youth sector in the steering group, drafting the strategic plan of the government. Participation of the youth sector and young people also will continue in the joint committees that will monitor the implementation and the evaluation of the contracts on performance of open youth work on the local level and it will be the guiding principle in the yearly efficiency dialogues with youth organisations.

Additionally, on the local level, there is the possibility of direct participation for young people. This happens via social space analysis and the specific design of open youth work in the German-speaking Community, where young people directly participate, can give input and have their say. Moreover, the German-speaking Community also has established a national working group for the structured dialogue which is managed under the leadership of the youth council.

## Outcomes

In the years 2005 and 2006 a series of consultations in the framework of the [P.R.I.M.A.](#) process involved experts from the DG, Belgian and international experts and young people from the German-speaking Community to elaborate recommendations for youth policy. The process was moderated by a group from Luxembourg. The P.R.I.M.A. process was initiated to redefine youth policy and youth work and develop a youth concept in the DG in 2005. P.R.I.M.A. stands for Partizipation (participation), GestaltungsRäume (scope for creativity), Information, Miteinander (together) and Anerkennung (recognition). The P.R.I.M.A. process lead to different recommendations for youth policy in the fields of participation (with the inclusion of the municipalities), mobility, information, cultural diversity, networking and training, which resulted in the creation of the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work.

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

See the [P.R.I.M.A.](#) consultations above.

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

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

#### **REK**

The small scale of the German-speaking Community fosters a great diversity of offers. Through the intensive promotion of youth work and existing structures for participation, the DG, compared to neighboring regions, retains its attractiveness for young people - even in rural structures. To consolidate these standards and to expand them, working instruments of participatory youth policy are being continued. Young people in the DG are continuously involved in the development of all these processes. To this end, the structures of active youth work are maintained and expanded. The goal must be to integrate early and second-generation young people into these structures at an early stage, so that they also achieve a high level of identification with the DG.

#### **Youth Strategy Plan**

The decree foresees the adoption and implementation of a cross-sectorial youth strategy by the government for each legislative period. It is explicitly mentioned in the decree that the government engages funded youth NGO's, the Youth Council and young people in drawing up the strategy. Article 4 of the Decree reads:

For each legislative period the Government will adopt and implement a multidisciplinary Strategy Plan. It will document the environment of young people in the German-speaking Community and lay down targets and tasks which will contribute to improving the situation of young people. [...] The Government will involve the supported youth centres and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community as well as young people in drawing up the Strategy Plan. This will also include the results of the analysis of the current situation and evaluation of the previous Strategy Plan to be carried out once in each legislative period by the Government as well as the social space analyses to be drawn up by the Open Youth Work agencies [...].

The Youth strategy Plan provides the framework in which, thanks to the cooperation with strong partners from the youth and social sector, practicable, future-oriented and sustainable projects can be developed. Nevertheless, it is open enough to enable interested organisations to develop relevant projects. The Youth Strategy Plan not only involves creating new approaches but also continuing already existing measures or directing them to the youth sector.

Decisive for the successful implementation of the Youth Strategy Plan continues, however, to be thinking holistically and keeping an eye on the multidisciplinary approach for all projects. The political environment has committed itself to creating appropriate general conditions for the best possible implementation of the Youth Strategy Plan. For this, however, it needs the support of all organisations and people involved in the development of the Youth Strategy Plan. They should be deliberate in their authorship and breathe life into the Youth Strategy Plan jointly with the Government.

#### **Scope and contents**

In 2014 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Strategy Plan (YSP II) covering the period 2016-2020 was drawn up. The second and actual Youth Strategy Plan 2016-2020 (YSP2) "Acting respectful" foresees 11 actions in 4 categories:

- "Strong against Addiction",
- "Promoting diversity",
- "Political education",
- "Emotions and self-perception".

These actions include cross-border action days, developing networking, promoting projects, building awareness, offer trainings and supporting mechanisms for young

people and youth workers in order to develop e.g. new approaches for drug-prevention, for social inclusion, democracy, political education and participation in the youth field.

Especially the category “Political education” aims at increasing young people’s political participation.

### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

The Youth Department of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community has the responsibility for the coordination of the Youth Strategy Plan.

A Steering Group has taken the lead in supporting the implementation process (selection of the topics, specification of the measures and editing). This Steering Group is composed of representatives of the youth sector, the Government and the Ministry. In 2014 the following sat on the Steering Group:

- one member of the staff of the Prime Minister, responsible for external relations, finances and budget, administrative organization,
- one member of the staff the Minister responsible for culture, employment, local authorities and tourism,
- one member of the staff of the Minister responsible for family, health and social policy,
- one member of the staff of the Minister responsible for education and scientific research,
- two representatives of the Ministry of the DG (Youth Department),
- two representatives of the Youth Council (one for the youth organisations and one for open youth work),
- one representative of the Youth Office,
- one representative of each of the two youth information centres of the DG.

### **Revisions/Updates**

The strategic plan is renewed with each new legislative period, i.e. every five years. The Youth Strategy Plan is an ongoing process. Not least for this reason good communication between the participating partners is important. A Steering Group supervises the implementation of the 2016-2020 action plan and supports with the implementation. Individual topics, actions and procedures will be regularly evaluated and may if necessary be adjusted.

## **5.6 Supporting youth organisations**

### **Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations**

Youth work is regulated by the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work (*Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*) which sets out the essentials of the youth policy of the DG.

The decree includes definitions for “youth work”, “youth workers” and the various categories and types of youth work that are eligible for funding from the government. The decree was a first step towards an integrated and holistic youth approach as well as transversal cooperation between the different sectors regarding youth issues as it foresees the adoption and implementation of a cross-sector strategic plan by the government for each legislative period. It is explicitly mentioned in the decree that the government engages funded youth NGO’s, the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community and young people in drawing up the strategic plan.

The decree provides regulated funding, a legal framework for youth work and ensures anchorage of youth work within youth policy, which offers a certain level of security for the sector.

The decree governs the funding of

- youth centres,
- youth organisations,
- youth information centers,
- open youth work,
- the Youth Office
- the Youth Commission, responsible for basic and advanced training courses for young people, volunteer youth leaders and youth workers,
- the Youth Council

Youth work takes place out of school and during particular leisure activities and is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation.

By providing appropriate opportunities, youth work promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, while taking account of their interests and needs.

### Public financial support

Basically, the subsidies supporting youth policy in the German-Speaking Community are related to structural funding. The decree of 6 December 2011 ensures structural support for youth work facilities at community level. Funding and grants are provided for the staffing costs of professional youth workers, for the maintenance of infrastructure, for equipment, and for the training of youth workers and voluntary youth leaders. The decree sets out funding conditions for community-level youth work and requires that the youth work facilities operate in line with the community-level priorities. In relation to the 2015 budget for youth, 0.4% (i.e. 1,870,000 euros) of the total government budget (i.e. 468,000,000 euros) has been foreseen for the youth work sector.

As mentioned in article 5 of the Decree of 6 December 2011, youth centres have to meet general criteria to be eligible for funding. Those include, amongst others:

- To be constituted as not-for-profit organisations based in the German-speaking Community;
- enable young people to gain self-efficacy experiences and learn shaping skills;
- support the participation of young people in their establishment;
- offer and provide activities that place the needs of the children and young people at the centre of their actions;
- ensure that the activities are supervised by youth workers or volunteer youth leaders;
- regularly inform their members and the population about their activities.
- take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability;

They also have to implement at least four of the focuses of the youth work defined by the Government, which include

- socio-political and social education to promote interest in socio-political participation, of the ability to form critical judgements of socio-political processes and of the readiness for active involvement in socio-political processes;
- cultural youth work to promote creativity and cultural forms of expression;
- leisure-oriented youth work as a contribution to holistic development through sport, play and movement;
- media work to promote media skills for critical and conscious media use;
- intercultural youth work to promote skills and finding one's identity;
- gender-differentiated girls' and boys' youth work for the promotion of equality of opportunity and breaking down gender stereotypes;
- cross-community and international youth work to promote understanding within Belgium and internationally, peace-keeping and the European identity.

To be eligible for funding, youth organisations have to

- meet the general funding criteria mentioned above,

- carry out activities aimed at children and young people mainly at weekends and in the school holidays,
- have a concept approved by the government,
- annually participate in the effectiveness dialogue

Youth organisations that are eligible for funding are classified into six categories, depending on

- the number of their annual members (ranging from 50 to 1000 children and young people),
- the number of activities they carry out per month and during the school summer holidays,
- if they are active in several municipalities.

Depending on the category they're assigned to, youth organisations receive an annual lump sum grant ranging from 2,500 euros to 70,000 euros. Youth organisations with at least 300 young members may be eligible for an additional annual grant on the employment of youth workers (20,000 euros for 0.5 full-time equivalent or 40,000 euros for one full-time equivalent).

Funded youth organisations can receive an additional lump sum of 1 euro per day and per participating child/young person.

### **Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants**

As mentioned in article 5 of the Decree of 6 December 2011, youth organisations have to meet general criteria to be eligible for funding. Those include, amongst others, the obligation to take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability.

## **5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning**

### **Policy Framework**

The decree of the 6 December 2011 on funding for youth work in the German-Speaking Community regulates the development of young people, provides support for youth work, youth organisations and the youth council as well as for the organisation of education and training for young people and youth workers.

Youth work takes place in out-of-school settings and within the scope of particular leisure time activities. It is based on non-formal education and informal learning processes and achieved through voluntary participation.

To be funded, youth centres have to enable young people to gain self-efficacy experiences and learn shaping skills and support the participation of young people in their establishment. They also have to offer and provide activities that place the needs of the children and young people at the centre of the actions and take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability.

Focuses of the youth work are:

1. socio-political and social education to promote interest in socio-political participation, of the ability to form critical judgements of socio-political processes and of the readiness for active involvement in socio-political processes;
2. cultural youth work to promote creativity and cultural forms of expression;
3. leisure-oriented youth work as a contribution to holistic development through sport, play and movement;

4. media work to promote media skills for critical and conscious media use;
5. intercultural youth work to promote skills and finding one's identity;
6. gender-differentiated girls' and boys' youth work for the promotion of equality of opportunity and breaking down gender stereotypes;
7. cross-community and international youth work to promote understanding within Belgium and internationally, peace-keeping and the European identity.

Starting from the voluntary nature of the participation of children and young people, funded youth centres fulfil their tasks within these focuses on their own responsibility and using a variety of methods.

### Formal learning

Article 55 of the decree of 31 august 1998 regulating the organisation of formal education in the German-Speaking Community ([Dekret vom 31. August 1998 über den Auftrag an die Schulträger und das Schulpersonal sowie über die allgemeinen pädagogischen und organisatorischen Bestimmungen für die Regel- und Förderschulen](#)) states:

The pupils are involved in school life through elected pupil unions. The school principal is obliged to allow for a pupil union from the 2nd level of secondary education on. The pupils' representatives have an information and consultation right. The pedagogical project of each school contains provisions on the form of the participation of pupil unions. These provisions are elaborated together with the pupil's representation in the so called Pedagogical Council and presented to the principal for approval.

In some schools of the German-speaking Community, pupil unions are accompanied by a trained youth worker from the youth information centres. This allows for a link between formal and non-formal education.

### Non-formal and informal learning

As defined in the Decree of 6 December 2011 governing the funding of youth work ([Dekret vom 6. Dezember 2011 zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit](#)), youth work takes place out of school and during particular leisure activities and is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation.

This form of participation refers to offers that take place in open youth work or youth organisations. Greater say, participation and co-determination are part of the activities in youth organisations or youth centers. Young people get to experience teamwork and improve their social behaviour, that can be used to empower them as responsible citizens while being supported by trained youth workers.

Numerous activities are offered to young people by youth centres and youth organizations, where they are actively involved in the realization of projects. The Youth Commission of the German-speaking Community organises training courses for youth workers.

### Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

Joint committees monitor the implementation and the evaluation of the contracts on performance of open youth work on the local level. Representatives of the DG, the respective local authority and the agencies of the Open Youth Work are represented in these committees.

Youth organisations meet annually with the ministry for an effectiveness dialogue during which the implementation of the concept and what has happened in the previous year are discussed.

## **Educators' support**

The youth commission is responsible for the organisation and managing of training for youth workers and youth leaders.

## **5.8 Raising political awareness among young people**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

#### **Youth Information Centres**

Young people's access to information is provided and fostered by the two youth information points: the youth information centre (JIZ) in Sankt Vith which also serves as EURODESK in the DG and the Infotreff in Eupen. The latter is also a member of the ERYICA network, and both work according to the European Youth Information Charter. Both structures are independent non-profit NGOs according to the Belgian law. The Infotreff Eupen covers the north of the Community, while JIZ Sankt Vith is in charge for the south. Both follow an outreach approach since young people's personal mobility is a major issue – especially in the south. Therefore the youth information workers visit schools and try to cooperate with youth organisations, open youth work and the Youth Office.

Furthermore the youth information provision offers a newsletter which now has 1,100 subscribers. Moreover, the two information centres also are sending and hosting organizations for the European voluntary service (EVS).

In both information points, access to the internet is provided for young people as well as individual information and consultation.

#### **Youth Council**

The Youth Council gives young people the opportunity to actively shape their future. To this end, it helps creating further possibilities for participation and promoting political education. For this reason, the RdJ encourages the creation of student councils in secondary schools and the inclusion of new members. The RdJ tries to strengthen its own membership in other committees, such as administrative boards and advisory bodies.

#### **Youth Strategy Plan**

The second Youth Strategy Plan 2016-2020 (YSP2) "Acting respectful" foresees 11 actions in 4 categories:

- "Strong against Addiction",
- "Promoting diversity",
- "Political education",
- "Emotions and self-perception".

These actions include cross-border action days, developing networking, promoting projects, building awareness, offer trainings and supporting mechanisms for young people and youth workers in order to develop e.g. new approaches for drug-prevention, for social inclusion, democracy, political education and participation in the youth field.

Especially the category "Political education" aims at increasing young people's political participation.

The Youth Department of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community has the responsibility for the coordination of the Youth Strategy Plan.

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values**

The Youth Council and the Youth Information Centres organise both regularly youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values.

## Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

### Youth decree

As mentioned in article 5 of the Decree of 6 December 2011 (*Dekret zur Förderung der Jugendarbeit*), youth centres have to meet general criteria to be eligible for funding. Those include, amongst others:

- offer and provide activities that place the needs of the children and young people at the centre of their actions;
- take into account issues of children and young people in disadvantaged life situations, of children and young people with a migration background and children and young people with a disability;

They also have to implement at least four of the focuses of the youth work defined by the Government, which include

- socio-political and social education to promote interest in socio-political participation, of the ability to form critical judgements of socio-political processes and of the readiness for active involvement in socio-political processes;
- cultural youth work to promote creativity and cultural forms of expression;
- leisure-oriented youth work as a contribution to holistic development through sport, play and movement;
- media work to promote media skills for critical and conscious media use;
- intercultural youth work to promote skills and finding one's identity;
- gender-differentiated girls' and boys' youth work for the promotion of equality of opportunity and breaking down gender stereotypes;
- cross-community and international youth work to promote understanding within Belgium and internationally, peace-keeping and the European identity.

### Youth Strategy Plan

In 2014 the 2<sup>nd</sup> [Youth Strategy Plan](#) (YSP II) covering the period 2016-2020 was drawn up. The second and actual Youth Strategy Plan 2016-2020 (YSP2) "Acting respectfully" foresees 11 actions in 4 categories:

- "Strong against Addiction",
- "Promoting diversity",
- "Political education",
- "Emotions and self-perception".

These actions include cross-border action days, developing networking, promoting projects, building awareness, offer trainings and supporting mechanisms for young people and youth workers in order to develop e.g. new approaches for promoting diversity, for social inclusion, democracy, political education and participation in the youth field.

### Intercultural and interfaith dialogue

This is the focus theme for school year 2016-2017 in the German-speaking Community (DG). The government decided on a corresponding action plan for pupils and trainees in all educational institutions.

The chosen theme is no accident as East Belgium too is becoming more varied. As in many places in Europe, here too we come across languages, cultures and religion from all over the world. This reality must move us to action:

- to set up cultural and faith dialogue
- to get to know and respect each other
- to deal with each other impartially

and to also do this not least in view of the increased number of refugees.

Reducing prejudice, designing better coexistence, establishing togetherness. This is at the centre for intercultural and interfaith dialogue. It is intended to promote dialogue between people from different cultures in the schools of the DG.

### **Info-Integration**

The aim of [Info-Integration](#) is on the one hand to give immigrants the information and support that they need to be able to make decisions and to determine their own lives (consultations) and on the other hand to support social actors, volunteers and civil society to dismantle barriers to the equal participation of people with a migration background in the life of society. This takes place by means of the organisation of further training (also on request), involvement in various working groups and networks, dialogue with the policy makers, awareness raising, etc.)

### **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

Young people's access to information is provided and fostered by the two youth information points: the youth information centre (JIZ) in Sankt Vith which also serves as EURODESK in the DG and the Infotreff in Eupen. The latter is also a member of the ERYICA network, and both work according to the European Youth Information Charter. Both structures are independent non-profit NGOs according to the Belgian law. The Infotreff Eupen covers the north of the Community, while JIZ Sankt Vith is in charge for the south. Both follow an outreach approach since young people's personal mobility is a major issue – especially in the south. Therefore the youth information workers visit schools and try to cooperate with youth organisations, open youth work and the Youth Office. Furthermore the youth information provision offers a newsletter which now has 1,100 subscribers.

In both information points, access to the internet is provided for young people as well as individual information and consultation.

## **5.9 E-participation**

No legal frameworks or key policy programmes, projects or initiatives enabling or encouraging young people to participate in political processes electronically exist in the German-speaking Community.

## **5.10 Current debates and reforms**

No current debates and reforms on participation are discussed at the moment in the German-speaking Community.

# **6. Education and Training**

Belgium is a federal state divided in three communities and three regions. Each entity is responsible for various competences. In Belgium the three Communities are responsible for education, with the exception of three competences, which remained a federal matter:

- the determination of the end and the beginning of compulsory school attendance,
- the minimum requirements for the issuing of diplomas,
- the regularisation of retirement for the employees in the educational system.

Instruction in each community is provided in the language of the community in question.

In the German-speaking Community, the Ministry of Education is responsible for all stages of education starting from pre-primary education. Childcare is a competence of the German-speaking Ministry of Family, Health Care and Social affairs.

Education is either organised by the German-speaking Community or subsidised by it (grant-aided public education and denominational or non-denominational grant-aided independent education).

The education system in the German-speaking Community of Belgium is divided into three school networks:

- Community education system: is the official education organised and financed by the German-speaking Community.
- Government-aided public education: which is organised by municipal authorities and subsidised by the German-speaking Community.
- Government-aided private education: which is organised by grant-aided private bodies and subsidised by

For the last two networks (education only financed by the German-speaking Community), controlling authorities enjoy fairly extensive autonomy, particularly with regard to methods of education and assessment. With the condition that they comply with laws, decrees and orders.

In Belgium, besides mainstream education there also exists special needs (pre)primary and secondary education. Special needs education is organized for children who need temporary or permanent specific support because of a physical or mental disability, serious behavioural or emotional problems or severe learning disabilities.

In Belgium, 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 learning and working is organized in:

- an institution for part-time education;
- a centre for apprenticeships.

## **6.1 General context**

### **Main trends in young people's participation in education and training**

#### **REK II - Upgrading of technical/professional training**

This upgrading is intended to be implemented chiefly in the pre- and primary and general secondary schools of the German-speaking Community as a way to explain to young people about the different types of training on offer and to give them the ability and enthusiasm for technical training. Scientific findings show that careers guidance should be started as soon as possible and so pre- and primary schools are likewise requested to deal with this subject and to bring their pupils into contact with crafts and technology at an early stage.

#### **Heterogeneous audience in SME education and training**

New concepts must be developed for the future to create suitable provision for the increasingly heterogeneous audience in SME education and training. The statistics show that the spread between pupils with a low educational level and those with a higher educational background is greater. This trend presents both the vocational schools (*Berufsschulen*) and also the training companies with a challenge. Here the provision of vocational training must be tailored to this heterogeneity in the educational level by offering both training programmes for candidates with a low educational level and also attractive programmes for new entrants with high existing educational knowledge. Over and above that, appropriate preparation should be provided in the long term in the form of a preparatory year in school but with a practical emphasis.

### **Organisation of the education and training system**

#### **Compulsory education**

The Act of 29 June 1983 lays down the end of compulsory school attendance (full-time and part-time attendance) at the age of 18 (12 school years). Compulsory part-time attendance applies from the age of 15 and enables the young person to decide on work-linked training either in an SME or in part-time lessons.

During compulsory education access to lessons is free of charge. No school fees may be requested. The school governing bodies and the Ministry of the German-speaking Community pay part of the costs for the classical teaching materials. Special services may, however, be charged to the parents. For the pupils of compulsory school age who have to travel a certain distance by bus to the nearest school of their choice, most of the travel costs are reimbursed.

### The education system

The full-time education system is composed of four educational levels:

- **Nursery school** is aimed at children from 3 to 5 (6 if necessary).
- **Primary school** is attended by pupils who are as a rule 6 to 11 years old. (Some pupils are one, or exceptionally two, years behind). These two levels- nursery school and primary school - form the pre- and primary school.
- **Secondary school** is aimed at young people from 12 to 18 (and older).
- **Higher education** is aimed at young people from the age of 18.

Every pupil goes through nursery school (normally three years), then primary school (normally six years) and finally secondary school (normally six years or seven years in vocational training). The first and second years of secondary education are intended to facilitate guidance towards general, technical or vocational education. In the German-speaking Community there is only a limited opportunity to go through the higher education system. A degree course of short duration is offered for the areas of teaching (nursery and primary school) and nursing. To follow other degree courses, those with qualifications for university must go into the inland area of Belgium or abroad.

At the end of the first cycle of secondary education there are several options that can be chosen in school: general educational, technical or vocational courses. Young people can, however, also choose to do dual vocational training in the form of an apprenticeship or in part-time education. This choice at the end of the first, two-year cycle ("observation cycle") is very important both for later studies and for professional life. The young person can choose between

- transitional education, which mainly enables access to higher education but also to the world of work and which can be done in the following forms:
- skills training which is intended for pupils who at the end of secondary school would like to exercise a profession but who would, however, like to leave open the possibility of continuing their studies at university and in the following forms of education.

Part-time education is organised for pupils with compulsory school attendance from the age of 15 who would like to stop attending school full-time.

Guidance towards special education is possible from pre-school age if required. Special education provides pre-school, primary and secondary education.

In the German-speaking Community there are three residential schools available for the pupils.

The start and end of the school year and the dates of the school-free days are laid down for each school year by the government of the German-speaking Community. In order to organise in-service training or teaching conferences, the school governing bodies have six school-free half days available. In the German-speaking Community the school year starts on 1 September or on the first working day of the month of September and ends on 30 June or on the last working day in the month of June of the next calendar year.

Together with the two-month summer holiday (from 1 July to 31 August), the pupils and teachers have a two-week winter holiday (Christmas and New Year week), a two-week spring holidays (Easter holiday) and at regular intervals a mostly one-week relaxation holiday (beginning of November and at Carnival). A school year must cover 180 to 184 days, an average of 182 days, therefore. In the German-speaking Community the following days are considered as public holidays (or as school-free days): Easter Monday,

1 May, Ascension Day (Thursday), Whit Monday, 1 November, 11 November, 15 November (official public holiday of the German-speaking Community).

## Main concepts

**Framework plans:** Core skills and framework plans specify what educational objectives pupils should have attained up to a certain key stage. To attain the specified educational objectives, the framework plans determine among other things what part-skills the pupils must acquire at the individual stages. Since 1 September 2008, in the German-speaking Community various framework plans for primary school and the first stage of secondary school have been in force: German as teaching medium, French first foreign language, mathematics, history/geography, sciences/technology, music/art and sport. These framework plans are compulsory for teaching in primary school and in the first stage of secondary school. The framework plan for nursing assistant applies to the seventh vocational secondary school year, the framework plans for German as first foreign language and French as teaching medium to the pre- and primary departments in which French is the teaching medium. The framework plan for school preparation for career choice and vocational guidance covers the whole of the primary and secondary school.

**Professional development:** Any form of education and training that is attended after completion of the initial training or after the transition into working life and is intended to help the individual to improve or update his/her own knowledge and/or skills; to acquire new skills with a view to professional advancement or retraining; for personal or professional development. Source: CEDEFOP, Beschäftigung durch Ausbildung – Zweiter Bericht zur Berufsbildungspolitik in Europa (Employment through training – Second report on vocational training policy in Europe), Luxembourg 2005.

**Dual / work-linked training:** By this is meant programmes that provide general and vocational training alternating between school or training centre and business. Depending on the state, this alternation between the different learning locations can be organised on a weekly, monthly or annual basis. Unlike apprentices, the participants do not sign a contract with the employer where they are doing the practical training and as a rule do not receive any pay. Source: CEDEFOP, Beschäftigung durch Ausbildung – Zweiter Bericht zur Berufsbildungspolitik in Europa (Employment through training – Second report on vocational training policy in Europe), Luxembourg 2005.

**Basic skills, basic/core qualifications:** These are the fundamental skills and proficiencies that are indispensable for life in today's society such as listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing and numeracy. Source: CEDEFOP, Beschäftigung durch Ausbildung – Zweiter Bericht zur Berufsbildungspolitik in Europa (Employment through training – Second report on vocational training policy in Europe), Luxembourg 2005.

**Lifelong learning:** Any formal, non-formal and informal learning activity in all (i.e. personal, civic, social or employment-related) areas of life and during the whole of life. Source: CEDEFOP, Beschäftigung durch Ausbildung – Zweiter Bericht zur Berufsbildungspolitik in Europa (Employment through training – Second report on vocational training policy in Europe), Luxembourg 2005.

**SME training / apprenticeship:** the aim of SME training is learning a vocation in the business. For this the apprentice signs a contract with his/her employer where he/she carries out the practical training. In addition, theoretical knowledge is taught in a centre for SME education and training. Source: Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, Ausbildung für Schüler und Jugendliche in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, (German-speaking Community Job Centre, Training for pupils and young people in the German-speaking Community of Belgium), Eupen 2009.

**Non-formal and informal education:** "Non-formally" and "informally" acquired skills are those that have been acquired outside school: for example you can learn to create web pages on an IT course (non-formal) or acquire social skills by performing an honorary activity (informal). Setting up a validation system is intended to give the

citizens of the German-speaking Community the opportunity of evidencing these skills acquired by experience or non-formal education processes and having them recognised - whether it is to be able to continue learning by building on them or to be able to best use their abilities on the job market.

## **6.2 Administration and governance**

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

#### **Cross-sectorial cooperation Education & Employment: the dual vocational training system**

SME training is very popular in East Belgium. For many young people, an apprenticeship represents the first step into the world of work. Businesses are very appreciative of the practical qualification of the apprentices. The practical part of the training is taught in the business. The theoretical part and the "general education" and "languages" subjects are taught at the vocational school (Berufsschule).

And this system pays off: in East Belgium, depending on the economic situation, 95 % of those qualifying find a job within six weeks of finishing an apprenticeship.

In addition, we are forging cooperation agreements with other regions to provide double qualifications in the educational area. Being able to work in two countries with one training qualification? No problem. Thus for example car mechatronics technicians or hairdressers can obtain two qualifications for one training course, which will be recognised both in East Belgium and in the CIC district of Aachen. This is the advantage of the border position of East Belgium for young people.

#### **Cooperation agreement between the autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, South Tyrol and the government of the German-speaking Community of Belgium in the educational area**

There has long been cooperation between the two regional authorities.

Thus the joint declaration of 9 April 1992 already clarified the efforts on both sides to stimulate cooperation between the autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, South Tyrol and the government of the German-speaking Community of Belgium. More than 20 years ago the focus was already on the reinforcement of interregional links and a grass roots policy for the benefit of the population.

In the course of the last 10 years, this cooperation in the educational area was promoted by joint projects such as "SYNEVA – quality assurance through synergies between internal and external evaluation of schools; effects on learning and teaching". The findings gained during this were fed into the respective further development of the education system.

Also attending joint conferences, such as the international symposium with education experts from seven countries which took place in 2014 in Potsdam on the subject of "Procedure for inspecting the achievement of educational standards", delivered interesting points of reference for more extensive joint educational projects.

This present agreement lays down the framework for further cooperation in the educational area.

In this the parties intend to have regular cooperation and a periodic exchange of experience in the educational area, in particular in the areas:

- Development priorities and education reforms in the education systems of both countries,
- Curriculum development, primarily dealing with heterogeneity and inclusion,
- Language support in a multilingual region (first language German, second language and further languages),

- Language support and integration of children and young people from other languages and cultures,
- Concepts of teacher training and development,
- Quality management in education, in particular internal and external evaluation,
- Digital learning materials and e-learning,
- Technical vocational education.

In this, the autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, South Tyrol and the German-speaking Community of Belgium (DG) transfer the experiences to date available from the processes of systematic content organisation and further development of the respective education system into a cross-state transfer process. This also ensures the information flow between the partners.

In addition, this new agreement enables mutual job shadowing, internships or scientific cooperation, which in turn flags up possible further development focuses in the education system.

Furthermore, as part of the respective work programmes, the fields of cooperation mentioned above will be refined and expanded in the following years. Laying down these programmes assumes a needs assessment carried out at regular intervals both in the DG and in the autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, South Tyrol. In the concrete implementation of the fields of cooperation, great importance is attached to an efficient and targeted working method so that added value is achieved for both partner regions.

The aspiration is to optimise quality assurance and improvement in both education systems through targeted cooperation.

## Governance

### The education system at federal level

Since 1989 education has no longer been one of the areas of responsibility of the federal parliament and the federal government; now each of the three communities is itself exclusively responsible for it with the exception of:

- laying down the start and end of compulsory education;
- the minimum conditions for issuing diplomas;
- the pension regulations for staff in the education sector.

These areas remain reserved to the federal parliament.

### The role of the government of the German-speaking Community

With the exception of the three aspects mentioned above, education in Belgium is the responsibility of the communities.

The government of the DG consists of four ministers of whom one (the Education Minister) is responsible for education and scientific research and another for extra-curricular education. The Education Minister and the Ministry of the German-speaking Community must fulfil a double role in the area of education:

- on the one hand the Education Minister (on behalf of the government) is the governing body of the community schools (of the previous state schools) that are integrated into the educational network of the community education system (GUW). In this capacity, he lays down structures, syllabi and methods, decides on larger infrastructure measures and finances the GUW schools; in cooperation with school heads, he takes all actions for improving the operation of the school;
- on the other hand the Minister and the Ministry as the supervisory authority are responsible for control of the application of all statutory provisions and regulations, not only in their own community schools but also in the schools of other school governing bodies. He approves the school structures and syllabi of the free and officially subsidised schools (FSUW and OSUW) and subsidises them to a large extent under criteria laid down by law.

## **The Ministry of the German-speaking Community**

As in every central administration, the main task of the Ministry lies in supporting its decision making and executing the decisions of the government. The Ministry circulates letters regarding the decrees and regulations issued by the legislative and executive organs of the German-speaking Community. The circulars from the Teaching and Training department in the Ministry are sent to all persons who administer the structures of the education system (in the Ministry, in the schools), as well as all other people concerned (school governing bodies, parents' associations, unions etc.). Apart from that, the Ministry is responsible for important administrative and inspection tasks.

### **Administration and control at local and/or institutional level**

By local level we mean the nine municipalities of the German-speaking Community and by institutional level we mean the individual schools. The decree of 31 August 1998 on the task assigned to the school governing bodies and school staff as well as on the general teaching and organisational provisions for mainstream schools is considered as the legal basis.

The municipal administrations are exclusively responsible for the schools, the governing bodies of which are the municipalities, just like any other governing body (i.e. the German-speaking Community or a free, private governing body) can only be responsible for its own schools at local level. As the governing body, the municipality can decide what syllabi it would like to introduce for use in its schools and what methods should be applied. It recruits and appoints the staff of the municipal schools under the rules laid down by the Parliament of the DG in staff regulations (decree of 29 March 2004), which are equally binding on all municipalities and municipal schools. It decides on the required infrastructure measures and sets the budget each year that the municipal schools have available for the procurement of teaching aids.

### **Administration and control at institutional level**

The assistance of the various persons involved in the education system is provided by the Educational Council, the School Council and the Parents' Association.

All participants, i.e. the pupils and parents, the management, teaching, educational support and administration staff as well as the paramedic and social-psychological staff acquire rights and obligations that they exercise within the bodies provided.

### **The Educational Council**

The Educational Council is placed by the school governing body in each individual school (sometimes there is one educational council for several schools or several councils for one school).

The Educational Council is composed of the school head(s), the representative of the school governing body and of at least five members of the teaching, educational support, paramedic and social-psychological staff. If a school has fewer than five members of the teaching, educational support, paramedic and social-psychological staff, all members of the teaching, educational support, paramedic and social-psychological staff are members of the Educational Council by virtue of their position.

The tasks of the Educational Council is to advise on the academic and personal educational work of a school. It does this by formulating proposals on the following range of topics:

- Procuring teaching materials,
- Organising the timetabling of the pupils and teachers,
- Developing and if applicable adapting the school project,
- Developing the school rules,
- Laying down the school structures,
- Laying down the teaching methods,
- Organising the formative and normative assessment of the pupils' performance,

- Planning and carrying out the teaching project activities,
- Annual planning for the in-service training and development of the staff,
- Organising the work of the class councils,
- Organising the internal evaluation of the school,
- Organising the extra-curricular activities,
- Supporting the external evaluation of the school.

Over and above that, the Educational Council has a right to be informed and consulted on all educational questions and in all matters that affect the organisation of the school.

### **School Council**

The pupils have influence on school life through the elected pupil representatives.

The school head is required to enable an elected school council from the 2nd cycle of secondary education. The pupils have the right to be informed and consulted.

The school project of any school contains provisions on the form of involvement of the School Council. These provisions are developed jointly with the School Council in the Educational Council and presented to the school governing body for a decision.

### **Parents' Association**

School projects and school rules clarify the form of the cooperation between school and parents/guardians.

The school project of any school contains provisions on the form of involvement of the parents' Association. These provisions are developed jointly with the Parents' Association in the Educational Council and presented to the school governing body for a decision.

## **6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)**

### **National strategy**

Belgium has established a national target of decreasing the rate of early leavers to 9.5 % by 2020. No specific regional target has been defined for the German-speaking Community of Belgium to tackle early leaving.

### **REK II : Personalised pupils support**

In this legislative period the education system in the German-speaking Community is committing itself more strongly to personalised pupils support.

In 2009 the Decree on the Centre for Remedial Teaching (ZFP) on the improvement of special educational support in mainstream and special schools as well as assisting the support of pupils with impairments, adaptive or learning difficulties in mainstream and special schools (Document no. 148 (2008-2009) no. 1, [www.dgparlament.be](http://www.dgparlament.be) > Dokumente > Datenbank) was passed unanimously. The basic principle of this decree is that every school is a remedial school, every lesson a remedial lesson and every pupil is entitled to support that is as personalised and differentiated as possible.

Against this background, the DG considers educational equality and increasing the educational quality as an important and permanent educational policy task. For this, skills-oriented standards are being developed and implemented. It is also important to carry out a regular internal and external evaluation of these standards and measures for reinforcing the schools' own responsibility. A central task here is to continue implementing and developing the "education policy overall concept".

So that children and young people can reach the stated competence expectations, specific learning provision is needed that corresponds to both the strengths and talents but also the weaknesses of individual pupils. Over and above that, the socio-economic, language and cultural environment must be taken into consideration. This means that the individual support of all pupils is at the focus of the school and curriculum development.

To meet these challenges, it needs above all an agreed procedure by all school actors in the DG. As already in many German-speaking countries, the DG too should continue to promote this networking.

As part of the first implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK I) the foundation has been laid for the support of all pupils, irrespective of their social, cultural and language origin. In this connection for example, the campus with the ZPF, the Autonomous University (AHS) and the Unterstadt pre- and primary school (SGU) and the campus with the Robert Schumann Institute and Centre for SME education and training (ZAWM) in Eupen have also been created. This grouping of education and training establishments is intended to ensure both the heterogeneity and differentiation of all pupils and promote cooperation and create synergies.

At overall systemic level, an agreed framework records the basics among other things for individual support, compensating disadvantage, protecting grades and the accompanying performance assessment and evaluation, for standardised diagnostic procedures, for promoting school success and reducing dropping out of school but also for recognition of the integration projects, the support of sick students and the optimisation of homework practice. In the process the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is continued in the DG and the path to the inclusive school further levelled.

At school level, the expansion of school promotion concepts is to be aimed at. These cover both individual counselling of pupils and parents, support with homework and the individual support of pupils in the low or high threshold area. For differentiating these supports transparent, school-internal and further DG criteria are needed.

At teaching level, individual learning requirements of the pupils should be better recorded so that differentiation and practical support measures in everyday school life can succeed. This also includes recording the educational language level of pupils at decisive interfaces in the education process. Thus the number of children and young people in the DG whose first language is not German has consistently risen in the last few years. There is hardly a school left that does not have to tackle integrating pupils with a migration background (second or third generation) or initially arriving pupils. These pupils too and their parents must participate in the school development process. This development must be taken into account.

In view of these new challenges, teachers need instruments and methodological teaching aids so that skills-oriented diagnostics, assistance and learning support for all pupils in everyday school life can succeed. One of the essential conditions for this is an individual training and development concept for teachers adapted for the DG but also for school heads and non-teaching staff.

### **Formal education: main policy measures on ELET**

To promote school success and reduce the number of pupils dropping out early, the projects "personalised pupil support" and "enhancing technical vocational training" have been developed as part of the Regional Development Concept (REK I).

The Regional Development Concept Ostbelgien Leben 2025 is being implemented since 2011. It integrates some of the following specific policies and measures related to early school-leaving among others:

- increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways by setting up incentives during the transition from general education to vocational training and establishing measures to recognise the academic and vocational skills gained both in trainings and in professional experience;
- offering support for apprenticeship beginners with learning disabilities through differentiated modular teaching. This has been more systematised in the school year 2013/14 by setting up clear admission criteria to the modules;

- hiring specialised staff to support teachers with the aim to improve the quality of education. Technical advisory groups have been set up on the different taught subjects. A school development consultancy has also been implemented that aims at developing a school's learning culture, setting up systematic forms of reflection, quality assurance measures and feedback;
- 'Time-out' projects, designed as a full-time school for students excluded from their usual learning environment or in cases of drop-out. They aim at reducing early leaving by facilitating the reintegration to the education system of students at risk of early leaving. Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with migrant background.

Education and career guidance is explicitly considered as a prevention, intervention and compensation measure to tackle early leaving. Guidance is embedded in the primary and secondary education curricula as a compulsory cross-curricular topic.

The German-speaking Community of Belgium has adopted in 2011 a 'Skill Guide to Career Choice Preparation and Career Guidance' (Rahmenplan Schulisch Berufswahlvorbereitung und -orientierung), which is aimed at preparing career choices and career guidance for primary and secondary education. According to the guide, schools are required to inform and advise students and their guardians about studies, training and career possibilities. Career guidance is part of school education and a crucial link between school and the world of work. The professionals involved at school are teachers with no specific training in early leaving or in dealing with groups at risk. Students may also directly contact a PMS to receive advice about education and career guidance.

As a compensation measure, the Employment Office of the German-speaking Community of Belgium acts as the body responsible for adolescents and adults education and career guidance.

### **Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

The validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills is intended to contribute to achieving the aims of the Europe 2020 Strategy by 2020. One of the aims is to reduce the school drop-out rate to below 10%.

Youth work takes place out of school and during particular leisure activities and is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation.

By providing appropriate opportunities, youth work promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, while taking account of their interests and needs.

### **Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

Long-time cooperation exists between policy areas of employment, youth, social affairs and family.

Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level exist within projects (for instance in the 'Time-out' project, the case management team is comprised of the school leader, the psychomedico-social centre (Psycho-medizinischsoziale Zentrum – PMS), the project coordinator, and other institutions. Teachers may also be involved in the cooperation.

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

### **Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

The aim of the part-project "Expansion of the Initiatives in the Area of Lifelong Learning" of the first implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK I), that was supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) was the awareness raising of adults in the German-speaking Community (DG) to lifelong learning. Over and above that, access to education information has been improved, above all by professional development

guidance. Here people interested in professional development receive comprehensive information, guidance and advice on their professional development plans. The guidance provision also includes skills analyses. Parallel to this, information platforms such as the Professional Development portal (Weiterbildungsportal) with the Professional Development database on the internet and the Professional Development Manual have been (further) developed. For awareness raising, among other things the "Sommernacht der Sprachen" (summer night of languages) was started.

Against the background of demographic change, extended working life and with a view to the emerging shortage of specialised labour, it is the job of the European Union (EU) to promote lifelong learning even more strongly by emphasising throughout Europe the "non-formally" and "informally" acquired skills of the citizens more strongly by the introduction of "validation systems".

The main target audience for validation are people who have no to low qualifications but already possess many skills and capabilities from experience; people who would like to change professions and new arrivals whose foreign diploma has not been recognised in Belgium.

In the project development, care is taken that people with a disability also gain access to the system. All citizens of the German-speaking Community are to have paths and prospects flagged up to them that enable them to have their non-formally and informally acquired skills to be recognised.

In addition, care is taken in the project development that, irrespective of the validation system to be created, the classical school system retains its high importance.

Learning results that have been acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts can be used by means of validation. For this the government of the German-speaking Community will set up a central validation point within five years of the law coming into force. Then the functioning and procedure of the validation is still to be laid down.

### **Information and guidance**

For anyone who cannot see the wood for the trees among the provision, the professional development service in the DG Ministry represents the ideal place to start. Free of charge and without preference to certain providers, the advisor first determines the actual aim jointly with the person seeking advice before he/she is shown the different educational paths to it. At the centre of the advice, which can be found online, is the customer with the abilities and knowledge he/she already had.

### **Quality assurance**

There are no specific quality assurance measures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the German-speaking Community.

## **6.5 Cross-border learning mobility**

### **Policy framework**

Under the Belgian constitution (Art. 127-133) the relevant areas of responsibility of the communities – and these also include intercommunity and international relations – are the exclusive competences of these communities. For them, opening the community to the outside is necessary not only from practical considerations but also in addition a central element of their autonomy defined in the constitution and their identity.

Primarily since the 90s, the government has identified opening the German-speaking Community to the outside as an important policy field and also driven it further forward in the last few years. Quite particularly also under the aspect of a Europe of the Regions, as part of their competences, they are reinforcing their efforts to establish or deepen relations with neighbouring communities and regions and with other European countries,

to exchange experiences and – not least thanks to the European support programmes – to conduct joint programmes.

Because of its small size, in the area of human and financial resources the German-speaking Community has inherently only limited possibilities for involvement in international organisations and European programmes and initiatives. However, it is active on many levels and, to better coordinate the various activities, in 2002 the Ministry set up a service for external relations.

There are no statutory provisions that deal especially only with the European dimension in the education and training system of the DG. However, it should be noted here that the foundation decree of 31 August 1998 in which in the Chapter "Task assigned by society to the school governing bodies and the school staff it states Article 10: School shall teach cosmopolitanism and promote the European ideal and multilingualism."

As a constituent part of the federal state of Belgium, the German-speaking Community has considerable autonomy in the area of external relations which even allows it to make international treaties in its areas of responsibility. It maintains numerous international contacts with neighbouring states, partner regions and international organisations, central importance always being attached to education and training.

Mobility and exchange measures are mainly found among pupils and students and to a much lesser extent among teachers.

## **Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education**

### **Mobility of pupils and students**

**Erasmus+:** With its programme [Erasmus+](#) (2014-2020) in which the DG is also involved, the EU wants to improve the skill level and employability of young people and modernise education and youth work. Erasmus+ promotes cross-border partnerships and brings together the predecessor programmes Lifelong Learning (2007-2013) with Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo Da Vinci and Grundtvig under one umbrella. Pupil mobility likewise includes the mobility of trainees from vocational education. The coordination office for Erasmus+ in the German-speaking Community of Belgium is the [Youth Office of the DG](#). Students can have the opportunity of a study visit to another country; in addition graduates can go abroad for an internship for up to a year after the completion of their degree.

**Erasmus Belgica:** Since 2004 the programme [Erasmus Belgica](#) has offered students the opportunity to complete an internship or a study visit within Belgium. Erasmus Belgica is a partnership project of the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities.

**eTwinning:** Alongside the pupil exchange and the school partnerships, via the [eTwinning](#) project an international exchange may also be possible: eTwinning pursues the aim of promoting European school partnerships by using modern communication and information technology (ICT). From the academic year 2014-2015 eTwinning partnership projects can also be carried out within Belgium. Also projects between schools from the DG have been possible since 2014.

**Prince Philippe Fund:** In cooperation with the education ministries of the three communities of Belgium the [Prince Philippe Fund](#) organises exchange and cooperation projects between pupils, schools and teaching staff. With the project "Building Sustainable Bridges" the Prince Philippe Fund would like to promote structural cooperation between organisations and/or establishments from different communities of our country and an open attitude towards the other communities. The Prince Philippe Fund wants to promote joint initiatives and exchange between Dutch, French and German-speaking establishments and organisations beyond language boundaries. There may be the following options: exchange of ideas and/or persons, starting a dialogue, increasing mutual understanding, carrying out campaigns, linking objectives.

## Teacher mobility

**Erasmus+:** The possibilities of teacher mobility are likewise extended with the EU programme Erasmus+. Teachers and lecturers may teach in partner establishments, attend courses and seminars in other European establishments or take part in job shadowing in other educational establishments.

In addition, for the universities there is the option of forming knowledge alliances, through which projects, creativity, innovation, job-related learning, promoting entrepreneurial spirit or employability are supported. Projects contributing to creating curricula, developing innovative methods of vocational training or implementing recognition instruments of the EU in practice are likewise supported. Contact here is likewise the [Youth Office in the DG](#).

## Bilateral initiatives and programmes

The DG maintains bilateral relations both at national level (with the other communities and regions of the country) and at international level (with states or regions). In the relations with some states the DG joins in with various international cultural agreements which the state of Belgium made in the 50s and which through the state reform have fallen into the area of competence of the communities.

These bilateral relations mostly lead to agreements on future cooperation that, depending on the legal possibility of the partner, take the form of a joint declaration or a cooperation agreement.

In most bilateral declarations or agreements the areas of education and training play a central role.

- 1992: Joint declaration on cooperation with the autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen in South Tyrol (Italy); (exchange of experience at the administrations level; exchange of experience in the area of raising children to be multilingual; teacher exchange as part of a Socrates project);
- 2000; 2008: Cooperation agreement with the French Republic; (possibility of conducting joint campaigns as part of the European programmes with the aim of promoting cooperation between schools and training establishments as well as pupil and student exchanges; cooperation on matters of acceptance for university study, professional development in the area of French as a foreign language); exchange between the Autonomous University and IUFM (Institut de la Formation des Maîtres); partner of the Formaprim programme;
- 1994; 1997; 2000; 2002: Cooperation agreement with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (in agreements; including financial compensation for accepting Luxembourg pupils into the special school system in the DG; agreement: award of scholarships and internship visits; exchange of information and experience);
- 2002; 2006; Cooperation agreement with the Republic of Hungary (with particular focus on education: exchange of information and experience; promotion of cooperation in the areas of upbringing, nursery teaching, methodology of bilingual teaching and teaching foreign languages, of German as native language, in vocational training and development and in special education; encouragement of teacher-pupil exchange programmes and partner relations between training facilities);
- 2002: Joint declaration on cooperation with the federal state of Tyrol (Austria); (exchange of information and experience as part of the European networks and promotion programmes in the areas of general education, including nursery schools and universities, training and development of teaching staff, vocational education, careers guidance and occupational research)
- 1993; 1997; 2003: Protocol / joint declaration on neighbourly cooperation with the federal state of Rhineland-Pfalz (Germany); (General exchange of information and experience; use of European programs for reinforcing school partnerships and pupil, teacher and authority exchange; cooperation in the areas of professional development, recognition of school qualifications, vocational education)

- 2004: Joint declaration on neighbourly cooperation with the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)

### **Multilateral initiative and programmes**

Through the multilateral relations maintained by the DG, many people who have responsibility in the areas of policy, administration, education and training can attend conferences and congresses where current topics and trends are discussed and debated. Not least in the areas of education and training, which are some of the most important areas of competence of the communities, such contacts at European level are very enriching and to be reflected in their own legislative activity.

Alongside their membership and active participation in international committees such as the "Assembly of European Regions" (AER), the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion, the Greater Region Saar-Lor-Lux where among other things also education and training-relevant topics are discussed and occasionally cross-border projects encouraged, the German-speaking Community maintains also the following multilateral international relations:

- Ongoing contact with the European Minister Councils; including active participation in the events on the occasion of the Belgian presidency in 2001;
- Representation in the Education Committee of the European Commission; Youth Committee;
- Participation in community action programmes (e.g. Eurydice)
- Attendance at minister conferences of the European Council (education; sport; youth) and participation in the Pestalozzi education programme
- OECD: participation in PISA studies; participation in the PEB programme on the developments in the school building programme;
- Participation in the PIRLS study (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)
- Introduction of the EUROPASS

### **Other initiatives and programmes**

In November 2003 the topic of [Netd@ys](#) was: *Dialogue between the Cultures*. In cooperation with several external partners, those responsible in the Ministry have decided to have this range of topics treated very realistically by starting with the actual conditions in many schools where an increasing number of non-national fellow citizens are in the lessons. The pupils were called on to get to know foreign cultures in their immediate vicinity, to look more closely at how their fellow citizen from Africa or Chechnya live in East Belgium, what he/she thinks about it and what life is like in his/her previous home country.

European Label – European label for innovative projects for teaching and learning languages. The European Label is intended to make the results of innovative projects known and encourage their use. Furthermore, interest is to be stimulated among citizens for the improvement of their language skills. For some years already, schools and other educational establishments or organisations from the DG have been participating with great success in this European Union campaign. In the past few years between 2 and 4 projects each year have been given the award.

Immersion language exchange project (every year from 2004): this bilateral exchange project has now been in existence for some years and takes 12-year-old pupils from the French Community who would like to "experience" the German language, into the DG and pupils from the DG who would like to "experience" the French language into the French Community. These language immersion programmes consist of two-week visits and take place at the end of the school holidays in one school and one residential school; there the young people receive educational support from 9:00 to 16:30.

Five teachers from the DG are released from teaching because of the multilingualism and designated as teachers or educators at European Schools.

After the members of staff of all school educational establishments have received a two-monthly information brochure from the Ministry of the DG, the VADEMEKUM, for several

years, since 2006-2007 they have received the quarterly Educational Professional Development Manual. Receiving this publication ensures that the educationally relevant information (literature, conferences, professional development provision, educational assistance services, language immersion projects, pupil or teacher exchange projects, all provision of the Agency for European Educational Programmes (an NPO) etc.) reaches not only schools but also every individual teacher and educator. A lot of this information has a European or international dimension.

Every year around 5 May (date of the founding of the Council of Europe) an initiative in the area of Political Education Action Days is launched and reminds all teachers that this is a good opportunity to include a European theme in the lesson and deal with it in more detail.

In the Ministry of the DG, its own DG education server "learnbox" had, by the end of 2006 developed into a very valuable instrument for pupils and teachers, in just a few years. Thus it gives information on among other things interesting initiatives from the neighbouring regions and communities, other European countries and other continents. As part of this, also teaching materials, brochures or other information media (books, comics, CDs, video cassettes, films etc.) published by the European Parliament in several languages are presented and made accessible to interested teachers. They deal with EU member or candidate countries or the European efforts for unification and thus promote the international dimension in education. The education server learnbox has unfortunately had to be blocked as a consequence of repeated attacks by external hackers on databases and data systems. In the Ministry of the DG efforts are being made to develop a new education server; it should be up and running again in the academic year 2008-2009.

### **Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work**

The Youth Office supports mobility of young people and experts in the socio-cultural field and it promotes national and international cooperation in the youth sector. Consequently the Youth Office serves as the national agency for the Erasmus+ programme and as the agency for the national programme Bel'J.

Both youth information points are sending and hosting organizations for the European voluntary service (EVS).

### **Quality assurance**

There are no specific quality assurance measures on cross-border learning mobility in the German-speaking Community, although most of the programmes (Erasmus+, Bel-J, ...) are being regularly monitored and evaluated.

## **6.6 Social inclusion through education and training**

### **Educational support**

#### **Target group**

To ensure education appropriate for the needs of pupils with disabilities, in Belgium eight types of teaching have been defined in special education:

- Teaching type 1: for pupils with mild learning difficulties;
- Teaching type 2: for pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties;
- Teaching type 3: for pupils with behavioural difficulties;
- Teaching type 4: for pupils with physical disabilities;
- Teaching type 5: for sick children;
- Teaching type 6: for partially sighted and blind pupils;
- Teaching type 7: for hearing-impaired and deaf children;
- Teaching type 8: for pupils with specific learning difficulties (e.g. neurotic dyslexia and dyscalculia)

In special education there are, as in mainstream education, three school levels:

- the special nursery school (which is always attached to a special primary school),
- the special primary school (which can be autonomous or attached to a special secondary school and, with the special pre-school, forms one pre- and primary school),
- the special secondary school.

For the children in teaching types 1 and 8 no nursery education is organised. There is no teaching type 8 in special secondary schools. Teaching types 6 and 7 are not organised in the German-speaking Community. Some pupils from the DG attend specialised establishments in Germany for teaching types 6 and 7.

### **Admission conditions and choice of educational establishment**

Currently admission to special schools is subject to age conditions and special registration conditions.

As regards age conditions, children with a disability can be registered at a special nursery school from the age of 3. Admission to a special primary school takes place at the age of 6 to 8 and to a special secondary school at the age of 12 to 14. A special school can be attended up to the age of 21. However the Minister can grant individual divergences from the age limit.

The Act of 6 July 1970 on special education and integrated education as well as the Royal Decree of 28 June 1978 require that a psycho-medical-social centre or another centre recognised by the Ministry conducts a basic multidisciplinary examination for each pupil before registration in a special school (if this involves pupils for teaching types 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8) or that a medical examination is conducted by a medical specialist recognised by the Ministry of Health for this purpose (if this involves sick children, partially sighted or blind pupils and hearing impaired and deaf pupils – teaching types 5, 6 and 7 which are not organised in the DG) and that a report is written stating among other things what type of teaching best meets the disability and the needs of the child. The report includes a medical certificate resulting from the examinations carried out and justification based on the findings. In it is stated the type of teaching as well as the teaching level (nursery school, primary school or secondary school) and for the secondary school the appropriate form.

### **Age groups and group formation**

Special nursery schools are organised for all types of disability except for pupils with mild learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties.

In special primary schools the pupils are arranged into classes by type of teaching, taking into account their level and degree of maturity.

In special secondary schools three different training forms are provided:

- Special secondary schools for social adaptation (form 1) are intended to put the pupils with disabilities into a position to live as independently as possible in a protected environment. This form of training is intended to give the pupils the incentive to integrate into society within the scope of their abilities and to develop contacts to other people; observation and socialisation of the pupils is treated as a priority. The content and duration of these activities are personalised taking into account the concrete life circumstances of the pupils. The class council decides in all cases on the duration of the training, which must be a minimum of 4 years.
- Special secondary schools for social and vocational adaptation (form 2) pursue the aim of giving the pupils general, social and vocational training that enables them to integrate into a protected living and working environment. This form of training consists of two phases which each cover two years of study, the duration and content of which is determined for each individual pupil by the class council with the support of the PMS centre responsible for supervision. In the first phase the emphasis is on general and social training. The second phase primarily involves

vocational adaptation. Particular emphasis is placed on vocational training in connection with general education for differentiated preparation for work in a protected workplace.

- These special vocational secondary schools (form 3) pursue the aim of giving the pupils general, social and vocational training that enables them to integrate into a normal living and working environment. An observation phase of a maximum of one year is to familiarise the pupils with various skills and techniques so that they can identify their abilities and areas of interest and choose appropriate vocational training. The training phase covers four years of study. The first two years are geared towards vocational activities in a particular area, but do not yet lead to real specialisation. At this stage the pupils are split into departments. The vocational specialisation takes place in the last two years in which the departments are split according to the different training aims. There is the option of organising a sixth year which is open to motivated pupils who have received the certificate of competence at the end of the fifth year.

### **Syllabi, subjects**

For certain subjects special syllabi have been developed for special teaching.

This applies both to the foundation subjects of mathematics and the native language and to certain special subjects (music education, current affairs, geography, history and sciences, childcare and plastic arts education). Over and above that, technical vocation training in mechanics, personal services and building trades have been geared especially to special schools.

Foundation subjects:

- Provisional syllabus for mathematics in primary schools;
- Provisional syllabus for native language in special secondary schools (form 3),
- Syllabus for mathematics in special secondary schools (form 2).

Special subjects in special secondary schools:

- Music education (form 1 and form 2),
- Current affairs, geography, history and sciences (form 3),
- Childcare (form 3),
- Plastic arts education (form 3).

Technical and practical vocational courses for various focuses:

- Mechanics, focus on car body construction,
- Services for people, focus on varied community assistance,
- Building trade, focus on laying tiles.

These syllabi are written under the responsibility of the subject inspectors of the French Community by school heads and teachers and approved for and declared binding on the schools here by the Education Minister of the DG as part of the cooperation with the French Community.

### **Teaching methods and teaching materials**

The networks determine their teaching methods themselves in accordance with academic freedom which they are guaranteed by the Belgian constitution.

Teachers should use special educational methods and materials and take into account the individual learning objectives. So individual learning strategies must be developed with individual pupils.

The aim of all methods and of teaching in practice is to bring the pupils to take more and more control of their lives. All activities are preferred that enable the pupils to learn how to learn.

**Moving pupils up (moving to another class, school career guidance)**

**Pre- and primary school:** The class council and Kaleido are the decision makers in decisions on whether to move pupils up into the next class and on guidance at special school level or whether to move them to mainstream schooling. The parents are involved in the decision-making process. The children who have attended teaching type 8 in primary school (children with specific learning difficulties), are guided towards teaching type 1 (children with mild learning difficulties) or to teaching type 3 (children with behavioural difficulties) or to special secondary schools as at this level there is no teaching type 8 anymore. The class council can also recommend that these pupils are integrated into mainstream schooling. Children with physical disabilities who have no mental impairment and certain visually or hearing impaired children may be integrated into mainstream schooling.

**Secondary school:** If in the special secondary school the transition of a pupil to another type of education appears desirable, a report must be written in the course of the academic year by the class council and Kaleido. The parents are involved in the decision-making process.

With a positive report written by Kaleido in cooperation with the special school, a pupil who has previously attended a special school can continue his school career in mainstream schooling. There is also the possibility of integrated education: pupils who are registered and remain in a special school may attend courses in mainstream schooling by means of an integration project created by a mixed group. For some years this form of integration of special pupils has been particularly promoted in mainstream schools. What frequently occurs is that the parents refuse to put their child who needs special schooling into a special school. Since 1999 an integration project has likewise been created in such cases.

**Evaluation of the pupils**

In special teaching the greatest importance is attached to formative evaluation. The teachers strive to evaluate the development of the pupil in the course of the learning process and to observe how the pupil applies what he/she has learned, how he/she analyses or solves an exercise or a problem.

Formative evaluation also enables individual or collective interventions to be adapted and their effectiveness assessed. It contributes to making the pupil aware of the necessity of changing his/her behaviour, learning how to work, tackling problems and developing solutions.

By informing the pupil about his/her objectives and evaluation criteria, the educator team is so to speak creating a contract with the pupil and leading a dialogue about the performance achieved. Starting from co-evaluation, the path moves progressively to self-evaluation, which represents an aspect of individual independence.

The staff of the Psycho-Medical-Social Centres (PMS) can introduce a lot of information from their care by which the formative evaluation can be refined and special educational programmes developed.

The special school must likewise consider the not to be underestimated problems of a socio-affective nature.

The evaluation is normative if the class council of the special pre- and primary school has to decide whether a pupil is to receive the primary school leaving certificate. The class council of the special secondary school proceeds in the same manner for the young people who attend the 3rd form of these lessons.

**Leaving certificate**

**Special pre- and primary school:** Children who, because of their abilities, can either be integrated into mainstream schooling or who are aiming for vocational training in the special school system can receive a primary school leaving certificate.

**Special secondary school:** A school attendance certificate is issued at the end to pupils who have attended education forms 1 and 2 of the special secondary school. The pupils who pass the fourth and fifth year of education form 3 can take a subject test and receive a certificate of competence which corresponds to the certificate of competence that was awarded some years ago at the end of the second stage of the vocational mainstream secondary schooling

## Social cohesion and equal opportunities

### Target group

Every child of foreign origin (*allochthonous* child) is entitled to education, both the child refugee, the child of the asylum seeker, the child that is illegally in the country and the child of foreign origin whose parents or grandparents have settled in the country. Among these children considered as immigrants, in the German-speaking Community of Belgium only the *newly arriving children* benefit from special measures in the educational area. Considered as *newly arriving children* are pupils who meet all the following conditions (that were laid down in the decree of 17 December 2001 on the school admission of newly arriving children):

- They have been registered in a school in the German-speaking Community since 1 February of the previous school year. This limited period was increased from 2009 by an additional year.
- They are between 3 and 18 years old and do not speak the language of instruction.
- They fall into one of the following cases:
  1. they have applied for recognition of refugee status or are recognised as refugees under the provisions of the Act of 15 December 1980 on access to the territory, residence, establishment and deportation of non-nationals or they are accompanying a person who falls into this case;
  2. they have applied for recognition of the status as stateless or are recognised as such;
  3. they come from a developing country as stated in Article 2 (3) of the Act of 25 May 1999 on international Belgian cooperation, or from an emerging country that is officially supported by the OECD Development Assistance Committee; the government can add further countries if they are experiencing particular times of crisis.

Towards the end of the nineties the number of refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and people from Africa, Asia and primarily from Eastern Europe in the country illegally increased significantly; however this number never made up more than 1% of the total population in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. In summer 2001 the number of immigrants with children increased significantly so it seemed appropriate to give the remedial measures a more solid legal basis; this was done by the decree of 17 December 2001.

### Specific support measures

To enable the schools to care for the newly arriving pupils more individually on their reception, the decree of 17 December 2001 lays down specific support in the form of additional staff, whose primary task is to teach them basic skills in German but also to offer practical assistance with everyday problems.

### Creating transition classes

In primary schooling a transition class for newly arriving pupils is subsidised in the municipal school of Manderfeld (OSUW) where the Belgian Red Cross has had a reception centre since October 2001. To be paid for out of the community budget, the municipality can appoint two additional teachers: one with a full timetable for the transition class and the second with an incomplete timetable who is used either full or part-time in this transition class or in the nursery class.

In the secondary school system two further transition classes have been set up, one in the Technical Institute in Sankt Vith (FSUW) and one in the Technical Robert Schuman Institute in Eupen (GUW). The support measure consists in additional funding for 30 lessons being granted to the two schools for this transition class. With this lesson funding, staff can be appointed for the transition class (1½ posts).

In the pre- and primary and secondary schools that organise a transition class, a support council is formed that is intended to provide the best possible school integration of the newly arriving pupils.

### **Usual classes**

But also for the schools with newly arriving pupils who are not allowed to organise a separate transition class, the decree lays down support in the form of funding for additional lessons (in the secondary school or funding for additional posts (in the pre- and primary schools):

If in a pre- and primary school 4 to 6 newly arriving pupils attend the nursery school or 3 to 5 the primary school, the school receives an extra quarter post for a pre-school teacher or a primary school teacher and one further quarter post per additional group of three pupils.

The secondary schools receive funding for 3.5 lessons for each newly arriving pupil who does not attend a transition class. With the funding for additional lessons arising in this way, the newly arriving pupils who are otherwise integrated into their normal year group classes can be taken individually or together out of their classes and for example be given intensive German teaching (German as a foreign language) or support lessons in other subjects. This is in fact considered as a deciding factor in the efforts for faster integration into our mainstream school system.

## **6.7 Skills for innovation**

### **Innovation in formal education**

#### **Bilingual teaching in primary schools**

In the [Decree on Measures in Teaching 2015 \(29 June 2015\)](#) a change in the law on the decree on language use in teaching was made which, in a pilot phase, like in bilingual nursery schools, allowed pre- and primary schools in the DG to offer bilingual teaching in the primary school from now on. The legal basis for the bilingual nursery schools was created in the Decree on Measures of 27 June 2011. The adaptation for the primary school now follows.

As part of a pilot project, the government is allowing a school governing body to teach the subjects of mathematics, history, geography, sciences and technology in the first foreign language in all or individual establishments or language departments or in the individual classes. This is only done, however, under the condition that the scope of the subjects taught in the first foreign language takes up a maximum of 40% of the total lesson time. Before such a pilot project may be launched, here strict criteria – analogous to the conditions in the nursery school– apply: 1. A teaching concept accepted by the teaching inspection service must be present; 2. A pilot project in the mainstream primary school must be the continuation of a pilot project started in the nursery school; 3. Here too scientific support is required; 4. The project is evaluated after each school year by the school inspection service. 5. The teachers who teach the above subjects in the first foreign language must be able to demonstrate thorough knowledge of this language and possess sufficient knowledge of the teaching language. Thus, as continuation of the bilingual nursery school, the bilingual primary school can become a further important component for acquiring language skills.

## REK II

The education system in the German-speaking Community continues to set itself the challenge of pursuing the promotion of multilingualism for all citizens as one of its foremost aims. This is a decisive factor for networking with other regions and countries and a significant strength of border regions in Europe both for the individual citizens and for the location of the DG as a whole.

In the last few years, decisive structural and organisational measures have been taken to improve the promotion of multilingualism in school. For the second implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK II), the government has decided to devote its own future project to the theme of multilingualism.

The Decree of 19 April 2004 (*Document no. 146 (2003-2004) no. 12, [www.dgparlament.be](http://www.dgparlament.be) => Dokumentendatenbank*) on the teaching and use of languages in the educational system has created a solid basis for a coherent concept for the promotion of multilingualism in the schools of the DG. In addition, it is constantly being adapted to the most up-to-date findings and needs. Thus for example in 2007 a passage was inserted that enables schools to run a bilingual nursery school. In the said decree, for nursery schools, primary schools and secondary schools in the DG, the number of lessons and subjects to be taught both in the respective teaching medium and in the first foreign language was laid down as obligatory. The language and teaching requirements for teachers were likewise defined.

With the definition of development goals for the nursery school and the creation of framework plans for the primary and secondary schools, quality assurance and improvement has been promoted and secured. The basis for the defined goals was the [Common European Reference Framework](#) for Languages 63 and the corresponding specification of the level of competence as well as the regular testing of the level reached by means of standardised tests.

A wide professional development provision for teaching staff of all school levels and forms rounds off the measures.

### Planned measures and work steps

The process of quality improvement must now be continued and the foreign language lesson improved so that all citizens can gain the foreign language skills that they need for their professional and personal development and as a basis for lifelong language learning. This also applies to citizens with disabilities and for people with a migration background who are to be helped in language acquisition in line with their possibilities and needs.

In terms of quality improvement, the possibility of the exchange of teachers between the three communities of Belgium should be extended. This exchange enables the use of native speakers for foreign language teaching. This should also be used in school forms not previously considered as well as in subjects with subject matter taught through the medium of the foreign language. Apart from that, the use of native speakers should be used for longer.

The standardised certification of foreign language skills on the basis of the Common European Reference Framework for Languages is increasingly required on the job market. This standard certificate is of benefit to the citizens of the DG when looking for work. In consensus with the schools and the institutions for professional academic development, a coherent concept should be developed for this.

With the DELF tests for French as a foreign language, which are based on the Common European Reference Framework for Languages, a standardised certification of foreign language skills in the education system of the DG is being tried out. Following this model, further foreign languages can now be certified.

The promotion of French as the first foreign language should continue to be carried out regularly and in a targeted fashion for all children from nursery school. The measures

offered in the decree on the use and teaching of languages (2004) in this respect should be used more strongly and in more depth. Corresponding awareness raising for quality upgrading of the activities must be carried out.

For the "bilingual nursery school" pilot project a legal basis for the possible expansion of the pilot project to the primary school should be created to secure the continuity to the already existing bilingual departments of the secondary schools and to continuously promote the language skills acquired.

Upgrading the Dutch teaching will be carried out via the creation and implementation of framework plans for this subject.

As part of a conciliation with the secondary schools, new possibilities for embedding Dutch teaching in certain departments of these schools should be sounded out and implemented as part of pilot projects.

### **Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

There are no specific measures to foster innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work in the German-speaking Community yet.

## **6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media**

### **National strategy**

#### **REK II**

IT and media literacy have been accepted into the second implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK II) as a new future project. In the specialist literature the term "metaskill" is also used. In the information and knowledge society of the 21st century, media literacy is unquestionably a decisive factor for the success of the individual at school but also after leaving school, for example as an undergraduate, in research and at work. In addition, the acquisition of this core skill contributes decisively to the democratic development of our society. In terms of educational equity, all citizens of the German-speaking Community (DG) should have the opportunity to acquire media literacy appropriate to their needs in their professional and private environment and to continue to further develop these skills. This does not only involve being able to use the various electronic terminal devices but also critically analysing the wide range of media, acquiring differentiated research skills and becoming active creatively and artistically in this area. All citizens must be able to keep up with the changing circumstances in the world of media. This is a task for the whole of society which can only be achieved by the interaction of numerous actors. The framework plan-oriented guideline for the development of IT and media literacy which was published in the past legislative period presents a grid for teaching broken down by skills and age groups. This guideline reaches all pupils of the DG from the nursery school to the school leaving certificate and also includes structured teacher training and development which plays a prominent role beyond the school structures. The Media Centre of the DG regularly organises media events for all citizens. The staff collect information, create networks and see themselves as partners and advisors in all matters to do with the media.

In addition, the Media Centre is networked with similar institutions in Belgium and abroad and the staff work closely with their colleagues in the Ministry who likewise have the aim of imparting media literacy. Thus the cross-sectional theme appears in the youth strategy plan again and is, as a REK II project, implemented jointly with the Media Centre and Teaching department.

### **Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

#### **Planned measures and work steps**

The framework plan-oriented guideline on the teaching of IT and media literacy represents the basis in skill acquisition in primary and secondary schools. The media literacy acquired in this school training are intended to give them the ability for continued

lifelong learning and to be the best possible preparation for the demands of training, everyday life, work and society.

On the basis of this guideline, alongside the target groups of pupils and teachers, all other groups of society in the DG must also be reached to show up gaps in provision and if necessary close them. For this, providers must be networked and provision be made accessible in a structured way.

### **Socio-political orientation: sustainability and innovation**

The cross-curricular orientation of the project makes possible lifelong learning in handling modern media and connectivity linking to the school training for all groups of the population of the DG. Individual activities thus become part of the overall concept, which is designed for all target groups. Over and above that, the project creates the basis for mature participation in shaping society and thus contributes to making each individual's personality more resilient.

The double leadership of the project guarantees a synergistic approach and sustainable exchange. Schools that reach a large part of the population and have per se an immense task in media literacy teaching, are networked with the Media Centre, which is by definition aimed at all citizens of the DG, in order to work together and involve external partners inside and outside the DG in the activities.

### **Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning**

Media work as the promotion of media literacy for critical and conscious use of the media is one of the focuses of the youth work.

A study from the KFN institute conducted in 2010 showed that above all children and young people from precarious circumstances have a lot of devices such as televisions, games consoles etc. compared with their peers and thus have more frequently the opportunity to consume media that is not appropriate for their age and can increase the propensity to violence.

The Media Centre has a wide range of possible projects on the subject of "Violence in the Media". However, disadvantages young people and families do not mostly come along to the Media Centre. They are more likely to be reached by schools and youth facilities. The Media Centre can first and foremost offer institutions material and specialist speakers on all aspects of media literacy.

### **Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media**

In the past few years various studies have been conducted in the DG to provide information on a range of topics. These have included drugs and addiction, social problems, media, violence and poverty.

## **6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

Youth work is the main agent of youth policy in the German-speaking Community. All funded youth organisations promote the value of non-formal and informal learning through youth center activities, organised youth work, outreach youth work and youth information.

In that sense, awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work is done by the main actors in the youth field through their daily activities: youth organisations, youth centres, the Youth Office, youth information points, and the Council of the German-speaking Youth are responsible for disseminating information amongst young people.

## Awareness raising initiatives

The aim of the part-project "Expansion of the Initiatives in the Area of Lifelong Learning" of the first implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK I), that was supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) was the awareness raising of adults in the German-speaking Community (DG) to lifelong learning. Over and above that, access to education information has been improved, above all by professional development guidance. Here people interested in professional development receive comprehensive information, guidance and advice on their professional development plans. The guidance provision also includes skills analyses. Parallel to this, information platforms such as the Professional Development portal (Weiterbildungsportal) with the Professional Development database on the internet and the Professional Development Manual have been (further) developed. For awareness raising, among other things the "Sommernacht der Sprachen" (summer night of languages) was started.

Against the background of demographic change, extended working life and with a view to the emerging shortage of specialised labour, it is the job of the European Union (EU) to promote lifelong learning even more strongly by emphasising throughout Europe the "non-formally" and "informally" acquired skills of the citizens more strongly by the introduction of "validation systems".

The main target audience for validation are people who have no to low qualifications but already possess many skills and capabilities from experience; people who would like to change professions and new arrivals whose foreign diploma has not been recognised in Belgium.

In the project development, care is taken that people with a disability also gain access to the system. All citizens of the German-speaking Community are to have paths and prospects flagged up to them that enable them to have their non-formally and informally acquired skills to be recognised.

In addition, care is taken in the project development that, irrespective of the validation system to be created, the classical school system retains its high importance.

Learning results that have been acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts can be used by means of validation. For this the government of the German-speaking Community will set up a central validation point within five years of the law coming into force. Then the functioning and procedure of the validation is still to be laid down.

## 6.10 Current debates and reforms

### "Good staff for good schools"

School heads and members of staff regularly come up against the limits of current public service law. The Regional Development Concept (REK II) diagnoses that current statutory regulations give very little leeway in recruitment and little job security at the start of the career.

The "Good staff for good schools" concept lays down the guidelines for modernisation of public service law. The aims of the new concept:

- Strengthening the schools' autonomy
- Promotion of teamwork in teaching
- Support of career beginners
- New forms of career development.

### **DG acquires a scientific institute**

In May 2016 the government of the DG signed an agreement with the Catholic University of Leuven (KUL) and the University of Cologne on the creation of a Scientific Institute in East Belgium.

The new institute:

- is the point of contact and platform for queries in the area of scientific research. Inhabitants, institutions and businesses from the DG can turn to the Institute.
- is the interface between interested persons and universities: queries from the DG are passed on.
- This close cooperation reinforces the transfer of knowledge between the project partners.

A member of staff of the KU Leuven will work in Eupen as the coordinator for the Institute. The project is expected to run for 4 years (until the end of 2019). The project partners will then decide on the continuation of the Institute.

### **DG and FH Aachen sign cooperation agreement**

On 2 February 2016 the Aachen University of Applied Sciences and the government of the German-speaking Community signed a cooperation agreement on the basis of which both partners want to expand and deepen their cooperation in the next few years.

The agreement will serve as a basis for future cross-border cooperation and provides for the DG and the FH Aachen to cooperate in the following five fields:

- Training and development of technical teaching staff
- Advising businesses in the area of application-oriented research and development
- Professional development opportunities for management staff of SMEs
- Further development of existing training courses and creation of new dual degree courses
- Increasing the visibility of the FH Aachen in the DG.

## **7. Health and Well-Being**

The German-speaking Community, just like the other two communities of Belgium, is responsible in its area for health policy. The German-speaking Community is responsible for:

- care policy within and outside care institutions (hospitals, retirement homes)
- health education and health promotion and
- preventive medicine (preventive actions)

In the health area, alongside the specialist medical and paramedical staff, numerous organisations and services work that have specific tasks and are subsidised to do this by the German-speaking Community. Here the Ministry of the German-speaking Community is responsible for guiding, subsidising and inspecting these health services.

With regard to notifiable infectious diseases, the Ministry takes on the following tasks: monitoring notifiable infectious diseases and ordering medical measures that may be necessary, for example in the case of meningitis, tuberculosis etc.

Furthermore, the Ministry plans and executes its own campaigns in terms of national health. The German-speaking Community also subsidises building and equipping measures in the two hospitals in the German-speaking area as well as the emergency doctor service in Eupen and St. Vith.

### **7.1 General context**

#### **Main trends in the health conditions of young people**

##### **Addiction and drugs**

An important matter for the German-speaking Community is preventing addictive behaviour. In cooperation with groups such as the Working Group on Addiction Prevention and Dealing with Life's Challenges ("ASL"), the centre for the healthy development of children and young people (Kaleido-DG) and the schools, concepts are

being developed and campaigns carried out to counter addictive behaviour and for building resilience especially in adolescents.

Currently priority is given to the legal drugs alcohol and tobacco as a study has shown that in this respect there is a particular need for action in the DG. (Source: Risikoverhalten Jugendlicher: Ergebnisse der Befragung in der Euregio Maas-Rhein 2013 (Risk Behaviour of Young People: results of the survey in the Meuse-Rhine Euregion 2013), lögd (state institute of public health, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany): Scientific Series - Volume 18).

The subject of "drug use" has been incorporated into the youth strategy plan among other things because of the worrying results of an Euroregional study on the addictive behaviour of East Belgian young people. On the subject of "drugs" the following actions are to be taken:

- Organisation of a cross-border day of action on the subject of "Young People and Drugs" for actors from the youth area;
- Expansion of the networking in the DG on the development of new approaches for prevention and awareness-raising on the subject of "drugs" in the DG.

### **Emotions and self-image**

The "Emotions and self-image" focus has been included in the youth strategy plan so that young people learn to accept themselves with all their strengths and weaknesses. It is precisely this state of affairs that is intended to empower them to participate in a community as, to quote the words of the US philosopher John Rawls: self-respect is the most important social primary good. (John Rawls: Theorie der Gerechtigkeit (Theory of Justice), Frankfurt am Main, 1975.)

- Promoting projects on the subject of "Emotions and Self-image" for young people
- Developing region-wide support provision for full-time workers from the youth and social area
- Expanding networking in the DG

## **7.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Health is one of the so-called "personal" matters which have been transferred under the state reforms from the federal state to the Community. Thus the German-speaking Community, just like the other two communities of Belgium, is responsible in its area for health policy, with the exception of some areas that continue to fall in the area of responsibility of the federal state (matters such as hospital legislation, the State Office for the Disabled and Health Insurance LIKIV, vaccination regulations etc. continue to be governed uniformly for all at national level).

The German-speaking Community is responsible for:

- care policy within and outside care institutions (hospitals, retirement homes)
- health education and health promotion and
- preventive medicine (preventive actions)

In the health area, alongside the specialist medical and paramedical staff, numerous organisations and services work that have specific tasks and are subsidised to do this by the German-speaking Community. Here the Ministry of the DG is responsible for guiding, subsidising and inspecting these health services.

With regard to notifiable infectious diseases, the Ministry of the DG takes on the tasks that are comparable with those of the public health authorities in Germany: monitoring notifiable infectious diseases and ordering medical measures that may be necessary, for example in the case of meningitis, tuberculosis etc.

Furthermore, the Ministry plans and executes its own campaigns in terms of national health. The DG also subsidises building and equipping measures in the two hospitals in the German-speaking area as well as the emergency doctor service in Eupen and St. Vith.

### **7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

#### **National strategy(ies)**

##### **National strategy for the promotion and support of sport and movement among young people**

The diversified sport provision in East Belgium requires the public authorities to provide differentiated and adapted financial support that relates in equal measure to grass roots, school, competitive, disabled and senior citizens' sport.

Around 250 clubs form the basis of sport East Belgium. The sports played in the clubs are very varied. The clubs are organised at municipality level in the form of sports councils, sports federations or sports communities or can join one of the 16 recognised associations devoted to a specific sport.

Four competitive centres in various sports (tennis, apparatus gymnastics for boys and girls as well as acrobatics, sport for the disabled and chess) introduce children, young people and adults to competitive sport in East Belgium. The reform of the competitive training centres in 2005 and 2006 has enabled some young sport talent trained in the centres of East Belgium to risk the next step and sign up to the sport schools that exist both in Flanders and in the French Community and are geared towards competitive sport.

Sport for people with a disability is particularly promoted in thirteen specially recognised sports clubs. A competitive training centre particularly geared to sportsmen and women with special needs looks after these differently abled but no less ambitious sportsmen and women.

East Belgium has already been taking part in "Be Gold", a cross-community project for the promotion of young sports talent, for some years. "Be Gold" aims to finance specific promotion projects and measures in the area of the development, progression and support of young sports talent in the medium and long term and to do it with respect to a top 8 placement at the Olympic Games.

A cornerstone of sports promotion is the quality assurance of the trainers and training supervisors in the clubs. For this purpose the Ministry of East Belgium draws up an annual training and development programme together with the recognised sports associations and the clubs. Here young people from the age of 15 can participate and be trained as a training supervisor for grass roots sports or a specialist sport trainer.

Campaigns for the promotion of grassroots sport as well as the "Die DG wird FIT, ich mache MIT!" [The DG is getting FIT, me too!"] campaign which has been conducted for some years or by the "Week of Sport" first proclaimed by the European Union in 2015, encourage the active participation of as many citizens as possible in movement activities and round off the initiatives of the DG. The "European Week of Sport" has taken or will take place in East Belgium in 2016 and 2017 too. This is intended to propagate sport and physical activity at all levels. The European Week of Sport 2015 and 2016 was a great success not only for the European Union. In East Belgium too, many clubs and sports organisations joined in and offered taster training modules in the various sports for all age or ability groups.

Sport in East Belgium is governed by the Sports Decree of 19 April 2004. The Sports Decree has been developed with the involvement of the Sports Council of the German-speaking Community. It promotes among other things a range of recognised sport organisations such as local sport councils and sport associations and provides for special grants for the maintenance of the intra-community and international contacts of the sport clubs and sport associations, for the organisation of sports holiday camps, open air

classes and competitive training centres. It likewise supports projects in top-level, grass roots and school sport.

The provisions for the sport associations provide for a basic grant and additional funds that are linked to various conditions and specifications. This also includes a grant of EUR 1000 to carry out projects in the area of working with schools.

The Sport Council of the German-speaking Community, the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee, which coordinates the nomination and support of Belgian sportsmen and women for the Olympic Games and the Youth Olympics, receive ongoing funding provided based on the existing legislation or on contracts.

The promotion of a wide range of projects by the clubs and sports associations occupies a large place in the government programme in East Belgium. These include in particular, holiday and sports camps, training camps for preparing for championships and competitions as well as activities as part of international and intra-community relations.

The Programme Decree of 24 February 2014 has set out new regulations from scratch for the promotion of top-level sport in the Sport Decree. Like the other communities of the country, from 2014 East Belgium has introduced a three-level system for supporting top-level sport. It is planned that sportsmen and women will be given the opportunity to be classified into an A, B or C squad status. Children and young people who have already reached a high sporting level in their sport, are performance-focused and have been identified as talents by the respective sports associations fall into the category of the C squad. In the area of the B squad athletes are young people and adults who have already reached a high national and international level in the sport discipline and can demonstrate a significant prospect of increasing their performance. In the highest category are the A squad athletes. In this category are classified young people and adults who, because of the performance they have already achieved in a sport, have the prospect of participating and a promising placement in European championships, world championships, Olympic Games or Paralympics. While at the C squad athletes level the emphasis is primarily on improving the training conditions (including possibilities of release from school), the athletes classified into the B squad or A squad may also have benefit of individual funding. The classification of the sportsmen and women is carried out on the basis of criteria agreed with the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee and the French community. Over and above that, the German-speaking Community contributes annually to the accommodation and catering costs of squad athletes who are registered at recognised competitive training centres. This contribution is EUR 17 per day and per C squad, B squad or A squad athlete for a maximum of 180 days of an academic year.

In the area of team sports a revision of the applicable legislation has likewise been carried out. Sports clubs that have at least one team in the highest playing class, conduct active youth work and whose sports association does not have a training centre, can benefit from additional funding. Here the funding of the clubs is geared to the number of youth teams and the qualification of the trainers employed in the club's youth teams and teams in the highest playing class over a period of ten months.

Subsidies for participation in or toward the organisation of international championships are distributed over around 50 initiatives annually. Primarily sportsmen and women and teams that have qualified at national level for international tasks are considered.

Annually around 35 training camps are organised domestically and abroad by sports clubs for their members.

In total 22,106 East Belgians (as of 2012) have joined a sports club in their nine municipalities. About 40 % of them are under 18. Of the schoolchildren in the German-speaking Community about 60 % are active in a sports club.

Furthermore, in East Belgium there is also cooperation between club sport and schools. The initiatives within the scope of a time-limited and project-linked "School-Club" cooperation activity are financially supported and get a great response. In the last few

years, initiatives in sports such as orienteering, judo, tennis, basketball, gymnastics, cycling, karate and shooting have been carried out.

## **Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

### **Physical education in schools**

Alongside the compulsory 2 hours of sport each week, which has to comply with the specifications of the framework plans, the "Fit School" project, which was newly initiated this year, aims to bring more movement, sport and games into East Belgium's schools. School is the only place where enthusiasm for movement can be aroused in all children. This is where the "Fit School" project starts. The participating schools build a range of movement activities into every school day – before, during, between and after lessons. Plus they design the school playground and surrounding playing areas together with the pupils to make them more movement friendly.

If a school carries out 12 activities in the school year, it receives the "Fit School" award, for 17 activities it is even designated "Top Fit School".

After the successful completion of a pilot phase last year, this school year 12 primary schools have registered to take part.

The project was officially launched as part of the European Week of Sport - i.e. at the start of the school year 2016-2017.

## **7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition**

### **National strategy(ies)**

There are currently no national strategies encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition in the German-speaking Community of Belgium.

### **Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people**

**Mission statement on sustainable nutrition in community education** ([Leitbild zur nachhaltigen Ernährung im Gemeinschaftsunterrichtswesen](#))

The DGG Service and Logistics has therefore worked out a mission statement with working groups from all schools, which applies to all schools in the community teaching sector. It refers to the school restaurants as well as the snacks sold at the kiosk and the educational activities.

The mission statement includes eleven points:

- Selection of foods that promote concentration, attention and vitality;
- Adaptation of the nutritional supply to children with disabilities or medical pathologies (especially consideration of allergies); for this purpose, ideally, own jobs should be provided for;
- Adjusting the nutritional supply to the age of the children;
- Promotion of regional food culture and at the same time an intercultural offer;
- Application of gentle cooking processes;
- Priority for local and regional products;
- Priority for organically grown products;
- no exotic and energy-consuming products;
- Priority for fair trade products;
- Compliance with further sustainability criteria (eg packaging);
- common sense in the case of conflicting goals (eg weighing sustainability vs. fair trade product, regional vs. organically grown products).

### **Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools**

Checkups, vaccine protection and dental hygiene,... Parents can do a lot for the health of their child. The health of children has improved significantly in recent decades. A crucial

part of this is the services of lawmakers and organizations like Kaleido, which parents can use for their children. The health examinations and vaccinations are free.

### **Peer-to-peer education approaches**

There are currently no specific peer-to-peer education approaches to healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition in the German-speaking Community.

### **Collaboration and partnerships**

There are currently no specific collaborations or partnerships on the subject of healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition in the German-speaking Community.

### **Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people**

Kaleido

## **7.5 Mental health**

### **National strategy(ies)**

#### **Improving the mental health of young people**

For young people with mental illness there is targeted assistance in the German-speaking Community.

#### **The Social-psychological centre (SPZ)**

The SPZ is a public counselling and therapy facility. The services are aimed at adults, children and young people, individuals, couples, parents and families.

The SPZ provides assistance with mental health problems and interpersonal difficulties:

Stress and pressure, anxiety and depression, behavioural disorders, educational difficulties, questions on drug taking, dependency and addictive behaviour, mental illness, family conflict, separation or estrangement, sexual difficulties, suffering violence etc.

The activity covers:

individual psychological counselling for young people and adults, psycho-social support, partnership consultation, family and parent consultation, child diagnosis and therapy, out-patient psychological care and group therapy.

Various occupational groups...

The SPZ brings together various occupational groups in one location: psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. The members of staff are trained in different specialist areas.

The first consultation gives the clients the opportunity to describe their difficulties, concerns and expectations. At the first consultation, client and counsellor plan how to proceed. From that, the counsellor will discuss the request and range of counselling services with his/her specialist colleagues.

The SPZ staff are bound to professional secrecy.

#### **Psychiatric treatment at the St. Josef clinic in St. Vith**

The clinic in St. Vith has a psychiatric ward with 30 beds. This ward provides acute inpatient treatment and therapy for adults. Depending on the case, young people from 16 years of age are also accepted.

The functions:

- Diagnosis of illness

- Therapeutic services ranging from drug therapy to psychotherapy, art and ergotherapy
- Social and parent counselling

The Federal State finances both the inpatient service at the St. Josef clinic and the psychiatric day clinic. The patient's own contribution is largely covered by health insurance. As with any other stay in hospital, there is just a remaining amount to pay.

## **7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks**

### **Policy framework**

The basis for health prevention in the German-speaking Community is the Decree of 1 June 2004 on health promotion and medical prevention ([\*Dekret vom 1. Juni 2004 zur Gesundheitsförderung\*](#)).

By health promotion, the decree understands any action that aims to give people a higher degree of self-determination over their own health and thereby strengthen their health.

By medical prevention, the decree includes operational strategies that aim to prevent diseases or their development and to reduce the risk group as soon as possible.

The Department of Health of the Ministry of the German-speaking Community may collect and use personal data on health, in application of said Decree and the [Act of 8 December 1992 on the protection of privacy in relation to the processing of personal data](#).

### **Stakeholders**

#### **Health Promotion Board**

The decree of June 1, 2004 also called the Health Promotion Board into being, made up of health sector representatives, consumer protection, health carefunds and Kaleido East Belgium (Center for the Healthy Development of Children and Youth). Representatives of the government and the Ministries belong to the advisory council in an advisory capacity. The term of office is four years.

#### **Guidance to stakeholders**

The Health Promotion Board advises the government on issues of health promotion on its own Initiative or on their request.

Also on its own initiative or at the request of the government, the Advisory Council can develop proposals for the implementation of the health promotion concept mentioned in the Decree and act as a link between actors in health promotion.

The government must submit to the advisory council all drafts of preliminary declarations and rule-taking in the field of health promotion as well as the preliminary drafts adopting the concept of its thematic priorities.

#### **Target groups**

No specified target groups.

#### **Funding**

The [decree of June 1, 2004](#) determines that government institutions and organizations can get subsidies if they:

- are constituted as non-profit associations within the German-speaking Community;
- are active in the field of health promotion;

- have qualified personnel who meet the minimum requirements set by the government;
- accept the government's control over the application of the decree.

Annual action plans are agreed upon with the various organisations that define their work priorities and should help avoid double offers in the German-speaking Community.

In addition to annual funds, the government can grant funds for individual projects, if those:

- were approved in advance;
- are in line with the health prevention concept;
- correspond to the priorities defined by the government.

## **7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly**

PMS centres, health centres and social services supporting children and young people have been modernised and restructured

The DG wants to meet its own requirement to offer children and young people fair access to education, the best possible development prospects and the most efficient support systems irrespective of their social origin.

Included in the project right from the start: the staff of the PMS centres, health centres and social services supporting children and young people at the kick-off event for the future project in the Ministry.

Based on this assumption, there arose in the DG, as part of the large-scale citizens' dialogue for the development of the Regional Development Concept REK, the vision of a new "Integrated Service", which has as its target the early promotion of the healthy physical and social development of all young people in the DG between 0 and 20 years of age. By "early" is meant preventive and covers measures that start at an early stage in the development of the child (in some cases already before birth, e.g. by information for and care of pregnant women) or a possible incipient negative development (e.g. by making young people more resilient against possible addictive behaviour).

At the focus of this preventive work is, therefore, the promotion of the wellbeing of children and young people by supporting individual skills and resources and by the creation of development-promoting environment and living conditions in all primary spheres of life. This includes crèche, nursery and school just as much as family, neighbourhood or community.

The new service has become a direct point of contact for children, young people and their parents. It is also available in a supporting and advisory capacity to school management teams and teachers in matters of development and health promotion in schools and training centres.

Different services from different responsible bodies have joined together for the good of the young people and their families. An interdisciplinary approach which also clarifies the mission of the best possible promotion of the healthy development of the young people by society as a whole.

### **The PMS reform in the context of the REK**

For the purpose of the implementation of the Regional Development Concept (REK), which formulates a future vision for the DG as a border, education, solidarity and living region, the government has defined 16 future projects with 48 part projects in a first phase.

One of the part projects relates to the modernisation and restructuring of the PMS and health centres as well as the social services supporting children and young people. It is one of three part projects of the future project "Fair Access to Education".

In REK volume 3 the objective of this part project has been defined as follows:

"In the interest of the whole education and training system and in the interest of all children and young people, the available staffing and material resources are to be bundled and used in such a way that the various tasks can be executed by all those affected in an equally efficient and qualified way. Synergy effects should be used by checking how far the different services can be networked with each other. Also the possibility of creating a new joint facility will be investigated. In any case the aim is the improvement of the social-psychological and health care of the children and young people and their parents."

The REK future project "Social Services Hand in Hand" covers on its side aspects of health promotion and prevention and is thus closely linked with the part project on the restructuring of the PMS centres, health centres and social services supporting children and young people.

## **7.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **Future prospects for sport in East Belgium**

Initiatives in school and grass roots sport are conducted by the Sport department of the Ministry in cooperation with various partners.

For the Sport area, the main topics includes anti-doping and the combination of sport, health and balanced nutrition.

Further provision for active families but also modern and contemporary initiatives for young people and children are being developed.

Talent promotion and sports facilities development need regular guidance and reflection. It is necessary to stay abreast of the society's challenges and appropriate provision and concepts are being developed.

In particular comprehensive and sustainable planning for the sports facilities infrastructure to be promoted in future is of primary importance.

## **8. Creativity and Culture**

At the centre of the local cultural activities is without doubt the active special-interest group life in East Belgium. In all communities there are music, singing and theatre clubs and dancing groups. In total East Belgium has around 200 clubs and groups with which the local residents strongly identify. Almost 50 clubs are devoted to keeping traditions alive, most of them have committed to participating in the carnival. In line with the Rhineland tradition, the carnival in East Belgium is colourful, lively and down to earth.

Alongside the vibrant life of special-interest groups, many professional artists and cultural organisations are based in East Belgium - such as arsVitha, the Agora Theatre, Irene K. or Chudoscnik Sunergia. They facilitate a varied programme of events with concerts of all genres, art exhibitions, dance or theatre festivals.

### **8.1 General context**

#### **Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation**

##### **Cultural education**

The government of the German-speaking Community recognises the importance of cultural education both for the personal development of children and young people and for society (e.g. in the area of the integration of people with migration backgrounds or people with disabilities).

Therefore, in cooperation with the Ministry's Department of Culture and Youth, the Minister of Culture Isabelle Weykmans has attached importance in the development of

the decree on the promotion of culture in the German-speaking Community to cultural education being taken into consideration in all areas (promotion of professional cultural bodies, promotion of special cultural projects, promotion of youth culture etc.).

Since the Culture Promotion Decree, cultural education and communication of culture have been the task of the numerous active funded service providers such as cultural centres, event promoters, producers, amateur art associations, music academy, creative workshops, adult education establishments, artists, museums, the Autonomous University (AHS) artistic sites etc. Now the schools have to be integrated into this process by bringing the cultural opportunities into the educational establishments. In view of the important social task of cultural education and the broad range of actors, an inventory should be made and a round table with the actors involved organised.

"Culture Makes the school" is a project that aims at facilitating cultural experiences for children and young people. The schools can freely book cultural projects from the catalogue drawn up by the Ministry.

Cultural education is intended to inspire enjoyment of art particularly in children and young people and potentially discover and promote artistic talent. Cultural education makes a contribution to the self-fulfilment of the young people by enabling them to have access to art by learning various artistic techniques and giving them a closer understanding of various artistic genres. It also provides them with the necessary means and training for freelance artistic

activity so that they can develop their own creativity. Together with that, method skills and social and personal skills are reinforced.

### **Cultural and creative landscape**

Throughout Europe the promotion of the cultural and creative economy has come to the fore as the motor for location development, innovation and promotion of economic development that is an important unique selling point for the economic growth of a region. East Belgium is one of the "most creative" regions: according to expert opinion, the cultural and creative economy makes a very important contribution to economic value creation and creates a growth market for artists, cultural professions and creative professions. The cultural and creative sector is the bringer or even driver of jobs and creates independence. So its own future project has been developed for this market in order to put the focus on the promotion of the cultural and creative economy in East Belgium too.

#### *"How I Met My Idea"*

"How I met my Idea" organised by the Media Centre and the Business Development Agency (BDA) marks out the framework for the economic region in REK II: creative industry as economic opportunity. The range of events shows innovative business ideas, encourages independence and creates networks between the cultural and creative economists and likewise with the rest of the economy and society.

#### *"Culture in Focus"*

The seminars "Earning money creatively" or "How do I market my product and/or my service on the internet?" seminars serve three REK II intersections at the same time:

- Economic region: creative economy as economic opportunity (BDA and Media Centre)
- Educational region: increasing media skills (Media Centre)
- Border region: culture in focus and reinforcing networks (actors Department of Culture in the Ministry and Media Centre)

All these events, especially the workshops, help in the professionalisation of people working in the creative economy. In addition, they support independent entrepreneurship and innovative products, help in the search for new markets and promote business ideas. This takes place in cooperation with the BDA, which reaches new target groups for its

services by these events. Partners such as "smart.be" join to give targeted economic advice to the actors of the creative economy.

### Main concepts

**Cultural education:** cultural education means education for cultural participation. Cultural participation means participation in the artistically cultural life of a society in particular in its normal routines of life and actions in general. Cultural education is one of the conditions for a happy life in its personal as well as its social dimension. Cultural education is a constituent part of general education.

**Cultural and creative economy:** cultural and creative economy covers the cultural and creative businesses that are predominantly commercially oriented and deal with the creation, production, distribution and/or media dissemination of cultural/creative goods and services. The economically connecting core of any cultural and creative economy activity is the so-called creative act. By this is meant all artistic, literary, cultural, musical, architectural or creative content, works, products, productions or services that serve as an economically-relevant basis for the eleven sub-sectors.

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

Various legal bases:

#### The Culture Promotion Decree

The Culture Promotion Decree governs the promotion of the professional cultural bodies (cultural education, young talent and youth development), the promotion of cultural projects for young people, the promotion of cultural projects with schools, the promotion of amateur arts associations (promotion of young talent), the classification of the children's and youth choirs and much more.

In the last few years, cultural promotion in the DG has been strongly influenced by the Culture Promotion Decree coming into force and the accompanying financial enhancement.

On 1 January 2014 the Decree on the Promotion of Culture in the German-speaking Community came into force. The Decree does not define what culture is or what it should look like but creates a framework for the promotion of those creating culture in East Belgium.

Specifically, this Decree governs the classification and promotion of the professional cultural event organisers, the professional culture producers and the two cultural centres in the south and north of the German-speaking Community as well as the promotion of amateur arts organisations and the amateur art association.

Over and above that, the Culture Promotion Decree envisages further promotion programmes for special cultural projects, for anniversary celebrations, youth cultural projects, bursaries, cultural projects with schools and measures for improving access to culture. Schools can, for example, set up their own cultural project with artists, professional cultural bodies or amateur arts associations and obtain grants from the German-speaking Community. The cultural projects are only funded if they meet the prescribed criteria and if a completed application form has been submitted to the Ministry.

Apart from that, various projects in the artistic and cultural area, such as "Culture Makes the School" or "Bérénice - culture unites cultures!" are being developed and supported.

## Decree on Creative Workshops

Seven creative workshops in East Belgium provide a break from everyday life. Thus the workshops offer language, painting or fitness courses for children and adults. People garden, dance or research together – for example how Indians really lived.

## Museum Decree

The German-speaking Community has made it its task to recognise the museums that meet the ICOM criteria and to give them a special financial subsidy to support the professionalisation of the individual institutions. By means of these criteria, the museums aiming for recognition are classified into the different subsidy categories.

The museums recognised receive a lump sum per category towards the financing of their functioning costs. In addition, additional modular funding is laid down by decree, the granting and level of which is specified in an agreement between the DG and the museums in question and relate in particular to quality increase and staffing.

The Museum Decree, which governs the regulating and recognition of the museums, was renewed in 2007 and then passed in the parliament.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

### Cooperation of the Culture and Education departments in the "Culture Makes the School" project

The promotion programme "Culture Makes the School" was launched in the 2013-2014 academic year by the government of the German-speaking Community. As the project is completely financed by the government and takes place in schools, it reaches all children. Both children with a migration background and people with disabilities or people from socially disadvantaged situations come into contact with art and culture.

## 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

### Existence of a national strategy

In East Belgium there is currently no strategic paper on the subject of creativity and culture for young people. However, the strategy programme of the government (regional development concept) "DG - East Belgium Life 2025" provides for various measures in this area.

### REK II "Culture in Focus"

As part of the first implementation phase of the Regional Development Concept (REK I), a comprehensive reform process has been launched that has been anchored in law with the passing of the Culture Promotion Decree on 18 November 2013 in the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. With the government declaration in 2009, the promotion of culture has become a strategic priority for the DG government. In the implementation of the future project in the area of culture, the following three aspects were important:

1. Reforming the promotion of professional culture work,
2. Developing the promotion of youth culture,
3. Maintaining the cultural identity of the DG by recording the intangible cultural heritage.

### Scope and contents

With the reform of the promotion of professional cultural organisations, the aim of the REK I future project was to create the basis for further professionalisation and consolidation of full-time culture work. Via "developing the promotion of youth culture" an attempt should be made to give a forum to the creative work of young people. Since 2012 the "Kulturbeutel" has been promoting youth culture in the DG. Support is provided to projects by children and young people between 14 and 30 from all fields: music, film,

dance, theatre, literature, visual arts, events etc. The young people are both given advice on their projects and financially supported. The third focus for promotion, "maintaining the intangible cultural heritage of the German-speaking Community" aims to introduce measures for the systematic and sustainable maintenance of the intangible heritage. In 2014 the first results of the Dialect Atlas, produced by the German Studies Faculty of the University of Liège, was presented to the public. In 2013 the recording of the customs and traditions was started.

The future project "Culture in Focus" covers three areas: cultural education, mobility and creative leisure provision.

- Cultural education: inventory on cultural education in the DG, organisation of a conference, development of "Culture Makes the School", concept of cultural education in the DG
- Creative leisure provision: survey of the existing creative leisure provision for children and young people
- Mobility of artists: provision for cultural and creative economists, creation of an artist-in-residence concept, mobility of artists (here this not only involves young artists but also artists in general).

### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

Ministry of the German-speaking Community

### **Revisions/updates**

The Ministry is currently dealing with the evaluation of the "Culture Makes the School" programme to better adapt to the needs of the young people.

## **8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation**

### **Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture**

The German-speaking Community would like to enable young people to be active artistically and culturally not only at school but also in their leisure time. For this reason, the government and the ministry have together developed the "Kulturbeutel". Thanks to this promotion programme, young people obtain financial assistance for the implementation of their projects and can obtain advice if desired. To be supported, the projects must have a cultural or creative character and have been developed by a young person or a group of young people. The applicant must be between 14 and 30 years of age so he/she may be a minor. In this case, an adult must take the legal responsibility for the project. The young person or young people must in addition prepare, carry out and follow up their project themselves. They can, however, also be supported by a cultural or youth organisation. In addition to the application form submitted, the young person must present his/her project idea to a jury. The jury will be composed of three young people and a member of the ministry staff. Its task is to review the applications and advise the Minister of Culture Isabelle Weykmans in the selection.

### **Promotion of cultural projects for improving accessibility to cultural activities (Culture Promotion Decree, Art. 28)**

Cultural projects that aim to enable better accessibility to cultural activities for disadvantaged groups of the population can be funded.

The project must show total costs of a minimum of 1,000 euros, the level of the grant being a maximum of 50 % of the appropriate expenditure.

Those entitled to apply are legal persons that are promoted by the government within the scope of conventions or decrees in the social area, in cooperation with an artist, a promoted creative workshop, a promoted professional cultural body or an amateur arts organisation.

### **Culture Makes the School: payment of all fee costs by the government**

The promotion programme "Culture Makes the School" is fully financed by the government and takes place in all schools. This enables all children and young people to be reached, even children and young people with a migration background, with a disability or from socially disadvantaged situations come into contact with art and culture.

#### **Communication of culture** (Culture Promotion Decree, Art. 1)

The funded prof. cultural bodies are requested to involve themselves in the communication of culture. Some cultural bodies have introduced their own discount system for young people.

#### **Disseminating information on cultural opportunities**

The Ministry advertises the provision in the Culture Makes the School programme by means of a catalogue, which is published new each year and distributed in all schools in the German-speaking Community. Over and above that, the provision can be viewed online ([www.kulturmachtschule.be](http://www.kulturmachtschule.be)). This also applies to provision from the area of cultural heritage ([www.ostbelgienlive.be](http://www.ostbelgienlive.be), [www.ostbelgienkulturerbe.be](http://www.ostbelgienkulturerbe.be)).

Also the professional cultural bodies, creative workshops etc. advertise their activities both online and via the print media (flyers, ads in local papers etc.)

#### **Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people**

Almost 50 clubs are devoted to traditional customs, most of them have committed to participating in the carnival. In line with the Rhineland tradition, the carnival in East Belgium is colourful, lively and down to earth.

The local museums too (Raeren pottery museum, Ikob, ZVS Museum St. Vith, Göhlal Museum) hold culture promotion activities for young people.

Apart from visits to the IKOB and the pottery museum as part of Culture Makes the School, there are no particular measures or projects in this regard.

## **8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences**

### **Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training**

Cultural and creative skills are promoted in the German-speaking Community by a range of measures in the formal training and development area as well as access to a qualitative creative environment facilitated:

- Culture Makes the School
- Framework plans in the educational system
- DG Music Academy

Even in informal education there is a range of actors that regularly promote training and development provision for promoting cultural and creative skills: creative workshops, professional cultural bodies, Födekam (music organisation)

Over and above that there are specific training courses for experts in the areas of education, culture and youth

- Nursery and primary teacher training at the AHS
- Projects such as Prima Canta (project by the Music Academy, Födekam, AHS and DG <http://www.musikakademie.be/?p=3118>)

## **8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture**

### **Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities**

According to unanimous expert opinion, the creative economy makes a very important contribution to economic value creation and positively influences the development of the labour market, with the creation of both high and low-skilled jobs. Thus the cultural and creative economy in East Belgium represents a share of approximately 2.5% of the gross value creation in the gross domestic product. This makes East Belgium one of the "most creative" regions. It is also undisputed that the cultural and creative economy has an important influence on the innovative ability of the economy and creates a growth market for artists, cultural professions and creative professions. The labour market benefit is thus evident as the cultural and creative sector is the bearer or even driver of jobs and creates independence.

### **Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors**

"How I met my Idea": event for creative economists: various creative economists present their ideas and projects, platform for exchange of ideas.

Culture in Focus -"Earning money creatively": workshops for cultural and creative economists (2016, 2017) on various topics on all areas of "earning money creatively". The aim is intended to be to offer the creative economists the opportunity to become professionalised. The provision is free of charge for attendees.

## **8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies**

### **New technologies in support of creativity and innovation**

There are no policies, programmes, initiatives for making new technologies readily available to empower young people's creativity and capacity for innovation in the German-speaking Community at the moment.

### **Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

There are no policies, programmes, project or initiatives aiming at attracting young people's interest in culture, the arts and science through the use of new technologies in the German-speaking Community at the moment.

## **8.8 Synergies and partnerships**

### **Synergies between public policies and programmes**

There are no specific synergies between public policies and programmes in the fields of culture, education, health, social inclusion, media, employment and youth.

### **Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers**

Appart from specific projects, where youth organisations and the cultural sector cooperate from time to time, there are no partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers. Public funding devoted to such partnerships do not yet exist in the German-speaking community.

## **8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture**

### **Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities**

### **Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities**

#### **Bérénice: culture unites cultures**

Bérénice is an Interreg project funded by the European Union and the German-speaking Community and its aim is to oppose discrimination of any sort and promote social inclusion.

Bérénice brings together project partners from the social and cultural area who are convinced that culture and particularly performing arts play a decisive role in social inclusion and the integration of refugees. The bundling within the Bérénice network enables common approaches to be created at the Greater Region level.

This is done first of all based on an exchange of experiences and knowledge in colloquia and meetings in the Greater Region. Then the actors receptive to the project are identified (for the DG for example the Red Cross, the Youth Office etc.). The project partner on site (Chudoscnik Sunergia) gives regular updates to them on the cultural events, sets up a project group and thus activates further establishments. The cultural events with the Bérénice label are extended by a corresponding framework programme (e.g. exchange, workshop etc.).

The aims of Bérénice are thus not restricted to the project partners: the point is to extend the network of performance venues and social facilities of the Greater Region by as many as possible.

## **8.10 Current debates and reforms**

No current debates and reforms.

## **9. Youth and the World**

Young people's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up is not a political priority in the German-speaking community.

Just because the Government doesn't regulate youth cooperation and participation at global level, that doesn't mean that young people in the German-speaking Community aren't interested in global issues. The Youth Council of the German-speaking Community releases opinion reports from time to time on issues such as Human Rights, Sustainable Development and Green Production and Consumption.

There are also a few other associations that work on raising awareness on global issues.

### **9.1 General context**

#### **Main concepts**

Young people's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up is not a political priority in the German-speaking community. Therefore, there is no specific governmental strategy paper related to global issues and how these can be addressed by young people.

#### **Youth interest in global issues**

##### **The Youth Council**

Just because the Government doesn't regulate youth cooperation and participation at global level, that doesn't mean that young people in the German-speaking Community aren't interested in global issues. The Youth Council of the German-speaking Community

releases opinion reports from time to time on issues such as Human Rights (*Jugendrechte in der DG*), Sustainable Development (*Standpunkt zur Nachhaltigen Entwicklung*) and Green Production and Consumption.

## **9.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

Youth participation and contribution to policy-making and youth cooperation at global level and on global issues is ensured through the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community. Its main task is to increase youth participation in the German-speaking Community through participatory moments and active citizenship, in order to ameliorate the living conditions of all young people. All decision makers provide local and regional participative structures and participate in open fora, for example in the framework of the structured dialogue.

In executing its advisory and advocacy role, RdJ participates in several bodies on community and national level (e.g. youth welfare service; media; development cooperation, solidarity and integration; equal opportunities; family and intergenerational affairs). This participation allows for cooperation and participation on global issues in the German-speaking Community, in Belgium and in Europe.

A few years ago, the Youth Council took part in regular meetings at UN-level. Due to the size of the German-speaking Community and limited personnel resources, this is no longer the case.

### **Main actors**

Youth contribution to global processes of policy-making is not anchored by any decree in the German-speaking Community. For this reason, there is no specific governmental authority responsible for the implementation and follow-up of youth participation on global issues.

### **Public actors**

#### **RESI - Council for development cooperation, integration and solidarity**

The [RESI](#) aims to raise citizens' awareness of development cooperation, solidarity and integration, while encouraging the exchange and networking between local actors.

The RESI provides advice to the government and issues regular opinions on societal and development policy issues. Furthermore, it is responsible for

- the identification of potential needs for action
- the development and implementation of new sustainable projects
- raising awareness on chosen annual priorities through public forums and networks
- the evaluation of development cooperation in the DG
- promoting cooperation on EU-level as well as on national, regional and local level.

#### **Verbraucherschutzzentrale Ostbelgien (consumer protection organisation for eastern Belgium)**

The [consumer protection organisation](#)'s mission is to provide information to consumers on the range of goods and services on offer in their region, to conduct transfrontier surveys and comparison exercises, and to advise consumers on their rights should a problem arise with a supplier in a neighbouring country.

The kind of things dealt with by the centres range from the new opportunities available to consumers with the elimination of tax frontiers (e.g. purchases of goods or financial investment in other Member States) to the kind of problems which are always going to crop up (e.g. contract law and different commercial practices, difficulties over guarantees, etc.).

## Non-public actors

### Weltladen - fair trade shop

The [Weltladen](#) is a fair trade shop that raises awareness on global social, economic, ecological and cultural issues. The revenue acquired through the sale of fair trade products is used to fund small development projects in third world countries. They issue a local magazine "WeltladenAktuell".

### Oxfam Solidarity

[Oxfam Solidarity](#) is a belgian NGO that supports development projects. In order to build another type of globalisation, Oxfam Solidarity cooperates with partners in more than 35 Southern countries. These partners work for real social changes, and fight against poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, exploitation and exclusion. Daily involved among their populations, they try to improve the living and working conditions for a better future.

### *Oxfam Trailwalker*

[Oxfam Trailwalker](#) is a unique team challenge (for friends, family and colleagues) with one single purpose: to put an end to injustice and poverty. The challenge is to walk 100 km in teams of 4 in less than 30 hours, whilst raising 1.500 euros to support Oxfam-Solidarity's projects worldwide. Oxfam Trailwalker is a worldwide event that takes place in 9 countries, spread over 4 different continents.

### Amnesty International

In 2011, the human rights organisation [Amnesty International](#) has opened a [regional office](#) in the German-Speaking Community. They function as a hub for their investigations, campaigns and communications.

## 9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

### Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

No top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives that allow young people to exchange views on global issues in the German-speaking community have been implemented yet. Those exchanges happen through the Youth Council.

### Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

No top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives that allow young people to exchange views on global issues abroad have been implemented yet. Those exchanges happen through the Youth Council.

## 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

### Formal, non-formal and informal learning

#### Formal learning

Global issues are not treated as a separate subject but are covered mainly by the geography courses in secondary level schools. List of global issues that are prescribed by the [reference frameworks](#):

- sustainable development

Young people should be able to recognize the regularity of individual natural phenomena, develop a critical mindset on how to deal with natural resources, explain the need for a more sustainable development, describe areas of tension in our social space: nature-

humans, ecology - economy and their regional and global impact, describe measures to develop and protect our social space.

- interculturality

Young people should be able to analyze the social and economic impacts of a pandemic with regard to their own actions, to describe the interaction and consequences of past and present human factors and processes and to characterize spaces according to certain characteristics and compare them to each other.

### Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues are ensured through the Youth information centres and the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community. Some examples of past campaigns:

- 2017 campaign on migration: "Home versus new beginning - reasons for escape easily explained" (*Heimat vs. Neuanfang - Fluchtgründe leicht erklärt*)
- 2016 campaign on human rights: "Boring rights - complicated rights" (*Recht langweilig, Recht kompliziert*)

### Information providers

#### RESI - Council for development cooperation, integration and solidarity

The [RESI](#) aims to raise citizens' awareness of development cooperation, solidarity and integration, while encouraging the exchange and networking between local actors.

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- the identification of potential needs for action
- the development and implementation of new sustainable projects
- raising awareness on chosen annual priorities through public forums and networks
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### Non-public actors

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poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, exploitation and exclusion. Daily involved among their populations, they try to improve the living and working conditions for a better future.

### **Amnesty International**

In 2011, the human rights organisation [Amnesty International](#) has opened a [regional office](#) in the German-Speaking Community. They function as a hub for their investigations, campaigns and communications.

### **Key initiatives**

#### *Oxfam Trailwalker*

[Oxfam Trailwalker](#) is a unique team challenge (for friends, family and colleagues) with one single purpose: to put an end to injustice and poverty. The challenge is to walk 100 km in teams of 4 in less than 30 hours, whilst raising 1.500 euros to support Oxfam-Solidarity's projects worldwide. Oxfam Trailwalker is a worldwide event that takes place in 9 countries, spread over 4 different continents.

## **9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption**

### **Green volunteering**

#### **ASA**

Every year, the ASA-Program enables up to 250 young people from Europe to take part in its learning and qualification program dedicated to development education. The [ASA-Program](#) promotes exchange and learning about our One World through personal experience. It supports young and dedicated people to expand their skills and to contribute to sustainable global development based on respect for human rights and cultural differences. The ASA-Program is a very diverse program addressing different target groups and fields of activities. No matter what program, the participants are obliged to attend all seminars. Overall, the ASA-Program offers five subprograms: ASA-Basis, ASA-SüdNord, ASA-Kommunal, ASApreneurs and GLEN.

The ASA-Program offers a learning cycle consisting of training seminars, a practical phase and a follow-up phase including a global activity.

**Seminars:** In the seminars, which are held prior to, and after their three-month internship abroad, the participants learn about global interdependencies and international development. During the seminars they develop and try out new skills and new methods and get prepared for their internship abroad.

**Practical phase:** During the practical phase a team of two or three participants take part in a development project for three months. The projects take place within organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America or South Eastern Europe.

**Global activity:** After their time abroad the participants organize a global activity (e.g. a photo exhibition or a workshop at a school) in Germany or Europe to pass on their experience.

The ASA-Program is part of [Engagement Global - Service for Development Initiatives](#) and is mostly financed by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). ASA is co-financed by the German-speaking Community (on condition that one young german-speaking Belgian can take part). Engagement Global is a politically independent and non-profit organization.

## Green production and consumption

### DGMensa - Guideline on sustainable consumption in the public education system ([\*Leitbild zur nachhaltigen Ernährung im Gemeinschaftsunterrichtswesen\*](#))

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been warning of negative health and economic consequences for years because of the rise of severely overweight people in Europe.

A major cause of this development is deficient or excessive diet by means of ready-made foods and fast food - already increasing in children and young people. Awareness for health and quality of life should be raised especially for young people, for example about regional production and eating culture, fair trade and careful preparation of "healthy" food. At best, this creates a chain of sustainable nutrition that contributes to physical, mental and social well-being.

The guideline covers eleven points:

- Careful selection of foods that promote concentration, attention and vitality;
- Adaptation of the nutritional offer to children with disabilities or medical pathologies (in particular consideration of allergies);
- Matching the nutritional offer to the age of children;
- Promotion of regional food culture and, at the same time, an intercultural offer;
- Use of gentle cooking methods;
- Priority for local and regional products;
- Priority for organic products;
- no exotic and energy consuming products;
- Priority for fair trade products;
- Compliance with other sustainability criteria (eg packaging);
- Sanity and reason for conflicting goals (eg balancing sustainability versus fair trade product, regional vs. biologically grown products).

**"At youth camp, eat Walloon!"** (*Au camp, mangeons wallon!*)

The [APAQ-W](#) supports the summer camps organized by the recognized youth organisations by reimbursing part of their purchases of local products and of beef of Walloon origin.

Five euros per participant and per camp (maximum amount of 400 € / camp) can be reimbursed for the purchase of Walloon meat and or for the purchase of local products from Walloon agriculture. Purchases must be made on a farm, in a local point of sale, in a local butcher's shop, in a butcher's shop on the farm or at a baker's shop located in the Walloon Region. Both aids can be cumulated. Youth leaders and cooks are considered participants.

## 9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

### Intercontinental youth work cooperation

There are no programmes or actions that aim to promote cooperation and exchanges between organisations or individuals active in youth work in more than one continent in the German-speaking Community yet.

### Development cooperation activities

#### ASA

Every year, the ASA-Program enables up to 250 young people from Europe to take part in its learning and qualification program dedicated to development education. The [ASA-Program](#) promotes exchange and learning about our One World through personal experience. It supports young and dedicated people to expand their skills and to contribute to sustainable global development based on respect for human rights and cultural differences. The ASA-Program is a very diverse program addressing different target groups and fields of activities. No matter what program, the participants are

obliged to attend all seminars. Overall, the ASA-Program offers five subprograms: ASA-Basis, ASA-SüdNord, ASA-Kommunal, ASApreneurs and GLEN.

The ASA-Program offers a learning cycle consisting of training seminars, a practical phase and a follow-up phase including a global activity.

**Seminars:** In the seminars, which are held prior to, and after their three-month internship abroad, the participants learn about global interdependencies and international development. During the seminars they develop and try out new skills and new methods and get prepared for their internship abroad.

**Practical phase:** During the practical phase a team of two or three participants take part in a development project for three months. The projects take place within organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America or South Eastern Europe.

**Global activity:** After their time abroad the participants organize a global activity (e.g. a photo exhibition or a workshop at a school) in Germany or Europe to pass on their experience.

The ASA-Program is part of [Engagement Global - Service for Development Initiatives](#) and is mostly financed by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). ASA is co-financed by the German-speaking Community (on condition that one young german-speaking Belgian can take part). Engagement Global is a politically independent and non-profit organization.

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

No current debates and reforms.

## Glossary

- **Children:** people from the ages of 4 to 11 years old.
- **Social space analyses:** analysis of the life situation of young people of every local authority. The places and spaces of young people – their qualities, significances and functions – are investigated and the lives of specific target groups, individual in-crowds and cliques (e.g. foreign girls, younger teenagers etc.) examined. This is just a snapshot of the lives of the young people in the German-speaking Community that has no claim to completeness. The social space analyses are carried out by trained youth workers.
- **Young people:** people from the ages of 12 to 30 years old.
- **Youth Report:** Broad scientific study focussed on the situation of young people the German-speaking Community. To be published for the first time published in 2018, renewed every five years.
- **Youth Strategy Plan:** multidisciplinary strategic framework adopted and implemented by the Government every five years. It documents the environment of young people in the German-speaking Community and lays down targets and tasks which contribute to improving the situation of young people.
- **Youth work:** Youth work takes place out of school and during particular leisure activities and is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation. By providing appropriate opportunities, youth work promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, while taking account of their interests and needs. Youth work includes open youth work, outreach youth work, youth organisation and youth information.

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## Official websites

Ministry of the German-Speaking Community: <http://www.ostbelgienlive.be>

Government of the German-Speaking Community: <http://www.dgregierung.be>

Parliament of the German-Speaking Community: <http://www.pdg.be>

Federal State of Belgium: <http://www.belgium.be/>

## Youth Policy Governance

Youth Strategy Plan (*Jugendstrategieplan*): <http://www.jugendstrategieplan.be/>

Youth Council of the German-speaking Community (*Rat der deutschsprachigen Jugend*): <http://www.rdj.be/>

Youth Information Centres of the German-speaking Community (*Jugendinformationszentren*): <http://www.jugendinfo.be/>

Youth Office of the German-speaking Community (*Jugendbüro*): <http://www.jugendbuero.be/>

Structured Dialogue in the German-speaking Community: <http://strukturierter-dialog.be/>

## Voluntary Activities

EMJA - Volunteering platform (*Ehrenamtsbörse in der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*): <http://emja.be/>

## Employment & Entrepreneurship

Job center of the German-Speaking Community (*Arbeitsamt der DG*): <http://www.adg.be>

Wirtschaft und Sozialrat der DG: <http://www.wsr-dg.be/>