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YOUTH POLICY IN BELGIUM

A review by the international team of the Council of Europe

‘C’est plus compliqué que ça’

**A review of youth policy in Belgium by the
international team of the Council of Europe**

Gazela Pudar

Leena Suurpää

Howard Williamson

Manfred Zentner

Members of the international review team:

Georges Metz [CDEJ] (Chair)

Bjorn Jaaberg Hansen [CDEJ]

Jorge Orlando Queirós [CDEJ],

Kyrylo Ivliev [Advisory Council]

Camelia Nistor [Advisory Council]

André-Jacques Dodin [Secretariat]

Gazela Pudar [Researcher]

Leena Suurpää [Researcher]

Manfred Zentner [Researcher]

Howard Williamson [Co-ordinator]

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Some background to the Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy

‘C’est plus compliqué que ça’. This was the recurrent response to attempts by the Council of Europe international review team to clarify and confirm their understanding of a range of core youth policy issues in Belgium. The team itself was a complex construction, in an attempt to respect and respond to the specific political, geographical, linguistic and cultural characteristics of Belgium. Routinely, an international review team comprises six or seven individuals: nominations by the statutory bodies of the youth directorate (now the Department for Democratic Citizenship and Participation) of the Council of Europe – from the governmental committee and from youth organisations, a member of the Secretariat, two or three youth researchers or youth experts, and, in the past few years, the co-ordinator of the review process, who himself is active in youth research. The nominee from the inter-governmental steering group on youth (the CDEJ) is the designated chair of each review. But Belgium was different from any arrangements that have gone before. The international team for the youth policy review of Belgium was composed of no less than *eleven* individuals – three from each of the statutory bodies (though one of the youth organisations’ nominees, regrettably, was not able to take part), three youth researchers, the representative of the secretariat, and the co-ordinator.

The rationale behind this constellation was that the international team would be able to divide its focus, engagement and, critically, understanding, between the three language communities (which are also formal administrative Communities) of Belgium. In a sense, this meant conducting three rather separate ‘mini-reviews’, though the smaller teams were not so rigid that most members had no opportunity to witness youth policy activity in other parts of Belgium as well. Indeed, arrangements explicitly sought to provide as many team members as possible with some opportunity to gain at least a ‘feel’ for youth policy in contexts other than the one on which they were primarily focused. After all, a central tenet underlying the Council of Europe international reviews is that a team is interested in the lives of *all young people* within the boundaries of the country under review, not just those defined by administrative, cultural or political borders. Given many of the countries previously reviewed (for example, Estonia, Romania, Slovakia, Cyprus and Moldova), this has been an important principled stand.

The international review of youth policy in Belgium

But of course Belgium is, arguably, both different from as well as more complicated than that! Though its political and linguistic C/communities do anchor the core of ‘youth policy’ – at least in its sense of being cultural and educational practice – the international review team had also to take account of Regional activity and responsibilities that affect the lives of young people and, indeed,

policy and practice within the municipalities of Belgium. We attempt, with some anxiety and caution, to map this framework in our opening chapter that seeks to capture those ‘youth policy’ matters that remain at the federal level, while also delineating how other such responsibilities are divided between other administrative levels. These are addressed at different points in subsequent chapters. Whatever our efforts, we are humble enough to acknowledge that the situation is probably ‘plus compliqué que ça’!

The international review of national youth policy in Belgium is the 18th such review to be conducted by the Council of Europe. Each has contributed to the overall objectives of the review process as well as providing lessons that have shaped the evolution of the review process itself. The objectives are threefold:

- To provide a constructively critical perspective on the country under review
- To learn from the country under review, through examples of good practice or specific youth policy challenges
- To develop a European framework – not a blueprint – for thinking about youth policy

A Council of Europe international youth policy review now takes some eighteen months, not counting the intention to have a follow-up two years later. The first review, of Finland in 1997, took six months. That review was a venture (or adventure) into the dark. There was no model to follow. Gradually a process model has been established, but it is not cast in stone and is, almost every time, subject to revision for a variety of professional and pragmatic reasons. Initially, the early reviews built up a body of knowledge and understanding of ‘youth policy’, though this was constructed on a somewhat *ad hoc* basis and disseminated solely through the written (national and international) reports and through a presentation to the Joint Council of the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe (the joint meeting of the CDEJ and the Advisory Council, representing youth organisations). There was no preliminary, preparatory visit. There was no identification of priority issues. There was no National Hearing. There was no follow-up. After seven reviews, a clear framework for understanding and reviewing youth policy had emerged (see Williamson 2002):

- Concepts of ‘youth’ and ‘youth policy’
- Legislation and finance
- Structures for delivery
- Policy domains
- Cross-cutting issues
- Research, training and dissemination

This was, broadly, the framework that informed the deliberations of the next seven international reviews and they added further substance to it. For example, the influence of faith or military issues on ‘youth policy’ had merited little attention, and were perhaps not important, in the early reviews (of countries such as The Netherlands, Sweden or Spain), but they were more than significant in the reviews of countries such as Malta, Cyprus, Armenia and Moldova. However, it became increasingly apparent that, in trying to cover everything, there was a risk of the international reviews

interrogating nothing. The terrain for the reviews had become too broad, at the expense of depth. In order to address this, recent reviews have sought to focus on a small number of priority issues identified by the authorities in the host country and to highlight a small number of additional issues considered by the international team to merit in-depth commentary and reflection.

In the case of Belgium, the internal priorities identified were as follows:

In the Flemish Community:

- The divide in the level of schooling which causes a political and socio-economic dichotomy
- The ideological and cultural divide which makes that (still) some target groups are not reached: does multiculturalism work?
- The role of the government/public authorities: up to what extend should it be steering; what is it the citizen can and/or should expect? The positioning of Youth Work in society?

In the French-speaking Community:

- The Youth Policy Plan is currently in preparation in the French-speaking Community. The process is already engaged and will continue during 2011 at least. The Cabinet of the Minister for Youth would like to get feedback, comments and suggestions on the methodology, the content, the process on the way.

In the German-speaking Community

- Development of flexible instruments and methods, enabling a comprehensive and quality youth policy, based on knowledge and information - therefore:
- Two main projects of the actual youth policy: a) reform of formation and training (in youth work) of young people, youth workers, youth leaders and b) creation of a new framework for/of youth policy. Both should be reached by:
- The new funding decree for youth work. This decree will start in 2012. It will allow a better transversal approach in order to respect in a more holistic way young people's life, enhance participation of young people and participation of the youth sector in the design and in the implementation of youth work, allow evaluation on the basis of quality and not only on the basis of quantity, reinforce the participation of the municipalities in design and implementation of youth policy.

Specificities of Belgium

Belgium was the first federal country to be subject to an international review. Thus, while 'structures for delivery' had always exercised the minds of international review teams, the Belgium context produced different challenges. Previously, central decision-making on youth matters had sometimes been difficult to cascade to remote rural municipalities in the absence of effective regional structures (cf. Sweden), or had lacked the municipal capacity to make things happen (cf. Lithuania), or had been at least partially blocked by autonomous regional structures (cf. Spain). Here in Belgium, the international team experienced relatively autonomous authorities with different responsibilities for different youth issues that in turn were sometimes quite independent from, sometimes overlapping with and sometimes complementary to activity taking place at other

autonomous levels. There were times when even Belgian colleagues, sitting alongside members of the international team at presentations, appeared bemused by this complexity. They had always, previously, just taken it all for granted, but now – from more of a stranger’s perspective – realised how it might look through the eyes of those who were genuine strangers. Paradoxically, perhaps, the presence of strangers required the Belgian authorities to make the seemingly familiar strange – to evidence and explain what hitherto had been apparently quite self-evident.

And it is that ‘stranger’s eye’ that is brought to bear by the international review team on Belgium, as a whole and in relation to its maze of constituent parts: communities, regions, provinces, the federal government and the municipalities. The international review took place as Belgium ‘celebrated’ well over a year without a federal government¹, yet it has managed to sustain itself economically, politically, culturally and socially – in not the easiest of times. There is a stoicism, as well as humour, amongst the Belgians, in the land of Magritte, as Pascale Delwit, professor of political science at the Free University of Brussels, noted as a tentative coalition government was eventually formed:

Belgium is the capital of surrealism, and this long political crisis was typically surrealist, accompanied by a kind of general calm among citizens. When there was a hung parliament in 2010 in the UK, after six days people were saying ‘what’s happening?’ Here it lasted more than 530 days, with no mass movement in the streets, a calm pragmatic population that accepted the surrealist elements.

It is not our business to engage with the politics of Belgium, but we would wish to note a number of things that do bear on the idea and practice of youth policy. First, across the borders and boundaries that separate Belgium in many different ways, there is a discernible and laudable commitment to young people – in employment, health, education and leisure – that shines through. The opportunity structures for most young people in Belgium would almost certainly be the envy of many young people elsewhere. Secondly, even without a government, Belgium discharged its presidency of the European Union (shortly before the review, in the second half of 2010) with a sequence of outstanding events committed to young people: on youth work, children’s rights, youth employment, and youth mobility. And, for these events, it included not just the 27 members of the EU but also additional member states from the Council of Europe. Few outsiders would have guessed the persisting, possibly even strengthening, divisions within Belgium itself. And this is the third point: Belgium lies at the heart of Europe, and Brussels is the HQ of the European Union. No-one who knows anything about Belgium can escape the paradox that the unifying and integrating aspirations of Europe, through the EU, take place within a country that is itself ‘split’ in a variety of ways. And, however controversial, it may take a ‘stranger’s eye’ to highlight some of the inconsistencies, and perhaps inequalities, for young people that arise from living in one part of Belgium rather than another. That is a legitimate concern of an international review of national youth policy. We have always asked host countries to forgive our mistakes but to consider the issues that we raise. Here, perhaps, we should ask Belgium to temporarily fold up some of the traditional and established political umbrellas in order to view various professional and practical issues for young people through our lens, even if, for political necessity if not professional rationality, the umbrella has then to be extended once again.

¹ A government was finally formed – after 535 days without one – at the end of November 2011

Three different approaches of youth policy

In a somewhat narrow conceptualisation of 'youth policy', there are three distinct approaches in Belgium, developed under the auspices of the Flemish, French and German language speaking communities. So, as strangers, we repeatedly wondered if there is there any sense in which young people, or indeed any people, have an identity of 'being Belgian'?

More than ever, Belgium has become a place where people from the four corners of the world, with the most diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, meet..... [but] Few people in our country are really confronted with diversity. We are living parallel lives (Meys and Loopmans, no date)

These words, in some senses, capture the Belgian reality and the Belgian paradox, though they are of course not unique to Belgium and might indeed be applied as well to many other countries throughout Europe. As noted above, lying at the heart of Europe, centered by the European capital of Brussels, it clearly does attract a diversity of peoples, and promotes – in a very particular sense – diversity through its complex political and administrative arrangements that respect the language and culture of its constituent 'communities', yet simultaneously cements a range of divisions.

The national culture of Belgium is a synthesis... where one finds the genius of two races – the Romance and the Germanic – mingled, yet modified by the imprint of the distinctively Belgian. It is in that very receptivity – the fact that it has absorbed and unified the best elements of Latin and Teutonic civilization – that the originality of the Belgian national culture resides.

These distinctive marks of national culture, denoting the unity of a people, and serving, both in the Middle Ages and today, to distinguish the Belgian nation from the other nations of Europe, may be described as a common desire for independence and freedom, a jealous regard for those popular rights which serve as a guaranty of the continuance of independence and freedom, and a deeply religious spirit.

Van der Essen (1916, p.4)

Sometimes it is useful to step away from the specific context under discussion and to illustrate a point by reference to other circumstances. In his majestic book *Being Danish* (Jenkins 2011), the sociologist and anthropologist Richard Jenkins discusses the paradoxes of identity, a subject on which he commands a global reputation (see Jenkins 1996). Had he been writing about Belgium, he would have had to take on and consider a more formalised, as well as less formal, range of identities: being Belgian, being Flemish, Walloon, from Brussels or German-speaking Belgian, being Moroccan, being from Gent or Liège or Sankt Vith, being something else. As Jenkins notes in the context of Denmark, where the focal geographical and cultural point of his study was Skive in Jutland, there are many levels of 'Danish' identity. The same goes for Belgium.

If you are a young person in contemporary Belgium, some levels of identity are, inevitably, going to be more important than others. What will certainly be significant, whether or not you know it, will be the fact that you are subject to policy attention and service delivery on matters that concern and affect you, from a complex range of sources and levels – European, federal, regional, community and

elsewhere. As an individual young person, you probably accept what you have, positively or grudgingly, and are largely unaware that Belgian young people elsewhere in Belgium may have a rather different offer directed towards them. But we, as an international team of outsiders looking in, are interested in both the existing 'offers' available to young people and whether or not young people throughout Belgium have the same, or equivalent, access to support and opportunity. It does not take long to discover that structures, frameworks and institutional relationships are indeed complex but, despite (and certainly not because of) the complexity, they usually appear to work. At least that is the repeated internal assertion – youth policy, in its different forms across the communities, is considered to be sensible, rational and unproblematic. Nevertheless, it is the role of an international review to raise questions, plant thoughts, and advance issues where it considers that youth policy is perhaps not as robust and equitable as proclaimed – between and within different administrative contexts and political arrangements. During the international review, it became apparent that a great deal of policy, for young people and beyond, is currently subject to reflection, revision and reform. We would hope that our observations, where relevant, contribute to those debates.

The final point here is about the international review process itself. Most of the international team arrive 'cold', relatively or completely unfamiliar with the country concerned. Some will have done a bit of 'homework' on the internet and perhaps through other media, and usually, though this was not the case for Belgium, they will have had the opportunity to read an internally-produced National Report (instead Belgium provided a mountain of alternative paperwork, throughout the review process). Members of international reviews cannot help but become permanently attached to countries under review, and that commitment and attachment, coupled with the review activities themselves, produces an impressive body of knowledge in a surprisingly short time. Subsequently, there can be disputes, even 'battles', between the freshly-informed review team and those from the host country who defend themselves from attack on the grounds that the international review team does not really understand. Clearly, matters of factual error should be (and are) corrected as part of the process, but perceptions and perspectives do require debate, even if criticisms are ultimately abandoned, ignored or sidelined. The important point on which to conclude is that international reviews are *never* intended to undermine domestic youth policy in the country concerned. Both those inside the country and those in the international team share a common agenda and joint commitment. So while there is a moment in the process where they may have to agree to disagree, when it comes to presenting conclusions to an international audience, the position is one of joint endeavour. The late Peter Lauritzen, who co-ordinated the reviews in the early 2000s, described the relationship succinctly as one of 'critical complicity', the foundation of which lies in the mutual desire to improve the framework of opportunity and experience for young people both in the country hosting the review and in the wider Europe.

The federal structure of Belgium

"People who really understand the system are quite rare", the international review team was told at an early point in its deliberations. Below we strive to penetrate the complexity of the constitutional structure of Belgium and cautiously attempt to provide a 'simple' picture that may assist the external reader in making some sense of what everyone agrees is a complex system. Nonetheless,

as another respondent observed, “it may be a complex system but it is still functioning” – even without a government! Indeed, it does, according to the recent OECD Better Life Index, within which Belgium performs exceptionally and impressively well (see box):

Belgium performs very well in many measures of well-being, as shown by the fact that it ranks among the top ten countries in several topics in the Better Life Index.

Money, while it cannot buy happiness, is an important means to achieving higher living standards. In Belgium, the average household earned 26 008 USD in 2008, more than the OECD average.

In terms of employment, nearly 62% of people aged 15 to 64 in Belgium have a paid job. People in Belgium work 1550 hours a year, one of the lowest rates of the OECD. 63% of mothers are employed after their children begin school, suggesting that women are able to successfully balance family and career.

Having a good education is an important requisite to finding a job. In Belgium, 70% of adults aged 25 to 64 have earned the equivalent of a high-school diploma, around the OECD average. Belgium is a top-performing country in terms of the quality of its educational system. The average student scored 506 out of 600 in reading ability according to the latest PISA student-assessment programme, higher than the OECD average.

In terms of health, life expectancy at birth in Belgium is 79.8 years, half-a-year above the OECD average. The level of atmospheric PM10 – tiny air pollutant particles small enough to enter and cause damage to the lungs – is 21 micrograms per cubic meter, and is close to levels found in most OECD countries.

Concerning the public sphere, there is a strong sense of community and high levels of civic participation in Belgium. 93% of people believe that they know someone they could rely on in a time of need, just above the OECD average of 91%. Voter turnout, a measure of public trust in government and of citizens' participation in the political process, was 91% during recent elections; this figure is one of the highest in the OECD. In regards to crime, 7% of people reported falling victim to assault over the previous 12 months.

When asked, 76% of people in Belgium said they were satisfied with their life, much higher than the OECD average of 59%.

Nonetheless, there are still many complexities about Belgium that need to be unravelled and understood. Given the potential for multiple identities within Belgium, and the recurrent messages of division and separation around language, administrative ‘communities’, regions and, inevitably, politics, the international team – aware of recent well-publicised issues concerning Flemish separatism and student protests around political inertia – raised the matter of *Belgian* identity and citizenship. The response received was instructive:

Regarding citizenship, there were the protests largely orchestrated by young people, where the message was that they wanted to live in *this country* and felt that politicians were putting too many barriers between the communities. Political figures are being taken to task by young people. Young people have a stronger European awareness than older generations: they are travelling across borders much more easily than before. The structures of Belgium can seem a bit feudal to them.

Admittedly this is a particular category of young people: students from universities, not the vocational schools, or immigrant youth. So it may be just one particular perspective. We don't actually have an overview of what all kinds of young people in Belgium are thinking.

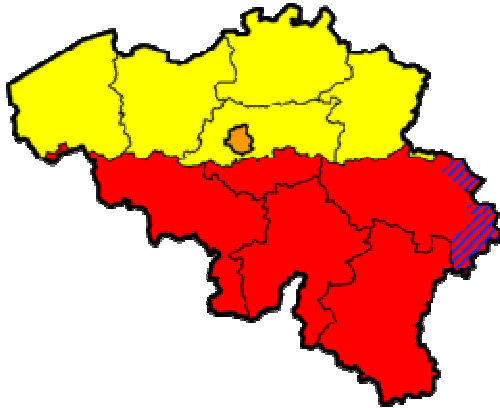
We had a far from consistent message on this front. Indeed, there were often countervailing views about the extent to which young Belgians were 'travelling across borders', particularly inside the country. But the observations above do point up the importance of not homogenising young people, a growing proportion of whom, coming as they do from immigrant backgrounds, may not have a natural affiliation to either of the two dominant language communities in French-Speaking Community and Flanders. As – if – they disperse from their current concentration in Brussels, existing separations may become more diluted, rather as has happened – albeit for rather different historical reasons – in the context of New Zealand, where the traditional tensions between Maori and Pakeha² are of little interest to immigrants from Greece, Vietnam or Indonesia.

It is clearly not the role of the international review team to comment *evaluatively* on the political, administrative and constitutional arrangements of Belgium, and we even venture carefully to *describe* them below, except insofar as they enhance or limit the social conditions of young people's lives. Those conditions do vary across the country of Belgium, according to different priorities and policies established by the various levels of decision-making authority that prevail.

There have been various 'rounds' of reform of the state of Belgium, a country that has a long history of foreign occupation and which is often described as forming the boundary, or the bridge, between northern and southern Europe, most sharply epitomised by a Dutch and French dichotomy. Indeed, differences in language, political orientations, civic arrangements and religion converge geographically on Belgium, a situation paradoxically compounded by the contemporary designation of Brussels (*de jure* just the city of Brussels municipality but *de facto* the Brussels region) as not only the capital of the federal state of Belgium (and, indeed, the capital of Flanders and of the French-speaking Community) but also the centre of what is currently a European Union of 27 countries.

Belgium is a federal state composed of three Communities, three Regions and four language areas. Clearly defined competencies are distributed between the three levels of governance, though the picture is rendered both more simple and more complex by some adaptations to this general rule. For example, since the geographical boundaries for the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region are co-terminus, responsibilities have been combined and unified. In contrast, there are specific French language 'facilities' within the 9 municipalities of the German-speaking Community and related language facilities for a number of specified municipalities adjacent to the boundaries between Flanders and the Walloon Region (Wallonia, or Wallonie). There are two French speaking municipalities adjacent to the boundaries of the German-speaking Community which have German language facilities. and between the French-speaking and German-speaking Communities of Wallonia.

² These relate to the wording of the Treaty of Waitangi 1851 which ceded Maori land to Queen Victoria of England – the Maori thought they were ceding 'governance'; the English translation proclaimed the securing of 'sovereignty'! It has been a bone of contention ever since.



The Flemish-speaking Community, comprising five provinces and 308 municipalities with some 6m inhabitants, lies to the north of the country, the French-speaking Community (with five provinces, 262 municipalities and a population of around 3.5m people) to the south and the German-speaking Community (some 74,000 people living in nine municipalities) to the East. The Brussels Region, a Dutch/French bi-lingual area comprising just over 1m people, is positioned geographically within Flanders, surrounded by the Flemish Brabant province (to the south lies the Walloon Brabant province!). It comprises 19 municipalities and is *not* a province. Alongside Wallonia (made up of the French-speaking and German-speaking Communities) and Flanders (co-terminus with the Flemish-speaking community), it is one of the three Regions of Belgium. Within the Brussels region, both the French and Flemish Communities have their own 'intermediary' institutions for administrative purposes. These sit below the Community level but above the municipal institutions. We were told that Brussels has four administrations: French and Flemish, French only and Flemish only: there is the Brussels-Capital Region, with its parliament and government responsible for regional competence matters, and then there are the three Community institutions, the French Community Commission (CocoF), the Flemish Community Commission (VGC), and the Common Community Commission (Cocom).

One respondent, when discussing Brussels, did acknowledge:

It is really difficult... the administrative structure in Brussels is really complicated, even for us! And at the moment it could actually be a bit easier because the Minister for Youth in the French-speaking Community is also member of the government of the Brussels Region. But the issues are different between Wallonia and Brussels, especially because of the young population in Brussels [where between one-third and two-fifths are under the age of 30]

The federal state has powers over matters such as foreign affairs, finance, justice, defence and social security. It also has 'residuary powers' over matters that may be new challenges for the country, such as migration, refugees and asylum-seekers. Beyond these overarching internal and outward-facing responsibilities, policy is the responsibility of Regions and Communities, while some implementation is carried out at provincial and municipal level.

One helpful way to think about the responsibilities and competencies of the three Regions and three Communities (despite the fact that, in Flanders, these are merged) is as follows. The Flemish, Walloon and Brussels Regions have competencies related to **land**: e.g. housing, the environment. The Flemish-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking Communities have competencies

relating to **persons**: e.g. culture, education, the use of language, youth policy and protection, and some aspects of welfare and public health. In the Brussels Region, as a bilingual (Dutch and French speaking) area, both the Flemish and French speaking Communities make provision in these policy domains.

Neither Regions nor Communities are more important than the other. Legislative power, determined under the Constitution, is distributed across the different levels of competence. Although there are some exceptions, both specific 'youth policy' and wider policies that relate to young people, are largely the responsibility of the three Communities. It is, therefore, there that we will start, with some detailed analysis of the Flemish-, French- and German-speaking Communities in turn, accommodating where necessary or relevant comparative commentary and reference to the Brussels Region (which has its own distinctive complexities, but within which both the French and Flemish Communities have specific competence, significantly in the youth field).

Readers may note some differences in style, structure and approach in these three substantive chapters. This is, in part, because they were drafted by different people, and it is also because youth policy derives, as anywhere else, from distinctive ideological, political, philosophical and cultural traditions, especially, as one colleague put it rather bluntly but illustratively, the contrast between Anglo-Nordic pragmatism and French/Latin abstraction! This is a point from which – especially in the context of Belgium – there is absolutely no escape. However, the focus and content of the three substantive chapters also differs on account of the questions to which each Community wanted the international review team to pay particular attention (see p.6). The custom of the international review process is to seek three particular policy priorities, but in the context of the French Community only one was chosen – albeit an overarching scrutiny of the youth policy sector and its future, as embodied within the Youth Plan. The questions proposed by the Flemish Community and the German-speaking Community were more detailed and related to more specific topics, contexts and levels of youth policy. This was a third, important, reason for the different approaches and reasoning advanced by the rapporteurs in 'their' distinctive contributions.

Finally, it is important to register what the international review team did *not* manage to do, see or hear. In just two visits, especially on account of the particularly complex policy structure of Belgium, it is clearly quite impossible to cover the whole field of youth policy with its diverse levels, competences and practices. In the very early planning for the review, various models for approaching it were discussed. These included quite separate reviews of the three Communities and a larger number of visits. For various reasons, other options were rejected as either inconsistent with the principles of country reviews or as impracticable given their financial and human resource implications. In the end, the international review team committed itself to a comprehensive agenda of visits and discussions with engaged authorities and practitioners (as well as with a few young people). Nevertheless, inevitably, there were gaps in these endeavours. Structurally, there was relatively little contact with the provinces and (with some exceptions) with municipalities. Substantively, the international review team sometimes gained the impression that group matters related to immigration and ethnic diversity were easily overlooked or considered too delicate issues to be discussed. There were other sub-groups with possible distinctive problems and challenges that seemed to be rather unobserved and almost 'passed over' in the youth field; gender issues are one example. Certainly, no comprehensive information was provided on these matters. Other arguably important youth policy issues were marginally presented to the international team: health; housing;

substance misuse; sport, arts and media-related issues (including social media); and sustainable development and environment. It needs to be said, of course, that any broadening of the basis of inquiry, within the parameters available, inevitably reduces the depth to which such inquiry can go. Early international reviews of national youth policy by the Council of Europe did seek to traverse an ever-expanding menu of issues; more recent reviews have agreed a focus with the host authorities and necessarily left some issues by the wayside.

One particular area of omission struck us as especially important to mention. No comprehensive information was provided on the issues related to youth cultural engagement outside recognized youth organizations, young people's own spaces and activities. This was particularly true in the context of the French-speaking Community. However, the French-speaking Community has a strong tradition of connecting youth and cultural policy approaches and domains, which gives an excellent platform for conceptual and political innovations in terms of youth engagement. The French-speaking Community could, indeed, be in the forefront in the European debate when it comes to the quest to rethink the conception of (and philosophies behind) youth cultural participation.

With these necessary caveats and explanations, the international review team hopes that its observations will offer a platform for the constructive debate around the paths required to further develop constructive and opportunity-focused youth policy throughout Belgium.

Chapter 2

Youth policy in the Flemish Community

Flanders is situated in the north of Belgium on 13.522 km², covering 41.5% of Belgium's territory in five provinces Antwerpen, Limburg, Oost-Vlaanderen, Vlaams-Brabant and West-Vlaanderen divided into 308 municipalities. Over 6 million inhabitants live in Flanders, which is about 58% of total Belgian population. Among them, 6% do not possess Belgian nationality. The Flemish capital Brussels is also the capital of Belgium. Antwerp, with more than 480.000 citizens, is the largest city in Flanders, followed by Ghent, Bruges and Leuven. The official language is Dutch.

Youth in the Flemish community is defined as the age group up to 30 years old, although different definitions are used in specific contexts. There are approximately 2.1 million young people, which represent 34% of the Flemish population in Belgium.

Unlike the French-speaking Community and the Walloon Region (which are separate administrative levels), the Flemish Region was officially merged with the Flemish Community in 1980, with one parliament and government, exercising both regional and community competencies. Hence, in the Dutch language area a single institutional body of parliament and government is empowered for all except federal and specific municipal matters. The Flemish Community exercises its powers on the territory of Flanders and in the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region (usually shortened to the Brussels Region).

The Flemish Parliament has 124 members from 9 different parties and represents the highest legislative body responsible for passing acts of parliament. Since 2009, a coalition of 3 parties (CD&V, sp.a and N-VA) under the Minister-President Kris Peeters rules the Flemish Community. The Flemish government consists of 13 ministries covering 13 policy areas, though it has only nine ministers at present. One of these policy areas is *culture, youth, sport and media*, whose ministry is in charge of youth policy in the Flemish community. The current minister is also in charge, from the Flemish-speaking side, for the coordination of the policy towards the Brussels Region: his title is Minister for Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels³.

Each policy area is supported by a civil service department and autonomous agencies. The departments offer support and advice to the ministries on policy-making, while the agencies represent services to citizens, companies and organisations, implementing policy. The Agency for Social-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults is directly responsible for developing and implementing youth policy. The Agency consists of a Division for Youth and a Division for Adult Education and Local Cultural Policy. Other important areas of youth policy, such as education, health and employment

³ The overlapping responsibilities sometimes vested in a single Minister can assist 'permeability' between the competencies attached to different levels and locations of governance, between communities and regions; the French Community Minister responsible for youth is also responsible, from the French-speaking side, for Brussels.

are in the competences of other ministries: the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family, and the Ministry of Work and Social Economy.

When it comes to bi-lingual Brussels, the Flemish side is governed by the Flemish Community Commission, which consists of a legislative body, the Assembly, and an executive body, the Board. The Assembly consists of 17 Dutch speaking members of the Brussels Region, while the Board consists of Dutch speaking ministers and secretariats of state for the Brussels Region. The body responsible for youth is Directorate General Culture, Youth and Sports. Almost all the municipalities of Brussels have a youth alderman.

Youth policy and legislation

The Flemish government carries out several important tasks regarding youth work and youth policy, among which the most important are preparation, execution and evaluation of policy and hence following legislation, the regulation and financing of youth work.

The government develops youth policy documents which present the overall vision for youth and children's rights policy. An essential characteristic of Flemish youth policy is implementation through explicit measures – acts or decrees. The government tends to regulate every specific field of youth policy, as defined by its Youth Policy Plan, with decrees, which creates a complex and closed structure of regulations, leaving unrecognized forms of youth work without support. Decrees define the instruments of the youth and children's rights policy and the funding of local and provincial authorities and youth organisations.

An Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy defines instances of youth work and recognizes institutions and organisations involved with young people and also children's rights policy, defining at the same time the allocation of finances within the system. This decree, adopted in 2008, perceives the policy for youth and children's rights as

the integral and integrated vision of children and young people and the systematic planned measures of a government based thereon, aiming to produce an explicit effect on youth, with special attention to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Act also specifies instruments for the implementation of youth policy, where the Flemish Youth Policy Plan is the most important instrument.

The Act defines the process of adopting the Flemish Youth Policy Plan, which operates on a four-year cycle. The Flemish government has to present the Plan to the Flemish Parliament no later than 18 months after the start of each term. The current Youth Policy Plan is valid for the period 2011-2014 and includes 24 strategic goals and 76 operational goals with proposed accompanying actions. During its adoption, various stakeholders were consulted and involved, such as the Flemish Youth Council, experts on youth affairs, the associations mentioned in the Act, as well as local and provincial authorities and the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels. Eight working groups were formed to work on the different themes, steered by the planning team (with both

governmental and non-governmental representatives) which was responsible for the quality of the Plan.

The themes encompassed are:

1. organisations and voluntary activities
2. health, identity, sexuality and well-being
3. education and training
4. employment and entrepreneurship
5. creativity, culture and media
6. space for young people and care for the world
7. participation and information
8. social inclusion and diversity

The draft document was disseminated for public consultation, and to advisory councils, before its adoption. The European Youth Strategy 2010-2018⁴ provided the framework and guided the specification of the strategic goals.

The agreed and advanced Youth Policy Plan represents a comprehensive document, encompassing the general vision on youth and the children's rights, defined as follows:

The Flemish authorities start from the assumption that every child has talents and develops inclusive and holistic policies aimed at:

- giving a voice to children and young people
- creating a physical, material, social and cultural context in which equal talents get equal opportunities
- sustainability and solidarity

The Youth Policy Plan also expresses the four desired social effects and outcomes on children and young people within the policy period:

1. All children and young people with the same talents get equal opportunities
2. The opportunities for development of children and young people increase
3. Children and young people get (more) space to be non-adult
4. Children and young people participate fully in society

⁴ The European Youth Strategy has eight 'fields of action' within a strategic vision of promoting opportunity, access and solidarity with young people. It was approved through the European Council Resolution on a 'Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)'

The document formulates the view of youth policy as transversal policy⁵ which is to include not only the area of 'culture, youth, sport and media' (where the youth policy field sits, inside the 13 policy fields of the Flemish government), but also other policy fields such as social inclusion, employment, health, and housing. It is envisaged that each ministry takes its own responsibilities and defines tasks linked to the implementation of specific goals within the Youth Policy Plan, while the Minister for Youth is in charge of overseeing the process and reporting on the Plan's implementation to the government. Youth policy is based on the group policy approach, which permeates almost every other policy sector, focusing on youth as specific group.

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

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

This Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy also defines the conditions for the recognition and consequently subsidizing of youth organisations on the Flemish Community level, while funding conditions on the local (municipal) and provincial level, as well as Brussels, are defined through the Act on Municipal, Inter-municipal and Provincial Youth and Youth Work Policy, adopted in 2003 and last revised in 2006. The main objective of this Act is to stimulate local youth policy through prescribing the obligation of the local and provincial authorities to develop local/provincial youth policy plans. This Act defines the youth age as 3 to 25 years old, unlike the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy. Local youth policy plans are developed for the period of three years (five for Brussels) and provincial plans for a 6-year period. During the youth policy plan definition process, local/provincial authorities should include local youth work initiatives, youth policy experts, youth councils and children and young people themselves.

The definition offered in the Act differentiates between *youth work policy*, which is defined as the set of policy measures taken by local/provincial authorities with regard to local/inter-municipal/provincial youth work, and *youth policy*, which is seen as the set of policy measures taken

⁵ Transversality is especially important for young people on the margins, who could benefit the most from such approach. It is recognized on European Union level as the desirable approach by the Council of youth ministers in November 2007, who adopted conclusions on a transversal approach to youth policy, with a view to enabling young people to fulfil their potential and participate actively in society.

by local/provincial authorities with regard to all living circumstances of children and young people. It is evident that youth work policy is perceived as the part of the broader youth policy.

The Flemish government sets the priorities of youth (work) policy for a certain period, usually 2 years. For the period 2008-2010, the priority was “youth work infrastructure and youth information”, while at the moment, for 2011-2013, it is “security youth work infrastructure and youth culture”. Those priorities are to be taken into account by the local/provincial authorities when developing their youth policy plans. Local and provincial authorities receive funding based on the number of children and young people living on their territory. The government also allocates additional resources for the implementation of the actions responding to priorities and for municipalities scoring high on the specific socio-geographic indicators.

The Act on Youth Accommodation Centres is the second decree in the scope of the youth policy which defines subsidy conditions for the so-called supporting structures of youth work, like hostels and youth accommodation centres. Also, there is an Act on the Camping Equipment Lending Service which regulates lending of equipment to the youth organizations. Finally, an Act on Participation is a cross-sectoral decree focusing on participation in the culture, sport and youth activities by specific target groups. Initiatives related to the youth policy are youth laboratories whose goal is to stimulate and guide disadvantaged groups (mostly immigrants) towards inclusion in youth organisations.

These four Acts represent a basis for the distribution of the youth budget which amounted to 61.5 million Euros in 2011. The major proportion of the funds (63%) was distributed in accordance with the Act on Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy, while 35% was intended for the implementation of the Act on Municipal, Inter-municipal and Provincial Youth and Youth Work Policy.

Youth work in Flanders – development

Participation in youth work is more than simply taking part or having a say. Engagement in any form of youth work involves a process of conscious, critical self-reflection that can only be voluntarily. Also, youth work engages with young people as they begin to explore the boundaries, examine self-perception and perception by others. Youth work is specific activity that focuses on young people because they are in the process of creating themselves and developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for lifelong reflection, learning and growth, which is especially present in Flanders where (traditional youth work, meant primarily as youth movements activities⁶, represents a 'third pillar of socialisation'.

Flanders possesses a strong history and culture of youth work and youth movements. Youth movements were even declared as the most perfect form of youth organisation by the ‘National Youth Council’, the body established in the mid-1950s and involving experts on youth and representatives of major youth organisations. From its inception, Flemish youth policy was built on the concept of youth organisations as the pillars of the youth work. As Van Gaens (2010, p.63) reported to the workshop on history of youth work in Europe, participation policies went only as far

⁶ For example, the Scouts and the Chirojeugd Vlaanderen, or Chiro.

as “participation to the activities of youth organisations”, but not of the young people themselves in the Flemish community.

However, with increased rate of immigration, there were a large number of young people who came from different surrounding and nurtured different values and habits. This situation, together with an increase in grassroots youth groups and new social movements, demanded new forms of youth work and youth organising, apart from traditional youth movements. First youth clubs and houses were formed during the fifties, while in the seventies a new category of youth work (advisory, information, training centres) appeared and received support from the government, often targeting particular groups perceived as deprived. These changes have slowly led to the professionalization of youth work, which is presently perceived as another important characteristic of the Flemish youth work.

However, youth work was not defined before the 1990s; it was little more than a collective name for different types of working with young people and youth activity, concerning primarily member organisations (youth movements, youth branches of adult organisations and students or special youth movements which gathered young people for specific purposes – such as music, or the arts), youth services and umbrella youth organisations.

The 1990s saw the emergence of a focus on youth work by the local authorities, which received much more responsibility for subsidizing local youth organisations, transferred from the Flemish Community. For the first time, in 1993, a definition of youth work was included in Flemish legislation, depicting youth work as

Group oriented socio-cultural initiatives based on non-commercial objectives for or by young people, who participate voluntarily in this initiative, in their leisure time and under educational supervision; this work is being set up by private youth associations or by municipal public authorities.

Youth policy in this decade favoured group oriented youth work and gave new momentum to traditional forms of youth organising, after it had experienced some decline during the 1980s. However, youth work organisations had to split up their non-youth work activities (around education, welfare, and health) in order to get funding, which created great dissatisfaction among youth workers.

In spite of efforts to shift the scope and focus of youth (work) policy from youth organisations to broader youth activities, the international review team could clearly perceive a firm understanding of youth work as traditional youth movements (such as the Scouts and the Chirojeugd Vlaanderen, or Chiro). Coussée (no date, p.2) also points this out when he speaks about media coverage of youth work and that “it is striking how these messages again and again establish the image that ‘youth work’ is synonymous to ‘youth movement’ (especially in Flanders) or structured leisure programmes”. He distinguishes so called ‘general youth work’ encompassing more traditional forms and ‘specific youth work’ which is more youth social work. The general intention behind this distinction is to use specific youth work as the channel towards the traditional youth work which is the “real youth work”.

| | | |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| | General | Specific |
|--|----------------|-----------------|

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Participants | Middle-class | Vulnerable groups |
| Youth worker | Young people, volunteer | Young adults, professional |
| Frequency | Once a week, weekend | Each day, not always in weekend |
| Radius of action | Leisure time, recreation | Adjusting and compensating for deficient experiences in family or school |
| Activities | Structured program | Unstructured, open |
| Educational philosophy | Holistic | Specific |
| Position in community | Splendid isolation | Uncomfortable inclusion |

Coussée (no date, p.4)

These distinctions also points to the division among young people between middle-class youth (Flemish origin, white, Christian) and working-class youth, which encompasses lower class and predominantly migrant youth. According to the report *Youth movements in Flanders*⁷, the 'hereditary' character of youth organisation membership is increasing, since 80% of youth leaders have at least one parent who was member of a youth movement. These youth movements represent some kind of 'third pillar of socialisation', contributing to the education of young people apart from the family and school. This feature of the youth movements may be less evident than it was in the past, but it still remains *relatively* unchanged in Flemish community, where young people tend to follow the pattern of their parents in engaging youth movements. It is also noticed that youth movements do not join the networks, except for their umbrella organisations, though they do engage with the youth councils, which are often seen by others in the field as youth movement councils.

Smaller organisations usually performing a specific youth work are able to reach a more diverse public, which is especially the case with organisations working with disadvantaged youth. But, at the same time, they are confronted with insecurity regarding staff/leaders and funds.

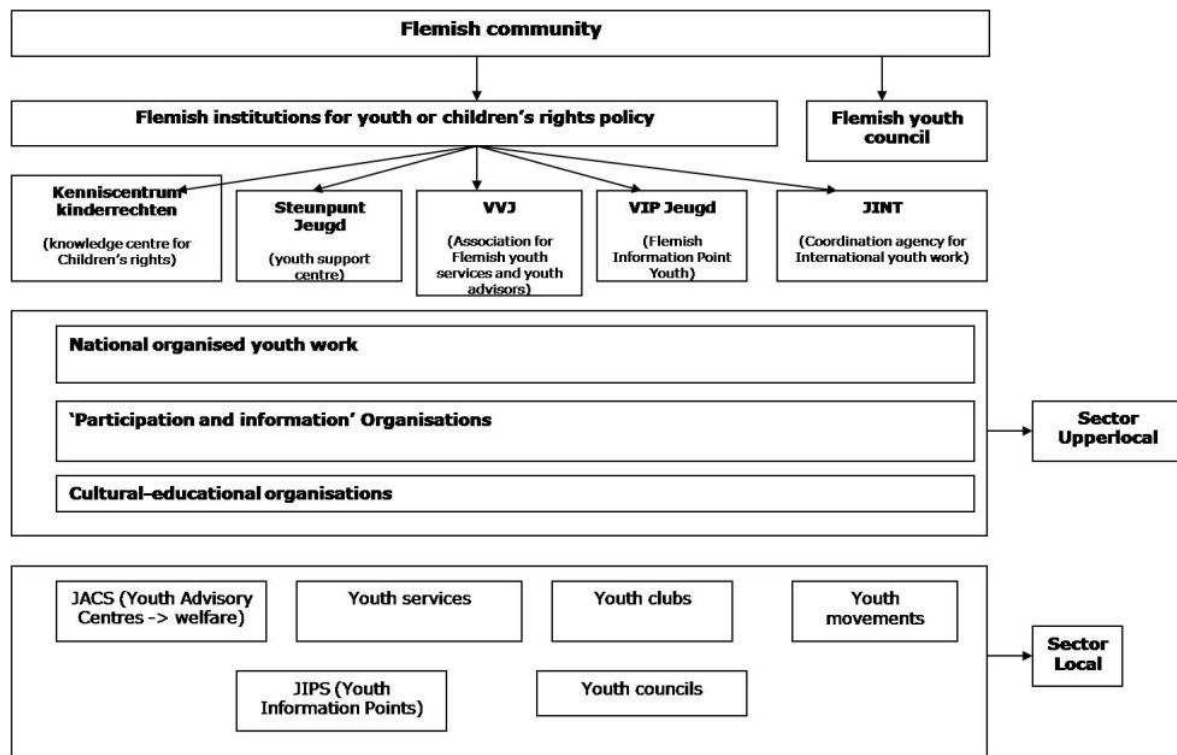
The concept of neighbourhood is another important concept in the scope of youth work, as it was perceived by international review team during the two visits. Neighbourhood refers to the closest surroundings of young people and is recognized as the key field for their inclusion in Flemish society. The practice shows that this kind of approach has its advantages, linked to the familiarity of the youth workers with the particular surroundings and their easier access not only to young people but to their families and friends. This approach enables youth workers to get closer to young people and secure their confidence, which is one of the crucial factors in working with them. On the other hand, the international review team felt there were certain weaknesses in the neighbourhood approach, referring particularly to the (en)closure of the neighbourhood. Youth work in the neighbourhood that is focused on engaging young people and building connections *inside* the neighbourhood does carry the risk of preventing young people from 'going out', thus arguably producing certain kinds of

⁷*Youth movements in Flanders: a survey of groups, leaders and members*, by the Flemish authorities. A synthesis of this report was provided to the international review team

parallel communities inside Flemish society. Sociologists have identified the potential value of social capital – the networks that can sustain people in an era of individualisation – but the concept has been developed to suggest that while some social capital can be ‘bridging’ (enlarging connections and broadening prospects and possibilities), other social capital can be ‘bonding’, almost trapping people within the comfort zones of the familiar and thereby limiting aspirations and the potential achievement of new horizons. Youth work in certain contexts can almost collude with such entrapment within supportive but disadvantaged and enclosed neighbourhoods.

Youth work in Flanders – structure

Youth work in the Flemish community today is structured in the following way:



* Structure overview provided by the Flemish Community authorities⁸.

The direct participation of the young people in youth policy preparation and implementation is encouraged through the youth councils at, community, provincial and local level. The Flemish Youth

⁸ In the response to the draft international report, the Flemish authorities noted that ‘a lot of other youth(work) varieties’ were missing from this chart. The chart was, however, provided by the Flemish Community. The international review team has no other sources, since it visited only clubs on the local level.

Council represents young people themselves and youth work at the level of the Flemish Community. The Youth Council members are elected every three years at a public congress, after a public call for applications. The Council has between 16 and 24 members, and at least one-third has to be under-25. They come from the youth organisations (50%) and young individuals who are interested to participate in the council's work. Its task is to give policy advice on the matters related to youth, on its own initiative or upon request from the Flemish government or parliament.

The Youth Council has initiated over 50% of its advice so far, but does not follow up its impact since it doesn't possess evidence on how much of its advice has been accepted. This perception raised some debate at the national hearing, and the point was clarified in a subsequent written note stating that "The impact of the advices is monitored in a yearly report. In general, there is a proper impact on the policy of the minister of youth. On the broader fields of Youth Policy (50% of the advices), the impact is not always satisfactory". However, the international review team had not been given any such information during either of its visits.

The funding of the council is defined through the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy, which prescribes that between 1 and 2.5% of the distributed youth work budget should be allocated to the Flemish Youth Council (this amounted to 632,000 Euros in 2011 or 2.22% of the youth work budget).

Municipal youth councils are defined through the Act on Municipal, Inter-municipal and Provincial Youth and Youth Work Policy. Local authorities and provinces must have a youth council if they want their youth policy to be funded by the Flemish government. However, in the practice, the international review team did not manage to evaluate the role of the local youth councils or their impact, which seems to be very much below these expectations. It is stated that there are neither communication channels (at least not direct or formal) between The Flemish Youth Council and local/provincial councils nor we have learnt about any kind of initiative to empower these bodies coming from the Flemish Youth Council. After the national hearing, we have received an information that "these tasks are left to a particular organization 'Karuur'. This organization is subsidised by the Flemish government to support the local Youth Councils. Karuur takes part in the General Assembly of the Flemish Youth Council and has a close communication with the Flemish Youth Council."

When the issue of the rather 'patchy' representation of young people at municipal level was raised by the international review team with the Flemish Youth Council, the retort was brusque: "there is an official youth council in every municipality in Flanders", though it was then conceded that possibly "some are not very active"!

Flemish institutions involved with youth and children's rights policy are a specific form of youth work which cannot be classified as youth organisations in the traditional meaning of voluntary based organisations nor as non-governmental organisations, since their boards sometimes include governmental representatives among others, even if only as observers (exceptions are VVJ and KeKi). The question of the independence of their work was one of the main issues during the first visit of the international team to Flanders, when the international team had an opportunity to meet representatives of all these organisations. They, through their practice, represent services of the government directed to the youth workers and youth organisations, and are recognized as such in the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy.

The Flemish Youth Support Centre (Steunpunt Jeugd - SPJ) is the knowledge and expertise centre for youth, youth work and youth policy in Flanders, working to contribute to the performance of youth work on all levels through developing methodologies, training, research and support services for its members. The general assembly consists of 50 members, coming from the 'national organised youth work' (120 youth organisations). The Board of Administration comprises elected members from the general assembly, youth policy experts and observing members from the public administration. SPJ received 993,000 EUR from the youth budget in 2011, to support its activities as defined in the tri-annual policy note approved by the Minister of Youth.

The Association for Flemish Youth Services and youth advisors (Vereniging Vlaamse Jeugddiensten – VVJ) is the organisation that draws together Flemish municipal administrations as members through their youth service or youth officials. VVJ supports the preparation and execution of the local youth policy, striving for more, better and broader local youth policy in Flanders. VVJ is financed by the cities, municipalities and provinces that pay an annual membership fee, and by the Flemish government, that resourced it to the tune of 352,000 Euros in 2011.

The Flemish Youth Information Point (Vlaams Informatiepunt Jeugd – VIP Jeugd) was founded by the Flemish government in 2006 as a network of youth information points with the aim to offer complete and coherent information to young people on any possible issue on one side and to improve the competencies of youth information workers on the other. The network includes 60 points which are often embedded in the local youth service or advisory centre. The target group is young people between 12 and 25, divided into three age groups (children 8-11, teenagers 12-15 and young adults over 15). VIP Jeugd received 598,000 Euros from the Flemish government in 2011.

Finally, there is the Coordination Agency for International Youth Work – JINT. JINT is focused on international cooperation and supporting the international mobility of young people, as the knowledge and expertise centre for international mobility of young people and international youth policy. JINT is also the national agency for the Flemish government for the EU Youth in Action programme and the Eurodesk national partner. JINT develops a policy plan every 3 years, which is the basis for the agreement with the government and ensuing subsidies (872,000 Euros in 2011).

Besides these organisations, there are two platforms formed by government with the goal to provide evidence for the policy and coordinate efforts in youth research in Flanders as support to the youth policy. Those are Kenniscentrum Kinderrechten and Jeugdonderzoekplatform.

The Children's Rights Knowledge Centre (Kenniscentrum Kinderrechten – KeKi) is an interdisciplinary centre, supported by an inter-university platform of researchers affiliated with the five research institutions from Flanders. KeKi aims to collect and disseminate knowledge on children's rights, generated by national and international scientific research. It was established by the Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy, operating from 2010.

Jeugdonderzoekplatform (JOP – Youth Research Platform) is an interdisciplinary cooperation between three research groups, initiated by the Flemish government in 2003, to stimulate systematic and interdisciplinary attention for youth research. JOP tends to systematize and analyze existing Flemish research on youth as well as conduct new research, creating a platform with information on children and young people that is accessible to all relevant and interested parties.

JOP has not been a part of the youth work structure presented in the visual scheme on previous pages.

The Act on Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy defines criteria for the operating and project subsidies for 'nationally' organised youth associations, which are defined as

a non-profit-making association which, according to its objectives - as formulated in its articles of association - and its activities, is active in youth work with participants from at least four provinces in the Dutch language area or at least three provinces in the Dutch language area and in the bilingual Brussels Capital Region.

There are 66 'national' youth associations subsidized in 2011, through this Act. These organisations receive basic structural grants (55,000 Euros per year) which take the form of an administrative grant. Additionally, and based on a predefined programme, organisations can also receive variable grants for particular activities.

Besides 'national' associations, the Act recognizes 11 associations for cultural education whose field of work is the enhancement of cultural competences and stimulation of creativity. These organisations receive only variable grants, the same as 25 associations for participation and information, whose aim is the enhancement of youth participation and catering for information needs. In order to qualify for the subsidies, organisations have to develop policy memoranda, which define their activities for a three year period, and sign agreements with the Flemish government on their implementation.

The Act also defines project grants up to 50,000 Euros per year, aimed at supporting artistic projects, experimental youth work initiatives, projects stimulating youth participation and information and international initiatives, performed by the organisations which do not fall within the three previous categories subsidized through the Act.

On the local level, there are over 5,000 youth organisations and other youth initiatives. These are financed primarily by the local or provincial authorities. The most numerous are, expectedly, youth movements, which make up almost 40% of all youth organisations. Political youth organisations, young people's movements and youth houses/clubs each comprise slightly less than 10% of all organisations.

Evidently, the youth work system is carefully developed. The government tends to define and include various forms of the youth work in the decrees that are outlined above. The international review team encountered a highly structured system in which every unit has predefined tasks and responsibilities. This situation led to an impression that grassroots movements and bottom up initiatives are rare and hard to reach, despite attempts to do so. In such a predefined structured system, it was hard to perceive the individual young persons with their desires and expectations. Young people almost get lost in the articulation of regulation and structures, though these clearly have youth, and youth work provision at their heart. Nevertheless, the paths for those young people who want to become involved and active are provided and prescribed by the system itself, which makes it difficult to contemplate the place and position of a youth initiative that was not recognised within the specification of the decrees and the boundaries of the structures. However, the international team has noticed differences in the approach among local communities, where in

Antwerp (also being the European Youth Capital) the municipality played a role in organizing and financing youth work, recognizing the need of smaller groups. But, there is a downside, or at least a point of concern, about developing a quality of youth (work) provision so tightly bounded by formal regulation.

Other policy fields affecting young people

Youth education

Education serves as the means to gain knowledge and acquire technical competency, developing in the same time personality physically, mentally and socially. The importance of education to youth is manifested in terms of the need to socialize the youth into mature individuals, citizens of the society. It serves to develop the principles of life, make career decisions and begin the pursuit of one's goals. Education should help the youths define their career objectives, decide what they want from life and enable them to achieve success in their fields of interest.

As Coussée (2010, p.12) states “youth work, being such a social practice, facilitates the negotiation between individual aspirations and societal expectations”. This means that using young people’s periods of leisure time can be used to give them the opportunity to develop creativity and to exercise new responsibilities. During the international review visit, we have often heard that youth work activities should complement to the formal education and serve as method of non-formal education/learning.

Compulsory education in Belgium is up to the age of 18 years, and it is free of charge. The Act on Equal Opportunities in Education, adopted in 2002, defines the right to enrolment, where each pupil has the freedom to choose the school. It also envisages the establishment of local consultation platforms involving education stakeholders in order to ensure the right of enrolment and to co-operate in implementing a local policy on equal opportunities in education. The Act defines the extra support for additional needs provision in schools with additional teaching periods or additional teaching hours per teacher.

Education plays an extremely important role in the Flemish Community, visible through the budget allocation of the 40% of the total budget. The financing system of the recognised schools is based on the social profile of the enrolled pupils. Schools get more funds if they have more pupils meeting one or more of four defined indicators predicting their performance in the school. These indicators include the level of education of the parents, the home language, the family income and the neighbourhood setting.

There are three educational networks in the Flemish community:

GO! education is publicly run neutral education organised by the public body called ‘het GO! Onderwijs van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap’ which is under the governance of the Flemish Community.

Publicly funded and run education (OGO) includes municipal education organised by local/provincial authorities. This network is led by two umbrella organisations: the Educational Secretariat of the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (OVSG) and the Flemish Provincial Education (POV).

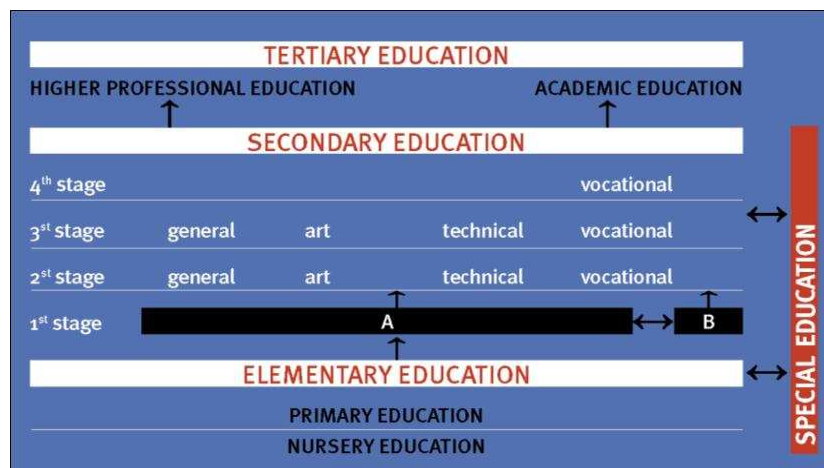
The publicly funded, but privately run schools (VGO) organised by a private person or private organisation, mainly catholic schools. The Flemish Secretariat for Catholic Education is the umbrella

organisation of these schools. There are Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, and Islamic schools, but also the schools which adopt particular educational methods known as 'method schools'.

Dutch is the official language of education. However, additional resources are allocated to the teaching of non-Dutch-speaking migrants, as the part of the equal opportunities policy of the Ministry of Education and Training which includes a separate policy targeting those for whom Dutch is not a mother tongue (Eurybase 2009/10, p.19). Still, officially, there are no legally-recognised minority languages in Flanders. As of 2004, the teaching of French as a second language has become compulsory from 5th year of primary education in Flanders.

The international team had an opportunity to meet representatives of the educational system in Antwerp. During this meeting, experiences about migrants' inclusion into schooling system were discussed. In spite of the personal commitment of responsible persons, the team has left with impression that the efforts in this area are limited to certain schools.

The educational system in Flanders has several levels:



Source: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/English/>

The Flemish government promotes participation in the field of education, which is operationalised through central participation structures involving relevant stakeholders (councils VLOR, VLIR, VLHORA, VOC) and several forms of local participation structures. In the first three levels of education, school councils are obligatory. Their duties are linked to the general right to information and these schools councils exercise an advisory and consultative role. Besides school councils, the Act on Participation defines educational councils, pupil councils, parent councils and parents' associations as possible forms of participation in decision making on education. Regarding higher education, there are student councils operating in each university or college. The Act also envisages negotiating committees, academic councils and works councils as forms of staff participation in the workplace.

The structure of nursery, primary and secondary education recognizes the difference between mainstream and special education intended for the pupils who need special help. However, in spite compulsory schooling, early school leaving still exists. Flanders copes much better with the school

drop-outs' issue, which amounted to 8.5% in 2008, comparing to 19.9% in Brussels and 15.2% in Wallonia. Flanders also defined a new legislative framework which guarantees that all pupils, compared to 76% so far, are active full-time in order to prevent and decrease early school leaving.

Additionally, there are programmes designed to bridge the gap between early school leaving and labour market. Regular secondary education offers full-time and part-time programmes, while the Vocational Education and Training programme (VET) is designed to provide second chance opportunities in centres for adult education, the training centres of the Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Agency (VDAB) and the Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training (Syntra Vlaanderen). The international review team met with the network of six organisations offering so called 'Personal development pathways' in the Integration Centre Foyer, which is one of the six. This alternative learning system was established by a decree in 2008. Organisations are working primarily with adolescents who are socially vulnerable and not yet able to work in market economy. The organisations are funded by the government, based on the number of hours in which a young person is engaged. The total number of hours is limited on the level of Flanders and distributed among cities. However, it was not clear how the criteria for the allocation of resources are defined and how they can be changed. The review team has had an impression that youth work is not recognized as the tool which can contribute greatly to the formal educational system. This raises the question of recognition of the value and visibility of non-formal and informal learning for young people, which should be enhanced by recognising the work and achievements of young people and those active in youth work and youth organisations.

Youth employment

Youth employment is one of the most important pillars of social inclusion of young people, and consequently, it is an extremely important aspect of youth policy. Joint recommendations of the Belgian presidency EU youth conference on youth employment includes recommendation:

Youth workers and career advisers should have a more important guidance role in informing and supporting young people on labour market issues through the use of non formal education and with the help of new exciting tools, information and support structures.

The labour market in Belgium has faced additional challenges due to the world and European economic crisis, which initially impacted much more upon employment in Flanders than in Brussels or Wallonia. However, the Flemish labour market managed to return to previous levels in the first quarter of 2011. Compared to Brussels and Wallonia, Flemish provinces have significantly lower unemployment rates, ranging from 5% in Flemish Brabant to 7.8% in Antwerpen and Limburg. There is a Public Employment Service, VDAB in Flanders, as well as ACTIRIS in the Brussels region, whose task is to implement active measures in the field of employment on the regional level. Their functioning is complex, since unemployment benefits are controlled by the National Employment Office, creating in this way disparity among employment and unemployment policy (though see Chapter 5).

Following general indicators, the youth unemployment rate in Flanders increased significantly between 2008 and 2009, from 10.5% to 15.7%. In the same time, however, the youth unemployment rate in Wallonia was 30.5% and in Brussels 31.7%, which shows the comparative

advantage of living in Flanders. As might be anticipated, the unemployment rate among low skilled youth (39.6%) is higher than among high skilled youth (11.6%), according to the labour force statistics in 2010.

Brussels has a significantly higher unemployment rate of 31.7% within the youth population, while general unemployment rate is 20%. This situation can be partially explained by the fact that the job demand in Brussels relates to high-quality jobs, while many job-seekers, especially young people, in Brussels are under-qualified. The high unemployment in Brussels has more structural characteristics compared to Flanders, due to the problem of the high proportion of low skilled individuals. Also, there is a significant requirement for the bilingual employees able to speak both French and Dutch, which is not the case among the majority of job seekers in Brussels, mostly low skilled young people who do not speak more than one language in 90% of cases. The Brussels Region has set up a database bringing together data from all employment-related institutions, in order to develop and provide a better match between labour market demand and those in search of work.

Brussels attracts a significant number of workers coming from the other two Regions of Belgium, but there are relatively few flows between Flanders and Wallonia, and from Brussels to Flanders. Another concern is unemployment among young immigrant communities in Belgium, with a 28.1% unemployment rate, which is three times higher than for non-immigrant communities, with an even worse situation in Brussels.

Belgian legislation envisages special assistance for the unemployed youth after studies. They receive so called 'waiting allowances' which provide them with means to live until they find the job. The state also defines incentives for the employers hiring young, lower educated people through the programmes ACTIVA and Win-win. ACTIVA's aim was to cut the cost of recruiting young workers under 26. Those employers are entitled to the monthly allowance in the amount of 1,000€ or 1,100€ for a period of 12 months if they engage a person younger than 26 with maximum secondary education. Job-seekers who find the job keep part of their unemployment benefit, which employers can deduct from their net wage. With the beginning of 2010, a new recruitment plan 'Win-Win' was introduced in order to bolster the existing ACTIVA scheme.

| Programme | Activa – aged under 25 | Activa Start – aged under 26 | Win-Win – aged under 26 (no higher secondary-education diploma or certificate) | Win-Win – aged under 26 (not in possession of any diploma or certificate above higher secondary-education level) |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Period registered as a job-seeker | 1 year | Within 21 months of completing full-time education | 3 months | 6 months |
| Amount of allowance | EUR 500 | EUR 350 | EUR 1 100 | EUR 1 000 |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Period for which the allowance is payable | Month of recruitment + 15 months | Month of recruitment + 5 months | 24 months (in 2010) 12 months (in 2011) | 24 months (in 2010) 12 months (in 2011) |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|

Source: EEO Review (2010, p. 5)

The cities are developing and funding various programmes in order to combat youth unemployment and support transition from the education to the labour market. The city of Antwerp subsidises Youth Competence Centres, where young people work with counsellors in order to build awareness on the competencies acquired through free-time, 'spare' activities and thereby to improve their educational and labour market position. Similar initiatives exist also in Brussels. However, there is a question what is the scope of these programs and how many people they reach comparing with the total population of vulnerable youth. Additionally, Flemish municipalities provide the most underprivileged young people from the age of 18 onwards benefits in the field of social welfare in their own municipality, via the OCMW (Public Social Welfare Centre).

Social inclusion

Social inclusion on European Union level⁹ is defined as

A process ensuring that persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion be given opportunities and means necessary for a full participation in economic, social and cultural life and achieving living standards and welfare considered normal in the society they live in. It ensures their enhanced participation in decision-making process which in turns affects their rights and exercise of basic rights.

The social inclusion process should empower citizens to take an active approach to and part in all the aspects of social life. This involves access to education for the children and adults alike, access to labour market even if they are not highly educated, when they have some form of disability or when they belong to a minority, access to health care and social services.

Obstacles to social inclusion can exist at the institutional level (discrimination, lack of infrastructure, absence of services etc), community level (prejudice, marginalization), or individual level (lack of education, withdrawal, rejection, fear). Therefore, it is important to identify groups in the risk from exclusion, as well as the social, political, cultural and economic processes that may lead to (re)production of exclusion. Combating discrimination and poverty, usually caused by the lack of employment, are two important pillars of the process of social exclusion. Factsheet on Social Inclusion/Equal Opportunities in Belgium¹⁰ provides information that 80% of studying people over 20 years in Belgium believe that discrimination based on ethnic origin is widespread in their country, which is 11% above the EU average. Similar situation is with the religious discrimination, as perceived by Belgian population. Since Flanders includes several major cities with large migrant population, issue of the combating social exclusion is very important.

⁹ Definitions from the EC's 2004 Joint Report on Social Inclusion.

¹⁰ <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Inclusion/Belgium.pdf>

In 2006, the Flemish Minister of Culture announced a new Flemish Plan of Action for Interculturalisation covering the fields of culture, youth work and sport (2006-2009). The Plan calls for positive action to address the under-representation of people with diverse ethnic-cultural backgrounds in subsidised activities in the respective sectors. The main aim is to provide for the participation of people with migrant backgrounds in the boards of cultural, youth and sports organisations and institutions. Those from migrant backgrounds should represent at least 10% of those in these positions. These measures have been envisaged to lead to a permanent and growing interculturalisation in all sectors. In the new Policy Agreement 2009-2014, the Flemish Government advocates an 'innovative, lasting and warm society'. Integration of the ethnic-cultural minorities is perceived as a chance to realise a more cohesive and respectful society.

On the Community level, the institution responsible for social services for young people is the Youth Welfare Agency (Jongerenwelzijn), within the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family. The Agency's mission is defined as follows:

Together with our partners we organise quality prevention and assistance to children and young people in problematic living conditions in order to maximize their chances of personal development.

The Youth Welfare Agency coordinates prevention policy and provides assistance to minors through committees for special youth care, for social services, and for legal assistance and arbitration committees. Furthermore, the Agency provides support to partners in the private sector, whose task is the guidance of young people with problems. These services are recognized and subsidised by the Agency which specially encourages innovative youth care projects. As well as the Agency, there are several more institutions under the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Family, which young people can approach in the case of need (for example, the Flemish Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and Public Psychiatric Care Centres).

During the visits of international review team in Flanders, we were informed about the existence of regional integration policies, but without specific measures directed towards young people. The international review team had an opportunity to meet representatives of the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, which is a public institution created by law, promoting equal opportunities and fighting any type of exclusion, restriction or preferential treatment. The Centre oversees the respect of the fundamental rights of migrants, analyses the nature and content of migration flows, and stimulates the fight against human trafficking. Cooperation with the Flemish Community is described as successful, since the Centre is a member of the Commission on Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Education, whose goal is to solve conflicts about inequality, racism or discrimination and the Commission on Pupils' Rights, aiming to solve conflicts with regard to enrolment at school. Also, together with Flemish government, the Centre is working on promoting the diversity of the teachers, taking up the educational aspect of intercultural diversity as a topic in teacher training courses and advocating inclusive education.

In the Flemish community, considerable importance is placed on intercultural education, which emphasizes students' ability to deal with other cultures in a respectful way, as well as to recognise and appreciate diversity. As an additional support to social inclusion and education, the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training gives additional funds to schools catering for a higher number of disadvantaged youth, for three consecutive years. Based on the Act on Equal Opportunities in

Education, schools can receive subsidies which allow them to work on prevention and combating developmental and learning lags, providing language skills, intercultural education, social-emotional development and participation of the parents and pupils. In order to get funds, schools have to cater for a minimum 10% of young people coming disadvantaged groups in elementary and first level of secondary education, or at least 25% in other levels of secondary education. The schools can also use these resources to engage a special needs coordinator, who is responsible for policy coordination, guidance for pupils and teachers, as well as communication and cooperation with the bodies included into the system.

As the international review team learned during its visit to Antwerp, where we had opportunity to meet representatives of the schooling system, one of the main indicators of disadvantage is linked to migration background. The Integration service, which is the first step for the migrants coming to Belgium, directs parents and pupils to specific schools, where special social programmes for disadvantaged youth exist. However, the international review team was informed about the lack of capacity in schools with these programmes for minorities. The gap between the schools enrolling Flemish-origin young people and those involving migrants and lower class pupils is documented and readily observed. Since parents have the freedom to choose the school for their children, they usually favour those schools enrolling pupils of similar status, thus creating 'Flemish schools' on the one hand and predominantly 'migrant schools' with various ethnic groups on the other. On account of this, Antwerp has developed a programme called 'Schoolbridge' whose aim is to build bridges between schools and socially vulnerable young people and their parents.

About one in ten of the population living in Flanders has a foreign nationality at birth or at least one parent with a foreign nationality, while 5.8% have foreign nationality. The migrant issue is especially characteristics of the bigger cities in Flanders (Brussels, Antwerp and Gent). Brussels has almost one third of its population coming from abroad (28.1%). These cities have also been facing increasing number of young people living in the city. The two issues – migration and youth – are clearly interlinked; a significant proportion of the growing numbers of young people in urban settings come from minority groups. In 2008, 28% of the Brussels inhabitants had non-Belgian origin, 15% in Antwerp and 9% in the third biggest Flemish city Gent. Migrants coming from outside of EU are mostly from Morocco and Turkey. There is also increased migration of young people coming from Eastern Europe and the new EU member states of Bulgaria and Romania. They are often in the risk category and can be considered as vulnerable.

Therefore, Brussels' as well as Antwerp's Youth Policy Plan defines important 'hot issues' for the youth population in the specific context of large cities focusing on diversity and accessibility in Brussels and improved, accessible leisure activities in Antwerp.

There are many organisations and networks whose work is directed towards disadvantaged groups of young people. The international review team visited some of these organisations in Antwerp and Brussels, where we had a chance to observe the way they are functioning.

JES is a social profit organisation, operating in the Brussels, Antwerp and Gent, with the aim to increase opportunities for young people so they can benefit more from creative leisure time activities, employment and training, participation in the society and policy making. JES is recognized as a national youth organisation by the Flemish Community. Its main activities include training,

labour market counselling, outreach work, and cultural projects. It reaches approximately 70,000 young people every year. The organisation cooperates with other NGOs, including networks of youth centres, municipal departments for education, culture, and the Flemish employment service. This is one of the rare organisations we had a chance to meet which has diversified its sources of income; today it receives funding from 90 separate sources.

Besides JES, the international review team visited several youth clubs and centres which are developing various activities and programmes supporting the personal development of the young people, focusing dominantly on the migrants in its neighbourhood (Habbekrats, Zappa, Kras Noord in Antwerp, Chicago in Brussels). These centres are active mostly in the poorer areas of the cities, in districts with the higher population density, the highest unemployment, the majority of the poor, and a bad housing situation. They work on the integration of disadvantaged young people, involving them in activities in the neighbourhood. Such activities are important for young migrants as the first step towards Belgian society, where they can feel welcomed and appreciated. Usually, they combine work in the facilities situated in the neighbourhood and an outreach approach using youth street workers who are establishing the contacts with the young disadvantaged persons on the spot, following their development and building closer relations. However, their work has limited scope when it comes to social inclusion in Belgian society. The international review team came to the conclusion that there remain very limited connections between young people of Flemish origin and migrant youth. Flemish youth is, as already pointed out, oriented to the traditional forms of youth organising (youth movements), while disadvantaged groups are directed to the professional/categorical youth work, which – at least in theory - should serve as the bridge to voluntary youth work.

The attitude of that voluntary youth work within youth movements is not negative towards the inclusion of vulnerable young people (including those from migrant backgrounds) and those movements claim that they are open to disadvantaged groups (for example, Chiro in Antwerp). However, they are not actively recruiting these groups, confirming that the attitude towards diversity is rather passive ('we are open to it, but not actively seeking it'). This was especially visible in the visit to Kortrijk in western Flanders. The youth related stakeholders are convinced that disadvantaged groups are more difficult to reach because of the lack of diversity in the area, financial restrictions and the faith affiliations of different groups of young people.

Challenges perceived

As the part of the review process, as we have noted in the introduction, the host country has the opportunity to identify a number of issues which are of the particular interest for youth policy in that country. The Flemish community used this possibility to the search for the answers to three questions:

- The divide in the level of schooling which causes a political and socio-economic dichotomy?
- The ideological and cultural divide which makes that (still) some target groups are not reached: does multiculturalism work?

- The role of the government/public authorities: up to what extent should it be steering; what is it the citizen can and/or should expect? The positioning of Youth Work in society?

During the two visits to Belgium, the international review team encountered a variety of activities implemented in the field of youth policy and a strong culture of youth work in Flanders. We have learnt that the Flemish community is guided by the principles of good governance and sustainable civil society, valorising participation, active citizenship and inclusion as the highest values and policy outcomes. The strong commitment to taking care of young people was observed and acknowledged. However, the international review team would also wish to raise some observations regarding youth policy and specifically youth work in the Flemish community which merits more robust debate:

- The international team has had some difficulties with the term "youth organisation". In Flanders, this term has two possible meanings: "youth movement" and "youth service organisation". There is a clear distinction between voluntary/traditional youth work organised in the youth movements whose main aim is the organisation of youth leisure time and specific/categorical/professional youth work. The latter is mostly oriented to the servicing youth work organisations on the one side, especially on the Flemish Community level (for example, VVJ, VIP Jeugd, Steupunt Jeugd) and to working with disadvantaged young people (youth services, clubs, centres) on the local level. This very well organised and established system leaves very limited space for new organisations which have to prove themselves first in order to get recognition and consequently financing, although there are opportunities on the local level through implementation of the municipal/provincial youth plan which are focused primarily on the leisure activities. It is expected and, to a degree, self-evident that middle class youth will voluntarily take part in the activities of the traditional youth movements, just as their parents did. Their activities, however, as well as those of lower class youth and migrant youth who are reached through small scale initiatives, very rarely venture beyond their own neighbourhood. Moreover, these two sectors have almost no common points of reference or activities which would contribute to their real social inclusion.
- Financing from the Flemish government provides a stable and secure situation for organisations which are recognized by the authorities. This is a very important feature of Flemish youth work, which builds on the durable perception of youth work as the additional or third socialising agent for young people and (unlike many other countries, it should be noted) it therefore has a very strong position in the society. However, this very formalised and visible system also has its weaknesses, since it brings into question the independence and autonomy of the youth work. The international review team did not find many organisations that have diverse sources of funding, leaning mostly on the government to sustain them. Organisations generally feel comfortable with the system as it is, even when they are not always satisfied with its functioning. This is very sensitive issue of the youth policy, which always has to strike a balance between directing and moderating youth activities.
- There is a difference between the Community level youth policy and local youth policies, as well as predictable gaps between local youth policies and their implementation. As Karen Evans (1998) once noted astutely, there can be important differences between the ways in

which policy is 'espoused, enacted and experienced'. While the Flemish Youth Action Plan formulates a view of youth policy as transversal policy, envisaging responsibilities and tasks for each ministry and applying the group policy approach, this was not often perceived on the local level. Youth Policy Plans on the local level usually included objectives referring to youth work as the mean for organising the leisure time of young people, leaving other important fields related to young people (employment, welfare, education) outside of the 'youth policy' domain.

It seems that in spite valorising participation, active citizenship and inclusion as the highest values, there are expectation that young people should have skills that are 'assertive', 'self-aware' and 'pro-active' in asking for what they need, contributing to the idea of co-called "emancipator youth (work) policy". However, the international team has perceived that there is a local autonomy in interpretation of what 'emancipation' means and how this is translated into local youth action plans. Visits to Kortrijk and Antwerp, especially, revealed the differences in the youth policy approach at the local level. While Antwerp nurtures proactive cooperation among different policy fields important for young people, this is not the case in Kortrijk where we observed a strong division of duties and competencies between the different policy sectors. However, even in Antwerp, the cooperation among sectors is rarely formalized, but it leans on the personal initiative of the staff. We also noticed and noted the different approach towards young people in these two cities. Kortrijk has developed various services and leisure time activities for young people who 'want to participate', while Antwerp encourages a more active approach, which is probably the consequence of the traditionally high diversity in this city. Youth work is not recognized enough by those working in the areas of employment and health. It is evident that activities such as personal development training undertaken with young people, in order to create pathways to work or further education, are not considered to be youth work. 'Social' work (such as drugs outreach) is considered as employment/welfare policy and not 'youth work' because it deals with all age groups. The team has noticed more separation of policy domains at the local level than at the Community level which proclaims co-operation and co-ordination.

- High ethnic diversity in Belgian society, notably in the large cities, is a constant challenge for public policy, and especially youth policy. Belgium has carefully developed policy for migrants, following their steps from the entrance to the country and developing various services available to them. The Flemish community supports several programmes for the inclusion and insertion of young people in the education system and labour market. However, there is a perceived divide in the level and quality of schooling experienced, which causes inequality of life chances among young people and segregation in lived realities. Migrant children often do not possess sufficient language skills to enable them to follow lessons without additional assistance, and hence they attend the schools which have developed special assistance for disadvantage pupils. And, given the freedom to choose schools, parents of more included Flemish-background children have 'natural' (understandable) tendencies to enrol their children in other schools with children of the similar backgrounds, which create a kind of closed cycle of divide. More broadly, minorities are rarely included in the many decision-making processes that Flanders seeks to cultivate.

The international review team encountered only one organisation of migrant youth (PAJ – Platform of Ethnic Youth Operations), only to discover that it is not recognized on the level of the Flemish Community, but just in Antwerp province and the city. Also, it is indicative that there was no one single migrant organization during national hearing in Brussels.

In reality, multiculturalism is reduced to communities living apart together. In this sense, the concept of interculturalism is perceived as more apposite depiction of Belgian (or at least Flemish) society, acknowledging the existence of the hosting culture and the influence it has on migrant communities and vice versa.

- Cooperation between Communities in Belgium is very limited. This is a concern that has a particular resonance in relation to the Brussels Region, which is subordinated to both Flemish and French Community administrations. Since Brussels has inordinately high levels of youth unemployment and a significant population of low skilled youth coming mostly from migrant communities, comprehensive and joint policy is clearly necessary to understand and combat these issues. As a bilingual city, Brussels requires adjusted policies which would enable young people to enjoy equal opportunities when addressing any school, institution or organisation. At the moment, at least young people attending Flemish schools have the opportunity to learn both languages and combine lessons in their own language with Dutch, which enables them to enter the labour market as bilingual employment seekers and this inevitably gives them more probability of finding a relevant job.

Recommendations to the Flemish Community

RECOMMENDATION 1

The question of recognition of the value and visibility of non-formal and informal learning for young people should be raised. The international review team felt that youth work in Flanders is perceived as predominantly the engagement of youth movements. However, recognising the work and achievements of young people and those active in youth work and youth organisations would reflect acknowledging youth work as important socialization tool and part of non-formal education/learning. Youth work activities should be complementary to formal education and serve as method of non-formal education/learning, which can, also, contribute greatly to the social inclusion of young people.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Recognition of youth work as a non-formal education/learning method requires establishing measures of the quality of youth (work) provision. Flanders possesses a developed support system for youth organizations and strong field of youth work oriented towards disadvantaged youth, which guarantees the expertise necessary for defining the quality measures of youth work.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Common points of reference should be established among traditional and specific/professional youth work. The international review team observed that these two sectors have almost no links which would contribute to their real social inclusion of young people. Specific youth work should

serve as the bridge to voluntary youth work, but the international review team struggled to notice this process in practice. The inclusion of vulnerable youth, especially young migrants, in traditional youth work is a challenge with potential in Flanders. This issue should be carefully elaborated, since the international review team felt that leaders of the traditional movements do not know how to approach the question, in spite of their readiness to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Youth policy should, besides setting up the framework for leisure time activities, include other important fields relevant to the lives of young people, such as employment, welfare and education. Youth work organisations have had to limit their non-youth work activities (around education, welfare, and health) in order to get funding, which created great dissatisfaction among youth workers that was expressed vocally during the international review team visits.

Although, youth policy on the Community level is defined as transversal, proclaiming co-operation and co-ordination, the international review team witnessed more separation of policy domains at the local level during field visits. Therefore, more attention should be dedicated to promoting a transversal approach to youth policy at municipal and provincial levels.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Young migrants should be more strongly included in decision-making processes concerning youth policy. Although the international review team witnessed strong dedication to the improvement of the position of young migrants in the field of specific youth work, migrants appear to be rarely included in the youth policy dialogue. Therefore, concerted efforts should be made to promote youth work among migrants and empower their organizations to play a more active part in the youth policy process.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Grassroots movements and bottom-up initiatives, as forms which nurture differences and creativity among young people, should be given more space. The international review team felt that these movements are rare and hard to reach, yet they are important youth initiatives, especially at the local level; they should be more strongly encouraged and more robustly supported.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Nongovernmental organisations, primarily voluntary membership based organizations, should seek to maintain a more independent position towards the government. The international review team had some concerns about the independence of the work of organisations in Flanders. Most organizations receive a high proportion of their finances through earmarked funds decided upon by the authorities, and by that they could be too dependent of the governmental structures. This contributes significantly to their stability, but at the same time limits the potential for the independent activities and possible challenges to the directions of governmental policy. On other hand, specifically focused youth service organisations should be supported by public money.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Youth policy plans should be revised more often on the municipal and provincial level. At the moment, local youth policy plans are developed for a period of three years, Brussels for five years and for provinces for a 6-year period. Since the Flemish government sets the priorities of youth policy for a shorter period, it would seem advisable to do the same at the local level.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Flemish Youth Council and local/provincial councils should establish closer links and cooperation. The international team didn't detect communication channels between the Flemish Youth Council and local/provincial councils nor any kind of initiative to empower these bodies coming from the Flemish Youth Council during its visits, although we have received information on some initiatives after national hearing. Nevertheless, the review team believes that the Flemish Youth Council should claim a more active role and represent a contact point and resource centre for the local/provincial councils.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Youth Councils should establish a system of following their impact on decision-making processes. The Flemish Youth Council has initiated more than a half of the advice given to the government, but there seems to be no evidence on how much of its advice has been accepted, which would provide at least some picture of the extent to which the structured voice of young people is authentically respected.

RECOMMENDATION 11

Special attention requiring more efforts should be paid to the Brussels Region. The high percentage of young people, migrants and low skilled individuals, accompanied by high levels of unemployment, requires coordinated efforts together with the French Community. The international review team commends the efforts being made in the setting up of a database bringing together data from all employment-related institutions in Belgium. However, youth work has the potential to play a greater role in combating low educational participation and attainment, and unemployment, in order to support the re-engagement of many more disadvantaged young people into society.

Chapter 3

Youth policy in the French-speaking Community

The living conditions of young people: demographic and societal context

The French-speaking Community has specific competencies within the Walloon Region which is the predominantly French-speaking southern region of Belgium, and in the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. The French-speaking Community covers an area of around 17 000 km², and it has approximately 4,000,000 inhabitants. The Flemish Region has merged its institutions with the Flemish Community, whereas the Walloon Region and the French-speaking Community of Belgium remain rather separate. The Region of Walloon makes up more than a half of the territory of Belgium but with only a third of its population. Wallonia has 262 municipalities (9 German-speaking) whereas the number of the municipalities in the Brussels-Capital Region is 19. The legislative power is exercised by a Parliament and a Government. The Parliament consists of 94 members: the 75 elected representatives of the Walloon Parliament and 19 French-speaking elected representatives of the Parliament of Brussels-Capital Region. The Parliament and the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region were created during the State Reform of 1988-89. The Walloon and Flemish Region have had theirs since 1980. There are six regional sub-entities in the French-speaking Community: five provinces (Walloon Brabant, Liège, Luxembourg, Hainaut, and Namur) and the region of Brussels capital. Each of these sub-entities has competences in the field of youth, but there is no systematic coordinating structure to guarantee the consistency between these entities. The Government of the French-speaking Community consists of a maximum of eight members, including the Minister-President. The Government has seven ministers at the moment, one of them being the Minister of Youth and Youth Welfare. In 2008, 37 percent of the total population in the French-speaking community was under 30 years old.

Until the middle of the 20th century, Wallonia was the most prosperous half of Belgium. Since World War II, however, the importance of heavy industry has greatly declined, and the Flemish Region surpassed Wallonia in socioeconomic terms as Wallonia economically declined. The French-speaking Community now suffers from structural problems which are visible in high unemployment and a high percentage of low-skilled workers. Wallonia has a lower GDP per capita than Flanders.

After travelling across Belgium the international team's impression comes close to Marco Martiniello's (2010, p.167) claim that we have entered "a process of diversification of European diversity", not only in ethnic or national terms but also in regional terms. The team witnessed a high variety of cultural richness but also various regional inequalities regarding opportunity structures for young people living in different parts of Belgium. This is true both in terms of living conditions, delivery of services and young people's daily life. These differential possibilities and resources become visible particularly with regard to young people's access to education and labour market, but also in terms of their societal engagement and inclusion. The education system in the French-speaking community, according to PISA scores, does not lead to as good school results as Flemish

educational provision. Unemployment rates in Wallonia are nearly twice as high as in Flanders. The current situation in the French-speaking Community – together with the world economic downturn, European challenges related to aging societies and welfare regimes undergoing fundamental changes – form diverse parameters for young people living in this part of Belgium today.

The need for a comprehensive policy view is evident in Belgium. Our interlocutors made repeated assertions about vertical and horizontal complexities resulting in, for example, a problematic gap between educational and employment systems (see Chapter 5). This observation seems to be particularly relevant in the Brussels Region where young people are affected by the consequences of an increasingly competitive educational and labour market as well as urban segregation. Furthermore, in former industrial milieu such as Charleroi there is now a huge gulf between current labour market structures and the labour force. A shared concern in the field is how former industrial sites should meet post-industrial conditions, and how this concern applies the youth sector. As a consequence of recent structural changes, one third of young people under 25 years receive social benefit (integration income) in the Charleroi area. In the municipality of Couvin the youth work professionals expressed anxiety about growing poverty and a decreasing number of jobs available for local young people. They were also seriously concerned about young people's simultaneous reluctance to move out of Couvin to study and work, and their decreasing motivation to engage themselves in the community.

The insecure position of young people is not simply related to their vulnerable status in socioeconomic terms. It may also imply a certain fragility of social networks and a loose sense of moral belonging to the community – the lack of legitimate citizenship in more symbolic terms. The latter dimension of instability is particularly challenging for the youth field, especially in the French-speaking Community, where the political and cultural approach has been strongly anchored within the tradition of citizenship education, as the concept of young people being educated to be Citizens who are Responsible, Active, Critical and Solidary (CRACS) reveals.

Youth policy on the move: institutional context

There is an evident need for innovative policy measures, to make sense of the current 'social condition'¹¹ of young people's lives. The French-speaking Community, having traditionally situated youth policy within the framework of socio-cultural policy spheres (as indeed has the Flemish Community), has taken current challenges of young people very seriously. The Government of the French-speaking Community has prepared a comprehensive reform of youth policy. The Government's Youth Plan is a welcome initiative to better recognize and deal with current key issues of youth policy. The Youth Plan has been the primary concern also for the international review team, as the Cabinet of the Minister for Youth wished to receive comments and suggestions on the content and the process related to the reform.

¹¹ This was a term first used in youth policy thinking by Paul Willis, in 1984. His 'youth review' for the municipality of Wolverhampton in the industrial heartland of England maintained that there needed to be a paradigm shift in approaches to youth policy on account of the fracturing of youth transitions as a result of the industrial collapse and the resultant marginalisation of the many young people who hitherto, even without formal educational qualifications, would have found work in manual labour and on the factory floor.

A two-fold aim behind the preparation of the Youth Plan is, on the one hand, to strengthen the profile of youth policy as a significant policy sector, and, on the other, to integrate youth policy more effectively in other arenas of public policy. Furthermore, the aim is to combine universal and general approaches (youth service) with more specialized provision (youth welfare and youth aid/protection).

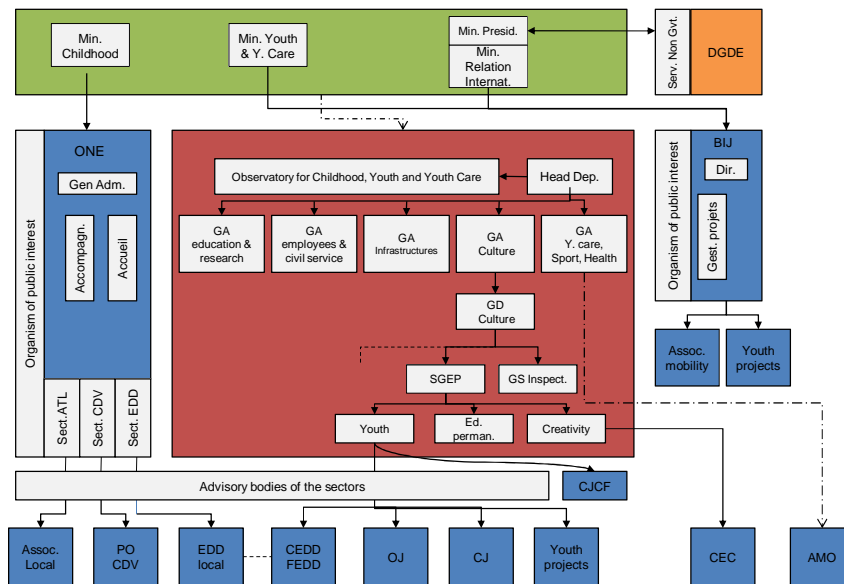
Currently, general youth policy is administered within the Government of French-speaking Community, by its Minister for Youth and Youth Welfare (since 2009, youth policy and youth aid policy are the competences of the same minister), assisted by various civil service departments. The Youth Service (another English translation used is Youth Department) is in charge of the implementation of the youth policy in the French-speaking Community. The Youth Service is concerned with multiple issues relating to young people, whether organized or not. However, it has a privileged relationship with the associative sector, notably the recognized associations: youth organizations, mainly composed of youth movements with young people up to 30 years and diverse youth service structures (altogether 92, subsidized by the French-speaking Community with approximately 13,700,000€ in 2010) as well as youth centres, youth hostels and youth information structures (altogether 193, subsidized by the French-speaking Community with approximately 12,032,000€ in 2010).

There are diverse decrees that concern youth policy implementation at the local level, such as a decree for youth associations and a decree for youth centres. Moreover, particular services have their own decree (such as homework schools). The Youth Service provides financial, institutional and training support for those implementing youth policy objectives at the local level. In addition to this, the Youth Service conducts regular dialogue and consultation with plenty of official representative bodies of the sector: the Advisory Commission of the Youth Organizations (*Commission Consultative des Organisations de Jeunesse*, CCOJ), the Advisory Commission of the Youth Centres and Youth Facilities (*la Commission Consultative des Maisons et Centres de Jeunes*, CCMCJ) and the French-speaking Community's Youth Council (*le Conseil de la Jeunesse de la Communauté française*, CJCF).

What comes to more specialized provision, welfare-related youth aid, youth care and the protection of young people and their families in the French-speaking Community are a combination of public services and associative, publicly funded, initiatives, with their own decrees. Also these services are currently incorporated under one transversal youth policy umbrella, even if they may be partly administered by the Ministry of Childhood. The Directorate General for Youth Welfare (*Direction Générale de l'Aide à la Jeunesse*) manages the services relating to youth welfare and protection. Important public institutions in this respect are, among others, the Birth and Child Office (*l'Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance*, ONE) and the General Delegate for Children's Rights (*le Délégué Général de la Communauté Française aux Droits de l'Enfant*). The International Office for Youth (*Bureau International Jeunesse*, BIJ) is responsible for the management and implementation of international youth exchanges in the French-speaking Community – both in terms of advice, information, training and financial support of the projects. The Office is co-managed by the Directorate-General for Culture and by the Wallonie-Bruxelles International in order to guarantee a meaningful consistency in administrative terms. It represents the French-speaking Community of Belgium in different

international collaborative structures and is a national agency of the French-speaking community for the European youth exchange programmes (currently Youth in Action).

Organigram of the French-speaking Community Youth Policy



Rapid changes that characterize the field of youth policy – and Belgian society more generally – imply the need for a revised understanding of youth. There are plenty of different conceptions of young people, partly due to the variety of sectors and decrees that bear on the youth policy field, partly due to the diversity of professional cultures involved. The French-speaking Community seems to be rather liberal in terms of age definitions and, therefore, a unequivocal understanding of young people has never existed, at least not in any strict form. The international review team noted the variations within the French-speaking Community: for example, the youth centres that work primarily with young people between the ages of 12 and 26 years; the homework support contexts where the main focus is on 6-12 years old children; and the under 30 years old person who is categorized as young within the framework of youth organisations. The Government's Youth Plan is designed to focus on young people between the years of 12-25 – thus incorporating young adults within the youth policy framework. One of the strengths in the French-speaking Community is its ability to also conceptualize youth policy matters in generational terms, thus promoting diverse intergenerational encounters, not only between adult (professionals) and young people but also between children and youth, or between young people and the elderly.

Vertical and horizontal complexities: Community and local practices

The federal structure of Belgian society provides both possibilities and challenges for the implementation of transversal youth policy at the Community level. Moreover, the federal model contributes easily to hard bureaucracy. Overlapping structures, contesting decrees, complex funding arrangements, multiple stakeholders and diversity of training rules produce a challenging framework for those working in the field. Fundamental agendas for the work done under the auspices of 'youth policy' also vary. For instance, respondents at the local level mentioned a tension between economic necessities at the Federal level and the maintenance of a certain emancipatory spirit when working with young people at the Community or Municipal/local level. A particular case in this respect is Brussels where the administrative borders between the capital Region of Brussels and the services of the French-speaking Community situated in Brussels are complicated from the perspective of young service users.

A careful assessment of the current youth policy structure is strategically useful right now since the French-speaking Community aims at enhancing the coordination and consistence of the services (the Youth Plan).

The ethos of subsidiarity: isolated or free municipalities?

When visiting diverse local contexts in the youth field, it became evident that vertical complexities (Federal, Regional, Municipal) imply particular challenges when putting horizontal policy services into practice (cross-agency partnerships).

One particularity in the field of youth policy across all three Communities is its strong ethos of subsidiarity. In the French-speaking Community, this framework is based on the coexistence of three main stakeholders: the French-speaking Community's Government, its public authorities (Youth Service in particular) and a highly diverse field of associations with their professionals and voluntary workers. Non-profit associations are the main service providers at the local level. The law subdivides the associations into five major categories: youth movements, thematic movements, service associations, federations of youth organisations and federations of youth centres. The principle of subsidiarity means that the public authorities at the community level delegate the operative responsibility for the most part to the associations. In addition to the youth organisations, there are youth centres (often run by associations), homework schools, and training courses, as well as individual projects.

The autonomous position of associations is indicative of their potential flexibility. The principle of autonomy is reflected in the innovative associative life with its committed persons, both employed and voluntary workers. However, it may also imply a certain fragility connected with the potentially segmented character of the sector. Four particular challenges of subsidiarity observed by the international review team during two visits to the French-speaking community are raised below.

(i) Freedom or fragmentation?

First, a sort of negotiated autonomy given to associations as the main service providers implies the richness of the local youth policy arrangements. It may also lead to unintended consequences in terms of the application of services. There is no official local youth policy structure in the French-speaking community, and municipalities differ considerably when it comes to their investment in youth work. Moreover, municipalities may implement youth policy priorities in various ways. This

autonomy must be, without doubt, considered a strength as it allows reacting on local specificities. The international team found also a potential paradox between autonomy and inconsistency of services. There is a risk of reinforcing a differentiated – and as such, unequal – structure of services available for young people depending on the local context.

To fight against this risk, a process of overall harmonization of the youth policies is currently under way. To give one example, an Associative Charter is being produced, aspiring to a more consistent deal between public authorities and the third sector. The harmonization is a delicate matter, particularly in the youth sector, which has traditionally been based on a strong voluntary ethos. In the French-speaking Community these reforms have also met predictable concern amongst people working in the field at the local level: how to promote professionalism without falling into unhelpful professionalization of the youth field¹²?

All in all, the aim for better coherence is certainly a relevant step in the development of transversality at the local level. This is particularly significant in the context where the sector as a whole faces challenges of institutional complexity which are rooted in the particular administrative structures of the country. Many respondents were seriously concerned about the lack of awareness among local people about the kinds of services that are available: young people (and their parents) often do not know where to turn when they need advice or service.

(ii) Networking or isolation?

Second, the autonomy of the Municipalities, which is anchored in the principle of subsidiarity, is a critical matter if it is connected to a scattered service structure. The French-speaking Community has actively taken this challenge into account. The cabinet advisers of the Minister of Youth and Youth Welfare informed the international review team about the system of local coordination, implemented in many Municipalities (219) in the French-speaking Community by the Minister in charge of Childhood, with a part-time coordinator who, with the assistance of the municipality, creates a committee with different representatives – from schools, free time organisers, associations and other relevant stakeholders. The Community funds the part-time work of the coordinator. However, the international review team also heard critical views from those directly involved in the work at the local level: “Municipalities are living in a political vacuum”. By this they meant a mismatch between the huge tasks expected of the youth sector but its scarce resources and weak networking. The international review team saw several local examples where a non-profit organisation runs a complex set of services, thus (partly) compensating for the local deficit of traditional welfare sectors (such as social, educational and employment services). There is a clear

¹² This is, of course, not just a tension within the French-speaking Community of Belgium. Throughout the European context, but particularly within the European Union, as more attention is paid to youth policy and youth work (with an accompanying debate about recognition and quality standards), a core site of contention is the debate about the relationship between professionalism and professionalization. Given that most youth work, broadly conceived, is clearly delivered by people working voluntarily, professionalization is not the issue, but professionalism is. On the other hand, for the small proportion of youth workers in full-time paid employment, both professionalism and professionalization are important platforms for debate, for the latter enhances pay and conditions, and ‘professional status’. See the Resolution on Youth Work produced following the first European Youth Work Convention, held in Gent during Belgium’s Presidency of the European Union, in July 2010.

need for better dialogue both within and across Municipalities. This can be seen as a particular challenge for diverse advisory committees working in the youth sector (such as CCOJ and CCMCJ).

The French-speaking community emphasizes the promotion of networking and partnerships, for example, in the Operational Plan 2009-2013 for the youth aid sector. The quest for partnerships, however, seems to be mostly limited to an essentially local approach rather than a broader inter-Municipal approach. As it is stated in the Plan, the networks may acquire an intrinsic value. Therefore a particular emphasis should be put on the qualitative methodology of collaboration: which kinds of network structures are needed in practice (formal vs. informal; systematic vs. ad hoc)? According to the Plan, there is a particular need for a more comprehensive understanding of professionalism in the youth aid field, on the one hand. On the other hand, there is a continuous discussion on the risks related to the instrumentalization of the field, especially that it may become too harnessed to wider societal agendas rather than focusing on the needs of the young individual.

(iii) Project governance: big tasks, small-scale initiatives

This leads us to the *third* challenge, namely a project-based structure of youth services in the French-speaking Community. The international team witnessed highly creative ways to face young people's living conditions at the local level. Small-scale projects are, indeed, responsible for complex matters related to school drop-outs, youth unemployment and other contemporary welfare-related challenges in young people's lives. "Someday the tasks must be re-defined in order to be realistic", was an observation made by a practitioner in the local context. The prevailing project-based governance is, of course, by no means a feature of just the youth sector. It is part of a European-wide tendency towards deregulation, privatization and competition, and it is increasingly embedded in the development of project-based welfare structures through commissioning and contracting.

Moreover, a common concern in the local field in the French-speaking Community, articulated particularly by those working in the Youth Service, is how to define, promote and assess the quality of the projects. There is a system of short-term assessment (yearly meetings with beneficiaries) and long-term assessment (the beneficiaries are contacted 1-2 year after the project to assess long-term consequences). In addition to this internal assessment, research-based external assessment and support is clearly needed. This sort of dialogue between researchers and practitioners would offer relevant data for discussion about the better coordination between, for example, unemployment policy at the federal level and local initiatives, which are at risk of living in two distinct worlds (though see Chapter 5).

(iv) What constitutes 'a youth issue' at the local level? The intersection between youth, social and educational frameworks

Fourth, the ethos of subsidiarity in the French-speaking Community implies autonomy in the sense that there is no clear inter-Municipal coherence as to what constitutes a youth issue at the local level. Particular attention needs to be paid to marginal zones in the youth field. This may imply associations which are not recognized youth associations (such as migrant associations) or marginal actors and issues in the youth field. One issue that was considered too marginal by our respondents concerned the participation of young people with disabilities, at least in the local contexts.

Having provided a somewhat abstract assessment of some challenges of youth policy within the French-speaking Community, there follows a short insight into how these challenges concretely characterize youth services at the local level. Through this analysis we aim to highlight the diversity of successful multi-professional initiatives at the local level. Moreover, we want to recognize the impressive commitment of the people engaged in the cross-sectoral youth field.

SAS Compas-Format (*le Service d'Accrochage Scolaire*) represents an effective combination of the youth work service, youth aid service, the educational service and social services. It is a local service whose aim is to take care of the re-integration of young people to the educational system. It characterizes one of the strengths of the youth sector in the French-speaking community, namely an innovative mixture between socio-culturally oriented community youth work (work with groups) and the fight against young people's exclusion (work with individuals). This framework was not only presented as a free choice of local authorities. It was also seen as an economic necessity: "We don't have recourses to maintain the quality of services alone".

Homework schools (*Écoles des Devoirs*, ie. Liège) is a significant service structure which combines youth work approaches with education in line with the ethos of *l'éducation permanente*. This service is situated metaphorically "in the middle of community": at the intersection of school, child policy and child care, youth work and the family. The challenge of this sector is that it worked for a long time before getting a legal framework for the action. Nevertheless, the sector engages a large number of stakeholders; currently there are 360 homework schools in the French-speaking Community. The service has traditionally been within the responsibilities of two ministers – for childhood and for youth – though subsidized by the Birth and Child Office (ONE). Despite this arrangement, some of those working in the homework schools were concerned about their poor knowledge on youth issues. As one person put it, "We do not know anything about teenagers".

Public social assistance centres (*Les Centres Public d'Action Sociale*, CPAS, ie. Charleroi) is a particular structure of social services with well-established contacts to other relevant welfare services such as the labour market sector, both public and private. Among others, there are social workers, psychologists, debt counsellors and medical personnel working in these centres. Here, again, the international review team found an innovative application of the socio-cultural approach to fight against the vulnerable position of people living in Charleroi. Diverse forms of community engagement are among the primary objectives of the work in the centre of Charleroi. As one of the social workers in the centre stated: "Young people do not know much about local structures and structures do not know much about young people". Institutional complexities may hamper the creation of clear lines around principles of confidentiality with young people.

Open youth aid (*Les Services d'Aide en Milieu Ouvert*, AMO, ie. Couvin) is, as well, a significant structure combining principles of prevention and correction. The first priority is to help young people to thrive in their living environment and in their relationships with the social environment (among other things, at school, at home, and in their neighbourhood) by giving them individual help, by supporting their projects, by helping them to cope with their family and school, and to deal with administrative and legal difficulties. Regardless of its importance, and the number of AMOs in Wallonia and Brussels (ca 60¹³ in 2010, according to the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy's Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Belgium), the open youth service seems to maintain a

¹³¹³ In 2012, there are 81 AMOs according to the French-speaking Community's own review.

certain ethos of voluntarism. This manifests a particular quest to secure longer-term professional commitment from the authorities and greater acknowledgement of the service.

One additional example of the successful multi-professional community approach in the context of corrective work with troubled and troublesome young people was found in Saint Servais at the residential institution for youth aid and correction.

CEDAS (*Le Centre de Développement et d'Animation Schaerbeekois*, Brussels, Molenbeek) is a youth centre in the northern quarter of Brussels, in a poor neighbourhood with a bad reputation due to a high youth unemployment rate (ca 40% in 2009) and a high proportion of children and youth, among other things (Rea et al 2009; *La Situation des Jeunes en Belgique Francophone* 2010). CEDAS is strongly embedded in the values related to CRACS. This principle gives impetus to diverse approaches such as a particular commitment to the reception of the inhabitants, a strong emphasis on the identity work of the participants in the centre, action-based education for diversity (ie. cohabitation of physical and moral education), and an enhanced understanding of the community.

The youth centre applies an intergenerational approach to the community work. The emphasis is on the social rather than biological or legal age, and the house is open for people from 6 to 81 years. There are different programmes and spaces available for separate groups (under 14, 14-18, over 18 years). A life course perspective to the community work is advanced, and local people seem to continue to visit the house from their early childhood. There is a particular system of tutorship where young adults are encouraged to become tutors for younger people. This kind of intergenerational approach demands a particular engagement from the part of the people working in the centre. Indeed, the international review team was impressed with a strong and long-term commitment among the people working in CEDAS – the same kind of attitude was evident in many other institutional contexts in the French-speaking Community.

These kinds of mixed-method approaches are courageous tools to promote transversal frameworks. They may also produce certain ambiguities around the professional identity of the people working in the field. Due to its current youth policy reform, a classic dilemma regarding how to conceive young people in the youth field – as individual clients of the services, as youth cultural groups or as community actors – seemed to be particularly pertinent in the context of the French-speaking Community. The local professionals talked about the tension between the political world, depicted as being overwhelmed by the individualized economic imperative, and the values of social integration and local democracy. Moreover, the current fragmentation of young people's life course demands particular resources when working with young adults who are easily situated on the margins of a variety of services. There is a big issue around casting young people out at the age of 18, when support services previously available for them as 'children' are stopped.

Other policy fields affecting young people

Education

The successful educational career and a smooth transition from education to employment are among the most important issues in the current policy fields concerning youth. This is true also in the context of the French-speaking Community, where the youth sector has traditionally focused mostly on the intersection between youth and cultural policy issues.

According to the federal structure, the decisions about education provision are made by the three communities. In the French-speaking Community, the education is compulsory from 6 years up to the age of 18 years. The educational structure is divided into four categories: kindergarten (2-5 years), primary education (6-12 years), secondary education (13-18 years), and higher education. The public school is free of charge. There is also private education, but this is subsidised by the Communities, who set the conditions and standards.

Researchers have distinguished three main challenges that young people and young adults face in the French-speaking Community lack of appropriate education, unemployment and diverse forms of discrimination at the everyday level (Martiniello 2010; Rea et al 2009). One relevant context in this respect is the crossroads between the fields of education and youth policy. Andrea Rea and his research team state (2009), that the education of young people is a selective process whereby social inequalities may translate into educational inequalities, which in turn reproduce the former (see also the report on poverty by the General Delegate of Children's Rights 2009). In terms of education, there is a convergence of poor performance in education, a polarization of schools into good and poor schools, and weak official recognition of diplomas acquired outside Belgium.

The evidence of the report on educational divergence between the Flemish and the French-speaking Community (2011) suggests that there is a significant educational attainment gap between the Flemish and French-speaking Communities. The dominant view is that poor situation in economic terms in several French-speaking areas contribute to a great extent to vulnerable educational performance. However, challenges do not rest only at the economic level but also in young people's local neighbourhoods – such as, the family, teaching staff and peer environments. One conclusion of this report is that adopting education reforms without changing social policy more broadly would simply punish educators for factors beyond their control.

The PISA-surveys reveal that there are far more pupils with migrant status in the French-speaking schools than in the Flemish schools. Consequently, a particular attention should be paid to the integration-related issues in the youth and educational field, with a commitment to go beyond institutional cleavages. Successful examples of the cross-sectoral collaboration between youth, educational and social services at the local level have been highlighted in the previous chapter. Moreover, the legal framework manifests the French-speaking Community's aim to promote not only young people's skills but also a social dimension of learning at school. To give one example, the decree related to the positive discrimination at school is an important measure to enhance equality in the field of education. The decree provides the criteria for the allocation of resources to

educational institutions (ie. the proportion of unemployed persons with respect to the global population; the proportion of foreign nationals).

The conditions of cross-sectoral communication were widely discussed during the visits of the international review team. Some respondents referred to the Youth Plan which they regarded as a strategic document also in terms of strengthening the collaboration between the education and the youth sector. According to these people, the relations between the formal and non-formal education sector are not always constructive. “Schools need to be more open to citizenship”, stated one of the respondents. The same concern was expressed by the representatives of CRECCIDE (*Carrefour Régional et Communautaire de la Citoyenneté et de la Démocratie*), a non-profit federation which aims to promote equality and democracy in the context of education in Wallonia. The engagement of citizenship education of the French-speaking Community is reflected in the strong tradition of a sort of life-long learning, called ‘*éducation permanente*’ in French.

Youth employment

Alongside with education, youth employment has become a key youth political issue in the French-speaking Community, regardless of the fact that employment matters belong for the most part to the regional competences. Evidently, this emphasis reflects an economic crisis throughout in Europe – including Belgium. It is also connected with an increasingly comprehensive framework of youth policy, covering transversal areas of young people’s life.

The international review team became well aware of the ruptures between education and employment services. Even if there are increasing efforts to fulfil the gaps, this is still a big debate at all levels of the society. As highlighted in the report (see Chapter 5), youth sector may compensate for the deficit of employment services, both in the Capital region and in rural areas. In some parts of the Community local partnerships with employment and training services as well as with enterprises seem well structured and functioning. In other parts there seems to be overlaps or gaps as to the division of labour among different partners. The particular issue in this respect, raised during the visits of the international review team, is the complexity of the unemployment and social benefit systems in Belgium. The complexity of the system is attributed to the fact that responsibilities are shared across different actors. At the regional levels of Wallonia and Brussels, there are public employment services, Forem for Wallonia (*le Service Public Wallon de l'Emploi et de la Formation*) and ACTIRIS, which can be considered an important crossroads of different networks and partnerships.

Moreover, the international team witnessed a certain tension between increasingly fragmented labour market structures and local projects in terms of balancing demand and supply. The risk of preparing young people for jobs that don’t exist is, by no means, a particular problem of the French-speaking Community. At its heart is the essential question as to whether the structural problems related to young people’s labour market position may ever be solved solely by promoting the skills of the individuals concerned. There were several examples given of young people holding multiple certificates but who were still unemployed.

The unemployment rate of young people in Wallonia is more than twice as high as in Flanders. It has increased between 2008 and 2009 from 27.5% to 30.5%. The youth unemployment rate is highest in the Capital region but the change is slightly smaller than in Flanders and Wallonia. The same

imbalance characterizes the early school leavers' rate by region: 8.5% in Flanders in 2008 and 19.9% and 15.2% respectively in Brussels and Wallonia in 2009. A central concern continues to be high unemployment rates among young immigrants in Belgium. (EEO Review 2010.) Moreover, in terms of job security, young workers are over-represented in the area of temporary work: nearly 65 % of temporary workers are aged under 30. The EEO (2010) has noted that young people may find it extremely hard to escape from this.

Current key issues for youth policy

In this section four current challenges of the youth policy in the French-speaking Community will be addressed (neighbourhood policy; multiculturalism; youth engagement; evidence-based policy making). According to the international review team, all of them should be seen as important youth political cornerstones.

Neighbourhood policy: an engine or restraint to mobility and openness?

A strong neighbourhood commitment of the French-speaking Community has already been described earlier. Here, some critical points related to this spirit are taken up, in order to encourage the French-speaking Community to develop further their rich tradition linked with the neighbourhood and mobility frameworks. Even if mobility inside Belgium has increased among young people – in particular, Walloons working in Flanders – there are still rural areas with strictly defined local 'comfort zones'. The areas where people feel themselves safe can be geographically very limited and, developmentally, very limiting. This issue has been clearly pointed out also by the General Delegate for Children's Rights in the report on poverty of children, young people and their families (2009).

There seemed to be a strong pride in the community philosophy among the people the international review team met at the local level. In some of the rural communities the aim to promote young people's possibilities for international exchange seemed remote for the people working with young people, and the concrete examples of inter-municipal community work were scarce¹⁴. It was evident for the respondents in the rural contexts that new measures and methods are needed to encourage young people's sense of citizenship in broad terms. However, new methods, such as social media as one potentially significant resource for 'enlarged community work' in the virtual spheres, did not seem to be actively applied.

¹⁴ Neighbourhood comfort zones really do sustain comfort in uncomfortable times. In the original 'status zero studies' (Istance et al. 1994, Istance and Williamson 1996), there were dramatic qualitative differences between the young people living outside of education, training or employment in the city (studied in 1993) and those in similar circumstances in the 'traditional' communities of the Welsh valleys (studied in 1995). The former group were isolated, unsupported and often engaged in 'survival offending', yet they were optimistic about the future, for they lived in a relatively buoyant economic environment. The latter group was supported both materially and emotionally by members of their extended families and was not currently experiencing significant hardship, but they were deeply pessimistic about the future in an environment of industrial decay and high unemployment. They knew that, to stand any chance of a 'future', they needed to move away, yet to move away or explore opportunities further afield risked losing the comfort zone that was currently supporting them.

The question of mobility does not concern only young people. Some local professionals interviewed were concerned about a too strong territorialization of the project structure, leading to a localized conception of professionalism in the youth field. One debate going on right now concerns the correct level of harmonization of the competences of the youth sector (the question of training and qualifications): To what extent should the training be harmonized in the context of recognized youth services? In the current situation, there is a common framework only for the training of the people working in the responsible position (the head or coordinator) in the youth centres. Otherwise the level and quality of training is mostly a decentralized matter which is determined at the level of each youth association.

The international review team discerned a sort of tension in terms of how internal and international mobility was discussed and prioritized among respondents. A 19-year-old girl's statement represents one end of the continuum: "We must first work in our own community and after that we can look at international exchange". At the other end of the continuum we have a claim of the Youth Council representative: "It is easier to have internal mobility once young people have experienced international mobility". This inconsistent picture has to do with the (thickness of) the international relations of the Belgian society but also to a certain thinness of Belgian citizenship. International mobility is depicted as a priority aim for youth policy. Still, only weak links between local youth work and international programmes were presented to the international team, in the rural areas. In these contexts the impression was that it is up to young people how mobile (and multilingual) they want to be. This challenge was recognized by those responsible for international mobility at the Community level. Each year around 3,000 young people take part in these processes, thanks to well-designed and committed coordination work done within the framework of the International Office for Youth (BIJ) at the Community level. Around half of the mobility programmes and projects are realised outside European exchange structures. This reveals the commitment of the French-speaking Community (notably BIJ) to engage young people to international mobility. However, a significant question is also whether European exchange structures are fully able to meet existing challenges related to local circumstances in the French-speaking Community of Belgium, at least in the remote areas.

Multiculturalism: policy frameworks, grey zones

Belgium is a unique country not only for the Belgians but also for the immigrants entering this sphere. These people meet three different socioeconomic circumstances, institutional arrangements and service structures depending on the Community in which they arrive. What's more – and even more importantly – they face dissimilar cultural understandings as to the cornerstones of living together in a society (citizenship, equality, diversity, discrimination). Marco Martiniello states that, in French-speaking Community, the official system approximates to the French republican model, where everyone is supposed to be primarily an equal citizen, and the differences between individuals according to ethnic origin, religion, or other factors do not count, at least in political discourse. Anyhow, in the French-speaking Community, there has been a progressive opening towards more of an intercultural society, with a need to take diverse group-based attachments, rights and responsibilities into account.

The challenge that the French-speaking Community is facing right now is how to find a sensible mixture between social cohesion and unity, on the one hand, and, on the other, respect for diversity

and awareness of discrimination at all levels of society. Many Belgian researchers state that there is no cross-sectoral vision about what should be done with newcomers. Previous waves of immigrants seem to be successfully integrated and therefore, the problems of current immigration are not seen as a key political concern in the French-speaking Community. Moreover, due to the federal structure of the country, the question of immigration is very delicate, revealing many complexities of the country such as the challenge of multilingualism that the immigrants face, together with many institutional and cultural varieties in both vertical and horizontal terms.

These statements can be applied also in the youth field. Immigration and multiculturalism serve as an excellent example of how complex political arrangements at the Federal level may lead to scattered policies and segmented practices at the Regional, Community and Municipal/local level. To give one concrete example, a school-age young person moving to Brussels from the Region of Wallonia is required to speak the Flemish language – an official requirement which does not concern the French-speaking Community outside the capital region. Therefore it may be difficult for this person to ‘fit in’ in the multilingual capital. The multilingualism was not only presented as an asset for the international review team. In spite of being a multilingual society, language was several times mentioned as a barrier both for internal and external mobility. Indeed, in spite of the bilingual character of the capital Region in statistical terms, there is a shortage of structured arrangements which would enable real multilingual encounters in the youth field.

The international review team visited various local contexts which functioned according to an ‘open door philosophy’. This principle implies that the services are open for all young people, regardless of their background. This is seen as a fundamental prerequisite for also fulfilling the quest for equality in political terms. As one youth professional stated, “For us, a young person is a young person. If we give priority, it is for those more at risk.” This kind of understanding of equality in terms of an open door philosophy has much potential but it also has possible drawbacks. The policy frames emphasizing equal opportunities may lead to unequal outcomes and differentiated opportunity structures if there is not sufficient awareness in terms of the overall stratification of the society, together with the political will for targeted practices and positive action.

Integration policy is, for the most part, a Community responsibility (immigration is, of course, a federal duty). From the information furnished to the international review team, there is no systematic coordination between youth and integration sectors. This poses particular challenges for the youth policy sector, if it is to make sense of diverse integration-related issues affecting young people in meaningful terms.

The international review team felt that respondents in the youth field seemed rather unaware of the anti-discrimination law implemented in 2007. Or this particular legislation was not seen as imposing on the Community in any direct manner. However, according to the Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, a human rights body of the Council of Europe (ECRI 2009), the persistence of direct and indirect racial discrimination in access to housing and public services continues to be a problem affecting primarily non-citizens and people of immigrant background. These matters are to be seen as the Community competence, as well.

Regardless of these policy challenges, the international review team visited many youth houses or projects where the integration of young people from different backgrounds was highly successful. Many times this achievement was due to particular commitment of the local staff, together with a

particular investment in local partnerships. These kinds of practices should represent an institutionalized, and as such mandatory, structure.

All in all, a clear policy framework is an important precondition for the youth sector to prevent and combat everyday discrimination by and against young people. This seems to be the case both at the level of training of youth workers, awareness-raising among workers and young people, or development of concrete targeted measures. The special case is Brussels where the percentage of the foreign-born and immigrant origin population is estimated to be close to 50% of the population. Brussels is a particular case also in institutional terms because it represents a crossroads between the Flemish view and the French-speaking Community view of how integration should be governed. Moreover, the disputes around the co-existence of French and Dutch languages imply particular challenges in terms of the integration of foreign inhabitants to the capital.

Youth engagement

Successful integration does not concern only welfare-related policy issues such as integration of young people to education and labour market. It implies also an inclusive idea of democracy and engagement of young people from different backgrounds, at every levels of society. This, in turn, is related to a more fundamental question on how public space is understood in the French-speaking community. As far as public space is concerned, special attention should be given to the engagement of 'ordinary young people', youth groups and neighbourhoods, contributing also to a broad sense of moral belonging to the community, regardless of the individual's formal status as immigrant, unemployed, or something else. The international review team did not have the opportunity to meet young people outside service structures. Nor, within the French Community and in its contact with French-speaking Brussels, did it meet any informal youth groups, acting outside registered associations (ie. local youth cultural groups, non-registered organisations working, for example, against discrimination).

Young people are engaged in their local environments at many levels: as political actors in different decision-making spheres, as beneficiaries of the services, and as citizens in numerous formal and informal (youth cultural) milieus, both public and semi-public. The challenges related to contemporary democracy, from local to federal, have been taken actively into account in the Belgian youth policy context, where a lot of attention has been directed towards the creation of representative advisory committees and councils at the Community level. Without wishing to underestimate the strong commitment of the people in these committees and councils, and the significance of the work they are doing, there are certain challenges in terms of consistency of these bodies which should be further analysed. One relevant question is how to promote meaningful modes of engagement among those being already inside organised consultation structures – and also those outside. Migrant youth organisations seem to traditionally be weakly represented in the French-speaking Community Youth Council, and matters related to migration and integration – to the surprise of the international review team – do not seem to inform in any significant way the agenda of the Youth Council.

The French-speaking Community addresses many requests to the Youth Council, which is seen as a key representative body for young people. In the Youth Council of the French-speaking Community, 60% of the members come from diverse youth organisations or youth movements, 30% come from youth aid and student groups and 10% come from elsewhere. The relatively high amount of the

representatives of the associations has declined after the reform in 2009 but it still remains quite high. The crucial question is how the current structure of the Youth Council (in the French-speaking Community and elsewhere), combining the idea of associative and non-associative representation, is able to successfully recognize the problems and possibilities that are relevant to all young people living in Belgium, inside and across Communities? Moreover, a delicate issue is how easy it is for the Youth Council – depending economically on the public authorities – to take up political issues that are declared as ‘too sensitive’ at the public level. The Youth Council gets the Government support and it has to meet a range of expectations from the Government. Nevertheless, it has a potentially powerful proactive role if it manages to elevate significant issues to the youth policy agenda at the Community level.

The Youth Council representatives complained about their difficulties in finding a solution to the problem of getting in touch with more ‘ordinary’ young people within the French-speaking Community. The international review team heard young people’s claims according to which “People of my age (19) don’t have a place in the society” or “There is a lack of trust and support”. A classic gap between aspirational active citizenship and lived citizenship (see Hall and Williamson 1999) is telling in this context. One young person described her collective attachment in the following way: “We are firstly Belgian. To be Walloon is about politics.” This kind of statement reflects a particular desire for the current joint actions, and perhaps more, of the Youth Councils in different communities (the informal J-Club arrangements that deal with federal, European and international issues).

In addition to the Youth Council, there are local youth and children’s councils. These are potentially open to young people from different backgrounds. However, the structure of local youth councils is informal by nature. The same challenge concerns young people’s participation possibilities and resources at school. In the context of local youth work, the French-speaking Community decree on youth centres presupposes young people’s engagement in the planning and implementation of the activities in the centre. In other words, one condition for public subsidy of the youth centre is that young people are included in the official working group and/or administrative committee with a certain percentage of all members. The international review team did not have an opportunity to talk with young people involved in this kind of administration.

What comes to the Regional level, there are only scarce possibilities for youth consultation and participation in relation to the political issues. This is a major challenge in the capital Region of Brussels, particularly if one takes into account the serious problems that young people may face in terms of their integration process in this area.

Knowledge in the evidence-based youth policy

The federal structure poses great challenges for the collection of adequate data on the Belgian population. The representatives of the Observatory of Childhood and Youth state that there is a serious shortage of comprehensive data in more general terms¹⁵. This concerns also particular topics such as immigration and integration. According to the report (2009) of European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI, the lack of centralized and accumulated data is a major

¹⁵ Observatory of Childhood and Youth is a department of the Ministry of the French-speaking Community of Belgium. It conducts and commissions researches and assessments on all relevant issues relating to children and young people as targets of policies conducted by the French Community.

problem both at the Community and Federal level. The lack of comprehensive data is in contradiction with the aim of promoting evidence-based policy making. However, new instruments are about to be implemented to get a better picture of integration and migration-related topics (ie. the diversity barometer, and the record of racist crimes maintained by the federal police). The Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism plays a leading role in this context. The data gathering instruments are not, however, sufficient without a political will among politicians, authorities and researchers to recognize and analyse parallel processes of stratification and multiculturalization of the society. The international review team felt a particular fear among the people interviewed, according to which negative stigmas of young people must be avoided. “We should not stigmatize immigrant youth as problem youth” was the answer of one respondent to the question of whether or not the data available are sensitive enough to recognize discrimination based on ethnicity and nationality.

The issue of sufficient evidence does not, however, concern institutional arrangements only. A more semantic question of what counts as ‘evidence’ is as important here. At the level of the Partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the youth field, the importance of youth work has been recognized, more than in the past discourses of European youth policy. Youth work is now embedded within the European Youth Strategy, though there are still debates about quite what it means and what its primary purpose is. There is now a Resolution on Youth Work in Europe, signed off by European youth ministers in November 2010. In the French-speaking Community, as everywhere in Europe, the youth sector is characterized by a particular dispute between ‘top down’ evidence and ‘bottom up’ experience (see, for example, Williamson 2006). According to the report assessing practices for using indicators in the youth sector (2011, p. A35), a challenge for Belgium (and the French-speaking community) is the overemphasis on administrative indicators, which focus on outputs of the actions undertaken, compared to wider indicators which would describe the situation of young people as recipients of youth policies. The representatives of the Observatory of Childhood and Youth acknowledged the need to develop the methodological processes of data gathering. Without a broad understanding of knowledge it is surely difficult to keep the transversal dynamics of the youth sector alive.

The Youth Plan

Background

The office of the Minister of Youth and Youth Welfare started drawing up the Youth Plan at the end of 2010, in cooperation with different agencies and officials, with the desire to establish a co-ordinated plan for youth. The combination of two competencies with somewhat different policy frameworks – general youth policy and special youth welfare policy (youth aid/protection) – was seen by the French-speaking Community Government as an important political step. There have been numerous initiatives to develop greater consistency and coordination within the youth field over the past 20 years, so the current initiative is, in some respects, by no means new. The current Minister of Youth and Youth Welfare is seeking to provide a new transversal dynamic to overcome existing tensions, particularly in terms of gaps and overlaps in vertical and horizontal arrangements. The objectives are ambitious and manifold, ranging from practical improvements of the youth sector

to the overall promotion of the youth sector's and young people's position in the society, both in material and symbolic terms.

The international review team had the possibility to meet the Minister and members of her cabinet as well as other relevant partners involved in the Youth Plan in April 2011. At that moment, the ministerial conference on the Youth Plan was to be organised, and another participatory survey was planned to take place over the summer. The consultation of the youth sector had been completed by the time of the meeting in April, and the Minister reported shortly about various opinions received from the relevant stakeholders, both positive and negative. The Plan was intended to be approved in December 2011. The evaluation of the process is scheduled to take place in 2013-2014. A decree is contemplated for the middle of 2014 in order to provide a methodological framework so that Youth Plans can be routinely developed and implemented in the future.

According to the procedure of the Council of Europe's youth policy review, the national partners in the review process have an opportunity to articulate key issues on which they would like the international review team to focus. The French-speaking Community decided to choose the Youth Plan as its key issue. Therefore, the international review team has endeavoured to make sense of the preparatory process of the Plan, both in procedural and substantive terms. The central concern is how the Youth Plan is able to recognize and respond to contemporary challenges related to young people's lives. To what extent is such an ambitious objective even realistic? The international review team was not provided with a complete draft version of the Youth Plan itself. This is unfortunate, and it clearly limits the specificity of some of the analysis conveyed.

The conceptual framework

The Youth Plan does not manifest only administrative development of the youth policy field in the French-speaking Community. Also overall conception of youth policy is in the middle of significant reform.

Howard Williamson's (2002) formulation of the expectations around 'extending entitlement', ensuring that the 'reach' of youth policy engages with those who are most in need of it, captures well the overall philosophy in the French-speaking community. There is a strong priority given to preventative intervention with the objective of maintaining children and young people in their ordinary living environments. In addition, the Minister herself emphasized the urgent need for going beyond Community competences to cover Regional matters such as employment and environment as well. With regard to employment, the multilayered employment policy in Belgium means that both the Federal government and the Regional or Community authorities are responsible for specific elements of policy linked to the labour market (such as vocational training, careers guidance, job seeking, and social security – see also Chapter 5). According to the EEO Review (2010), the present situation is characterized by a growing demand from the Regions to enlarge their remit.

When the whole policy context is on the move, the horizons are open with multiple possibilities. Openness, however, in turn may produce ambiguities.

As stated before, the French-speaking Community has a strong tradition of collectivist values (CRACS). Youth political actors everywhere, but arguably particularly in the French-speaking Community, face a tension between contemporary demands of individualism and personal

competences, and simultaneous concerns and commitments related to collectivism and communality. A crucial question in this context is whether the main policy driver is related to the promotion of young people's identity, social belonging and collective engagement in the society, or if the primary policy concern is to invest efficiently in individual young people's competences and qualifications, particularly in education and the labour market. This tension has to do with the essence of youth sector activity itself: whether it is supporting young people's path to adulthood or instead helping young people to be young (Williamson 2002)? Different conceptions are, of course, interrelated in practice. As a considerable body of research shows, material conditions may impoverish young people's possibilities and motives for taking an active public role in society. Still, in this strategic phase of the youth policy reform, it is important for the French-speaking Community to rethink the overall framework: whether the youth sector aims to guide young individuals into the decent adulthood (*youth sector as a transit zone*), or whether it rather strives to make a social forum available for young people in order to offer them collective tools to improve their daily life and living conditions (*youth sector as a social forum*) (Coussée et al, 2010)?

The preparatory process

The first visit of the international review team to the French-speaking Community took place in April 2011. In the course of this visit, the team aimed at making sense of procedural and substantive aspects of the Youth Plan. This was done by hearing the opinions, assessments and expectations of various respondents, who were asked specifically about the Youth Plan. Nearly everyone consulted was ready to discuss the matter in length – including those prospectively affected by it but who had not been involved in the preparation process in any direct way. The impression gained is that the youth field broadly shares a view that the reform implies great potential for the sector. The overall significance attached to the thorough preparatory process is certainly one reason that explains the great expectations attached to the planning phase, and the disputes it evoked.

First, due to an enlarged scope of the youth policy field, there is an increasing number of stakeholders who may be regarded as relevant partners in the process. The contested youth field, with its vague borders and the consequent dispute of who is 'in' and who is 'out', is clearly associated with the ambiguous character of the policy field, which may be considered both a richness and a puzzle. This, in turn, certainly confirms that, beyond those involved, there are also interest groups which consider themselves excluded from the process.

The political spirit of transversality does not automatically consolidate a holistic approach. Nor does it mean any easily shared responsibilities and dialogue. A transversal spirit may turn, in an unforeseeable manner, into the rivalry and segmentation of different interest groups if a special attention is not paid to the broad engagement of diverse groups of people. The concept of holism (originally a Greek word meaning *all, entire, total*) refers to a simple idea that all the properties of a given issue cannot be determined, understood or explained by its component parts alone. This was exactly one of the challenges mentioned by some respondents. However, there was an equal conviction that the transversal Plan should not brush over sectorally-articulated parameters which may be in conflict with each other. On the contrary, there was broad consensus that different frameworks should be discussed in a transparent manner.

Moreover, with regard to an enlarged vision of the competencies and responsibilities involved, it was particularly important that all relevant Ministries were actively involved to the preparation

process, as much as for the sake of the future legitimacy of the Youth Plan. Attention should be paid especially to the involvement in the process of the experts from the youth aid sector. Furthermore, one significant dimension is the Regional level with its competencies relating to, for example, employment and environment. From this perspective the international review team was surprised to hear that Regional agencies, such as those responsible for employment policies, had not been formally consulted, nor the Ministers outside the Ministry of Youth and Youth Welfare.

Second, the international team observed some ambivalence among respondents regarding the consultation and the execution of power: how the interplay between competencies and responsibilities should be divided and shared? Public authorities – such as the Youth Service, being a key actor within the youth sector at the Community level – were consulted, but they did not have any decisive mandate in the preparation process. When discussing the Youth Plan with youth associations and the Youth Council, as well as diverse federations and advisory committees, the international review team observed a classical tension between consultative and binding opinion. An overall European declaration that young people must be heard in the policy matters that concern them is a controversial statement if there is no clear vision of whose voice and knowledge count in this context, how the matters that concern young people are defined, and whether their consultative role produces any legitimacy regarding how the opinions are put into practice. Later in 2011, several working groups were established, composed of the representatives of public authorities from different ministries and the youth sector as well as people from the associations. One of the key tasks of these working groups is to go systematically through substantive matters included in the Youth Plan and in this way prepare the implementation of the Plan.

The content

Seven key issues have been distinguished in the course of the preparation of the Youth Plan (see *Le Plan Jeunesse est sur les rails*, in Cr@cs, no 1, 2011; Youth Policy Review, April 2011). These issues illustrate how the principle of transversality is meant to be applied in the youth policy field. The list reveals also how the Youth Plan may potentially solve current concerns in the policy areas on youth, mentioned also in this report.

1 Supporting young people's capacity for action and joint commitment

This aim crystallizes the traditional driver in the French-speaking community, namely the values related to CRACS. This, in turn, valorises a democracy-oriented view of youth policy. According to this principle, the youth sector represents a social forum for the youth, and young people are seen as responsible and engaged members of the society.

2 Recognising and developing the diversity of skills of young people

This aim calls upon a better interplay between formal and non-formal learning (*education permanente*), in terms of, for example, methods, forums, and the professionalism involved. The vision attached to young people's multiple potential may be seen in the background of this aim.

3 Reducing social and economic inequalities by supporting action against their underlying causes and combating poverty

This objective can be seen as a reaction to the policy tendencies which are inclined to tackle structural problems of inequality in individual terms. In this context, the youth sector may represent a particular safety net for precariously located young people. There has been a dispute going on as to how to agree and establish a shared vocabulary for both general youth policy and youth aid policy frameworks. The international review team captured various semantic ambiguities among the people interviewed: Should one talk about voluntarism or compulsion as a primary driver of the sector? Do the concepts of 'adviser' and 'measure' imply something else than 'judge' and 'sentence' when the dialogue of youth rather than youth justice policy is at stake?

4 Assisting young people in their choices of educational and occupational direction

This aim can be seen as a response to the efficiency expectation to which the field of youth policy (also) has to respond. Young people are seen as an investment for the future, and the framework of employability is highly valued here.

5 Promoting and securing the transition of young people to adulthood

This aim is a reaction to a strong expectation characterizing youth policies everywhere in Europe. The challenge in this context is how to respond to the increasing fragmentation of young people's life courses. Is there a mismatch between disintegration of traditional social pathways to adulthood, on the one hand, and a vision for a more and more coherent and integrated policy sphere, on the other? Youth sector is seen here as providing both a transit zone and a safety net for young people.

6 Giving a place to youth policies within the ambitions of sustainable development

This endeavour insists on a revised conception of global solidarity, going beyond national borders.

7 Taking into consideration the specificities of young people's home environments and mobilizing those involved at the most appropriate territorial level

This aspiration seeks to tackle a tension between young people's local commitment and mobility.

One additional key issue emerged from the consultation with the advisory bodies in the field of youth: 'Value the image of youth and their citizen actions'. The international review team also noticed during the visits a particular concern about young people's negative position in the Belgian society. According to the respondents, young people risk to be stigmatized in public debate in a pessimistic manner. 'We have nothing to lose' and related discourses echo, too, in the minds of some professionals, at least when marginalized young people are in focus, particularly those in rural areas.

These key issues were confirmed by the permanent Inter-ministerial Conference about Youth policies (Conférence Interministérielle Permanente Jeunesse) on 19th July, 2011.

The list is, indeed, an impressive political response to the principle of transversality. It illustrates how the Youth Plan is considered to provide a response to the inconsistencies of the youth sector. In the discussions with the responsible stakeholders of the Youth Plan, the transversal vision was presented as a solution to the overall problems in the youth sector. Yet, arguably, the call for transversality may also be seen as a part of the dispute itself.

A cursory glance at the list reveals the diversity in the policy aims and frameworks embedded in the Youth Plan. This rich, and potentially contested, nature of the youth policy field was often raised in discussions with the international review team. Many respondents applauded the Government's commitment on youth matters, reflecting in the process related to the Youth Plan. Several respondents were concerned about the future of the Youth Plan. They did not seem to have any clear information about the financial and other relevant resources available for the sensible and effective implementation of the Youth Plan. According to the Youth Policy Review 2011 (p. 5), the French-speaking Community's budget for the sector of youth policy has increased around 5 % from the year 2010 to 2011, and it is 14 % more than in 2009. The overall need to strengthen the recognition of the youth sector was generally shared. However, at the same time, a number of respondents, particularly those working at the local level, revealed their worries about everything becoming certificated and uniform. The international review team could sense an atmosphere that was characterised by a wish of 'more politics and less policies'. This particular concern illustrates well current challenges of a multifaceted youth sector, being discussed throughout this report.

Recommendations to the French-speaking Community

Recommendations concerning the youth policy coordination at the local level

RECOMMENDATION 1

The international review shares the concerns expressed by the French-speaking authorities and practitioners with regard to the challenges of the local youth policy coordination. The international review team encourages the authorities and civil society representatives to jointly improve a better coherence in terms of how local youth policy is structured and organized, in theory and in practice.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The international review team discerned a particular need for the better inter-Municipal coordination to prevent overlapped, differentiated and/or isolated services and related inequality between different municipalities, not only in terms of service delivery but also young people's overall living condition. A more consistent structure for partnerships in the field youth policy does not concern only municipalities. There seems to be a demand for a strengthened inter-Community dialogue as well.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The international team observed many local contexts where institutional complexities may hamper the creation of user-friendly youth services or, more profoundly, young people's awareness of services. Additionally, the debate about the grounds for confidentiality and the case for broader information-sharing is hardly restricted to the French-speaking Community, but it is something that requires clarity of thought and resolution.

Recommendation concerning the crossroads of education, employment and youth sectors

RECOMMENDATION 4

There is an evident need for transversal policy measures to deal with the challenges that young people face in the terms of education and employment. Besides the arenas of formal education, diverse out-of-school contexts should also be seen as important prerequisites for the successful education and social integration arenas of young people.

Recommendation concerning mobility

RECOMMENDATION 5

The international review team observed diverse prerequisites for young people's mobility and unequal resources embedded in this issue. Economic, social, linguistic and cultural obstacles of young people's mobility should be carefully analysed and unravelled. This should be a key focus of attention within the current youth policy development.

Recommendations concerning multiculturalism

RECOMMENDATION 6

The international review team discerned many examples of parallel processes of increasing ethnic diversity and ethnic stratification of the society. In order to ponder carefully on this matter, there is a great need for a thorough analysis on how the youth services are able to fulfil the aims related to the principle of equal opportunities within the current youth policy framework of the French-speaking Community. The team advises the stakeholders both at the Community and at the local level to detect critical points what comes to the dynamics and possible gaps between equal opportunities and equal outcomes, in terms of immigration. The intersection between youth policy, educational policy and employment policy is of particular importance here.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The international review team discerned a need for better awareness of the problem of inequality between young people (and their families), also in terms of nationality, ethnicity, race and religion. The impression is that youth authorities and practitioners in the Community and local level should be better aware of the legislation (such as the anti-discrimination Act) and measures (such as positive action) already available to combat discrimination, and to be more committed to revise and apply them in the youth field. This kind of commitment cannot be a choice or responsibility of individual local workers only. Rather, it should be a mandatory procedure of whole youth administration.

RECOMMENDATION 8

In the future, it is advisable to consider the possibility of producing a better link between youth and integration policies and related sectors, to make better sense of diverse integration-related challenges affecting young people.

Recommendation concerning youth engagement

RECOMMENDATION 9

The international review team encourages those responsible for youth policy in the French-speaking Community to assess the current structures of local democracy, particularly from the perspective of youth engagement. The international team got the impression that there are many consultative bodies and other possibilities for youth participation (ie. in the youth centres). These structures may need clarification and assessment. There seems to be a need to improve the manifold opportunities for engagement also for those young people who remain outside diverse consultative bodies and organized and/or recognized associative structures. To improve the participation resources of the immigrant youth and migrant associations is of particular importance. A special attention should be put also to the capital Region of Brussels.

Recommendation concerning the development of evidence-based policy

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Federal structure poses great challenges for the collection of adequate data on the Belgian population. The international review team strongly encourages the French-speaking Community to develop reliable data collection mechanisms and more lively dialogue with the research field, particularly concerning topical issues such as immigration, integration and discrimination, in order to be able to pursue its youth policy in a sensible, comprehensive and proactive way.

Chapter 4

Youth policy in the German-speaking Community

People and region

75,300 people belong to the smallest of the three Belgian communities, to the German-speaking Community (Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft = DG). This community is situated in the east of the Belgium, bordering Luxembourg and Germany. The German-speaking Community covers an area of 854 km² and is to a high degree rural. Eupen, the main city of the community, has approximately 18,700 inhabitants, and the second and the third biggest towns are also in the northern Kanton. In the south the city of Sankt Vith is the biggest municipality in the corresponding Kanton with approximately 9,300 inhabitants.

Approximately 20% of the population in the German-speaking Community have non-Belgian citizenship. The highest concentration of migrants can be found in Raeren and Kelmis, bordering Germany, where almost half of the inhabitants are non-Belgians. By far the largest groups of migrants in the German-speaking Community are Germans, who are living in Belgium but often still working in Germany.

The DG is part of the 'Großregion Saar - Lor - Lux - Rheinland-Pfalz - Wallonie - Französische und Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens' – in brief: 'Großregion' – which is the aggregation of Saarland, Rheinland-Pfalz (Germany), Luxembourg, Lorraine (France), the Walloon Region, the French-speaking Community and the German-speaking Community. This 'big region' is located between the rivers Rhine, Moselle, Saar and Maas. 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.

The German-speaking Community consists of nine municipalities – Amel, Büllingen, Bütgenbach, Burg-Reuland, Eupen, Kelmis, Lontzen, Raeren and Sankt Vith. Together with the two municipalities of the French Community in Walloon – Malmedy and Weismes – they constitute the geographical region of East Belgium. The German-speaking Community is not in fact one geographically unified territory but is divided into a northern and a southern part (called Kanton), which are geographically

separated. To go from the Kanton Eupen in the north of the DG to the Kanton Sankt Vith in the south one has to pass through the lands of the French Community.

The government of the German-speaking Community has 4 ministers; the parliament is composed of 25 members coming from six different political parties. Since 2009 a coalition between the SP, Pro DG and PFF¹⁶, under minister President Lambertz, rules in the German-speaking Community.

The German-speaking Community 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, Media 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, 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. A definition of youth policy in the DG is following:

Youth policy does not refer to teaching, but to the education of the organised and non-organised youth, but excludes youth protection legislation (penal legislation, social legislation and civil law). It includes the definition of provisions, which enable funding to be awarded for the socio-cultural education of young people, together with funding for their social development (Blanpain 1988, p.146)

The Council of Europe, however, sees 'youth policy' in broader conceptual, and less administrative, terms: it incorporates all areas of policy that affect young people. However articulated, all countries have a youth policy – by design, default or neglect (Williamson 2002). Therefore other important youth policy topics, such as school education and employment, 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 is definitely closer than with other fields of policy for youth.

Youth in the German-speaking Community

For the German-speaking Community, youth is defined as time span from 12 to 26 years of age, but since the target group of youth work is not restricted to this age bracket, also children and young

¹⁶ The SP is the Social Democratic Party, the PFF is the Party for Freedom and Progress, a liberal party, and Pro DG is the abbreviation for the movement Pro German-speaking Community.

adults use offers provided by youth work organisations. Therefore the – unofficial but broadly accepted – enlarged target group for youth policy in the DG is from five years up to 29.

The 22,308¹⁷ young people aged 5 to 29 represent 29.66% of the whole population in the DG; this percentage is higher than the corresponding proportion for Belgium overall. Reflecting the distribution of the adult population we find the biggest youth population in Eupen – every fourth young person in the DG lives here. The highest percentage of young people in the age group between 10 and 30 compared to the whole population can be found in the municipality of Sankt Vith, followed by Bütgenbach and Burg Reuland, the lowest in Raeren.

In 2009/10, approximately 13,500 pupils and students attended formal education institutions in German-speaking Community from kindergarten to tertiary education.

As in other rural areas in Europe the everyday lives of young people are strongly affected by the traditions and organisations in the villages. However, due to the size of the region and the geographical location of the German-speaking Community, young people in the DG face influences from many sides. The whole Walloon region, Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg are providers of different offers and opportunities for young people in various fields like entertainment, cinema, theatres, sports, shopping – and young people are making considerable use of this provision, since big cities like Namur, Liege, Maastricht or Aachen are relatively close and easy to reach by train or car. As a result, young people in the German-speaking Community experience a combination of different – seemingly oppositional - influences, in that they reflect globalisation and localisation at the same time. Yet the lack of a network of regular public transport makes individual mobility one of the biggest obstacles in young people's lives.

The international review team asked on various occasions what was perceived as the most challenging problem for young people, and most commonly it was said that alcohol abuse – especially in combination with driving – is a major problem. A lack of information on various topics – from labour market to the internet – was also mentioned, as were the socio-economic problems facing some groups of young people.

Youth work in the German-speaking Community

In the relevant draft of the decree youth work is described as follows:¹⁸

Youth work takes place out of school and during certain leisure activities. It is based on the processes of non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation. These activities and processes are organised as individual initiatives, with the consultation of young people or under the educational guidance of youth workers or voluntary youth leaders.

By providing appropriate opportunities, it promotes the individual, social and cultural development of young people, while taking account of their interests and needs. It also helps teach young people to support each other and live independently and sustainably. Furthermore, it aims to enable them to be

¹⁷ data from 1.1.2010

¹⁸ The finally at the parliament of the DG adopted version of the decree can be found here:
http://www.dglive.be/Desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-111/418_read-38242

responsible for themselves, take part in family and social life, contribute to democracy, resolve conflicts amicably and show tolerance towards different opinions, cultures and ways of life. It contributes to the physical and emotional welfare of young people and enables them to gain self-efficacy experiences and learn participatory skills¹⁹.

Youth work is the main agent of youth policy in the German-speaking Community and also plays an important role in the plans for future youth policy, especially the re-organisation of the funding scheme and the conceptualisation of participation in decision making, which are of high importance in new developments in the youth policy field. Funding and grants are now 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. Additionally subsidies might be given with the performance management framework, where the Youth Office has a target agreement with the government and the relevant municipalities. This new organisation of the funding system for youth work, designed to improve quality and produce agreed outcomes, is one of the main pillars of the future youth policy.

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. Seven youth organisations are acknowledged in the DG – beside *Patro*, (St. Raphael and St. Niclas), *Chiro* the Scouts and the Girls Guides, there are the Catholic Rural Youth (*Katholische Landjugend*) and *Jugend und Gesundheit*. Youth centres exist in nineteen villages (spread over 8 municipalities), and there are two youth information centres, in Sankt Vith and in Eupen.

Youth work carried out through youth organisations reaches approximately 3,300 young people and following estimations of youth workers the youth centres and clubs reach some 1,100 young people. The summer camps arranged by various youth organisations are very popular, with more than 1,500 young people participating in them in the year 2010. There is no accurate information on the contacts of the youth information centres with young people. In the nine municipalities of the DG more than 150 youth groups are active.

Nineteen full time work places are financed in the whole youth field; 12 in youth clubs, two in the youth information centres, 2.5 in the youth organisations and 4.5 in the youth office. More than 650 voluntary animators work in the youth organisations and youth centres. For the year 2011 the budget for youth policy was 1,680,000 Euro which is 0.61% of the annual budget of the German-speaking Community. In addition to this amount there are the subsidies from the EU programme Youth in Action (190,000 Euro), provincial funding (max. 9,000 Euro) and municipality funding.

In the Regional Development Concept (*Regionales Entwicklungskonzept der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*) an overview on the reach and scope of youth work in the DG is provided. The table

¹⁹ Youth Policy in the German-speaking Community, p.3.

illustrates how many youth groups (organised by one of the recognised youth organisations) exist in the various municipalities and how many people are working in open youth work.

Table 1: Significance of youth work in the German-Speaking Community

| | Population | Youth < 26 years | Number of youth groups | Number of open youth workers |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Amel | 5.345 | 1.713 | 18 | 0 |
| Büllingen | 5.471 | 1.778 | 21 | 1 |
| Burg-Reuland | 3.948 | 1.275 | 1 | 0 |
| Bütgenbach | 5.610 | 1.799 | 15 | 1 |
| Sankt Vith | 9.242 | 2.852 | 17 | 1 |
| Kanton Sankt Vith | 29.616 | 9.417 | 72 | 3 |
| Eupen | 18.408 | 5.500 | 42 | 4 |
| Kelmis | 10.566 | 3.003 | 11 | 1,75 |
| Lontzen | 5.267 | 1.688 | 9 | 1,25 |
| Raeren | 10.312 | 3.002 | 19 | 1,5 |
| Kanton Eupen | 44.553 | 13.193 | 81 | 8,5 |
| DG | 74.169 | 22.610 | 153 | 11,5 |

Source: Regionales Entwicklungskonzept, Band 1, Seite 30, data from 2007

Youth organisations and youth centres are technically supported by the *Jugendbüro der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft* (the Youth Office of the German-speaking Community) in relation to methods, materials and logistics. The support covers IT, media, financial management, rental of materials and insurance for voluntary youth leaders and visitors to youth clubs.

Six of the twelve youth workers in the youth centres are employed directly by the Youth Office. The youth workers have regular meetings to exchange and supervise their work. Therefore the Youth Office on the one hand delivers centre-based youth work and on the other hand coordinates and develops open and mobile youth work and streetwork.

Furthermore 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 European Union Youth in Action programme and as the agency for the national Programme Bel'J. The Jugendbüro also is responsible for the management of the European Youth Card in the German-speaking Community, the Eurojuka.

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 international review team learned that young people are especially interested in information on international experiences abroad, on studying and on social legislation.

In Sankt Vith the Youth Information Centre is situated in the house of service of the German-speaking Community (*Dienstleistungszentrum der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*). This includes, for example, the employment office, so it is easy to find and is known to adults as well. The Infotreff in Eupen is located in an old house on an entry road to the city.

The team for youth information does not create all information material afresh, but cooperates with youth information in Germany and in the French Community. Although information material in French language is provided, the youth information centres translate or create a lot of information material in German. Information material provided by youth information in Germany that is also valid for Belgium is used for informing youth. This approach is both cost and resource effective. Since some of the information in the German leaflets lead to other countries' institutions, the youth information centres in the DG adapt the information material to the Belgian legislation and institutions. Additional material from outside is used for example when informing on general topics like health. The dilemma of this approach is that the opportunity for a clearly targeted information style specially designed for the youth in the DG might be lost.

Members of the international review team had the opportunity to visit a local youth club in Rocherath, a village in the municipality of Büllingen. This club is located in an old fire brigade house (*Spritzenhäuschen*) next to the church of the town. The renovated premises were allocated by the village and the municipality; the human resources are allocated by the Youth Office. The youth worker is responsible not only for the youth club in Rocherath but for the open youth work in the municipality Büllingen at whole (where there are two other youth clubs – one in Manderfeld and one in Büllingen). The youth club is run following the ideas of open youth work; therefore it is open for everybody who wants to come. Most of the young people who attend – and who sometimes manage their own time at the centre - are at the same time members of other NGOs and/or youth organisations.

The majority of those who make use of the youth centres are male, though some girls do attend. But open youth work in the DG and in Büllingen has girls and young women as a particular target group and there are specific initiatives designed to engage the interest of female youth.

Currently some of the youth club members in Rocherath are participating in training to become volunteer workers in the youth club. This would enable them to prolong the opening hours of the youth club. The club is open on three days a week and offers opportunities for the young people of the village to meet, to listen to music and to play games. Indeed a number of the games available, like tabletop football or pool billiard table, are exchanged and rotated between youth clubs and

youth centres. This is a good example of the opportunities for cooperation created if youth workers are in charge of more than one centre or club, and also work for the same institution – they can exchange not only equipment but also ideas and understanding about the ‘mood’ and interests of different groups of young people.

Some of the young people at the youth centre in Rocherath had been participants in a Youth in Action exchange project with a youth project in Turkey and had been significantly affected by the experience. It provided them with the opportunity to meet with young people of a similar age but with another cultural background, thereby helping to overcome prejudices that were built by rumours about and scarce personal experiences with migrants in Belgium. This kind of exchange – even with a successful working European Union youth programme – is not a usual experience for young people in a rural area, coming from a village with less than 500 inhabitants. This exchange and other international activities – like a soccer cup in Austria and a girls’ week with international participants in Belgium – are symbols of the approach to open youth work in the German-speaking Community, designed to enable and support young people developing life perspectives and goals by extending a variety of opportunity²⁰.

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 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 Jugendbüro supports the Council of the German-Speaking Youth with a secretariat and expert monitoring.

The Youth Council was established 1976, but the legal basis for its current structure lies in a Royal Enactment from 1983. Originally the Youth Council was a kind of umbrella organisation for the formal youth organisations and institutions, but since 2005 it has been open to non-organised young people. The general assembly of the Council has 25 members coming from organisations and institutions and six individual members. There are no real elections for the general assembly, but the organisations and institutions nominate their representatives, and individuals can apply. All members of the Council have to be confirmed by the Government. This procedure bears the possibility of political influence of the Government – even though all involved parties assured the international review team that this did not happen, ever. Nevertheless this influence of the Government on the composition of the advisory and consultative body of youth representatives will be changed in the future²¹. And the Youth Council will in the future also open up for more individual participation by young people.

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

²⁰ This description of the aim of open youth work is also provided on the homepage of open youth work Büllingen (<http://ojb.jimdo.com/>).

²¹ As a ‘national’ Youth Council, it does not currently comply with the criteria set out by Youth Forum Jeunesse, the European Youth Forum.

expertise and advice on laws concerning young people and it was also involved in the development of the future youth policy in the DG.

The future of youth policy in the German-speaking Community

In the years 2005 and 2006 a series of consultations in the framework of the P.R.I.M.A. process²² 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 led to different recommendations for youth policy in the fields of participation (with the inclusion of the municipalities), mobility, information, cultural diversity, networking and training.

There is also the Regional Development Concept (*Regionales Entwicklungskonzept der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft REK*) that was developed in 2008 with the involvement of stakeholder groups and individuals and which is designed to provide a possible picture of and realistic perspectives for the DG in the year 2025. Youth and youth work play important roles in these deliberations. A detailed description of the process and its results were published in April 2011.

Based on the results of these projects the decision was taken to work on the development of a comprehensive and high quality youth policy based on knowledge and information. This is also the basis for the specific task of the international review team in the German-Speaking Community, having been asked by the authorities to make this a priority within its focus and reflections.

In the Regional Development Concept it was highlighted that youth policy should be understood as a cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary task including – besides youth work – themes like employment, voluntarism or media.

The new integrated youth decree, which will be enforced by 2012, takes account of the major prominence of youth work in the German-Speaking Community as well as of the young people themselves and the people involved in youth work. Therefore main themes in the new decree are the quality of youth work, initial and further training of youth workers and voluntary youth leaders, and the participation of young people. The involvement of municipalities in the implementation of youth policy will also be reflected in the new decree.

²² 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. In workshops and consultations moderated by people from outside of the German-Speaking Community. P.R.I.M.A. stands for Partizipation (participation), GestaltungsRäume (scope for creativity), Information, Miteinander (together) and Anerkennung (recognition) – these are also the main fields where recommendations for youth policy were formulated.

Currently the subsidies for youth NGOs are strongly linked to the number of members in youth work organisations and the number of participants in youth work projects. However, this approach to funding creates the problem of evaluating quality, if that becomes the paramount funding criterion.

The new approach will therefore focus on quality-based evaluation anchored within a commonly developed approach and performance guidelines agreed between youth work and the DG and between youth work and municipalities.

The youth decree will state 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 is foreseen to involve young people, youth organisations and youth services in the strategy planning at both local and Community level. Since the strategy plans should be 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 will be the basis for an evaluation at the end of the five year period. Youth NGOs will have an annual dialogue with representatives of the government on the activities and efficiency of the organisation in order to, if necessary, revise the 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 will be concluded between the youth work institutions and government and municipalities.

The Youth Office, as the support structure for these developments, will also have a five year management contract based on the strategy.

A youth strategy allows the government to prioritise 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.

A period of five years is, for institutions like the Youth Office and the Youth Information Centres, a good time span that allows for concentrating on the work to be done rather than chasing or trying to prolong service contracts. For some youth organisations, however, the time span might be too long bearing in mind that these organisations are run by young people themselves and for them it is even harder to foresee if their interests stay the same, if they will still be involved in youth work at all. Thus that long period might be seen as an obstacle to attract new volunteers to take responsibility in organisations. Furthermore a strategy for five years might be too strict and not flexible enough to fit the working habits of youth organisations.

One critical point might be that the evaluation of performance of different youth work activities is very likely to need to be different. It is advisable, therefore, not only to define, within the starting contract, the aims and practice that will be reviewed but also the evaluation methods that most probably will be used.

The new youth decree aims at the improvement of youth work quality by defining the needs for basic and further training of voluntary youth leaders that is supported by the German-speaking Community. This step will lead to an increased professionalism and a more coherent approach in youth work. This in return provides a higher degree of security for the participants to receive adequate and relevant contemporary provision. The content of this double-stage training – consisting of a theoretical and a practical module – will be clearly defined in the new decree. Furthermore it is anticipated that fully employed youth workers – who have to have an education in socio-pedagogy already – will have to do further training, which will be subsidised by the Community. This further training will have to cover 90 hours in three years, where the content of the training is not described in the new decree.

With these developments in the training of youth workers, an improvement in the consistency and quality of youth work can be achieved, but this then presents a greater obstacle for those individuals and some young people wishing to become voluntarily involved in youth work. Some may not have sufficient time to undertake the training, because of the demands of their jobs or their family responsibilities. This could, arguably, apply more to young workers and perhaps to migrants.

Evidence-based youth policy

The future youth policy seeks to be evidence and knowledge based. Knowledge of youth workers and practitioners should be 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 should be systematised, collected and made available. Data on population, education, employment, culture and other areas will be collected here.

Pure statistical data is one source of evidence for policy-making, and a second key source will be 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 and violence. The DG also participated in international research like the PISA study of achievement in formal education (where it scored in between the – better – Flemish Community and the French Community).

In general it is positive that data for the DG are collected and systematised, as it is important that research on prominent policy concerns is carried out. But 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. Here a regular youth report – maybe in combination with the five-year evaluation of the operational youth policy concepts – might improve the quality of youth policy development and implementation for the next five years.

Other policy fields affecting young people

Beside the areas that fall directly in the competences of youth policy makers, other fields of policy have a strong effect on young people's lives and young people are often a special target group for policy measures coming from other departments in the government or administration than the youth field.

Even if youth policy has no direct access to these wider policy arenas it is important to engage with them if the aspiration for future youth policy to establish a cross-sectoral and multi disciplinary approach is to be achieved.

Education

School clearly plays a key role in young people's life. Not only does the simple amount of time spent in schools makes it a centre of young people's development, but schooling is an essential if not *the* basis for life chances and choices. Even in times of increased recognition of non formal learning substitutes for certificates of formal education are hard to find. Degrees and certificates 'proving' knowledge are a prerequisite for achieving in the labour market. The fact that these degrees are at the same time not sufficient anymore to guarantee a smooth entry in work life lead to even more pressure on pupils to be successful. Thus more and more young people stay longer and longer in the formal education system and those leaving the system earlier are either not willing (or able) to face the stress any longer or not able (or willing) to succeed. Changing characteristics and developments in the labour market mean that young people with lower education are more at risk of failing in making successful transitions from school to work, and this evidence increases the pressure to finish education successfully. Recent European Union youth policy has highlighted education and training as important issues both in the EU 2020 Strategy and in the European 'Investing and Empowering' Youth Strategy. Together with international student assessments and the growing opportunities for studying abroad common standards of education levels are more and more in focus.

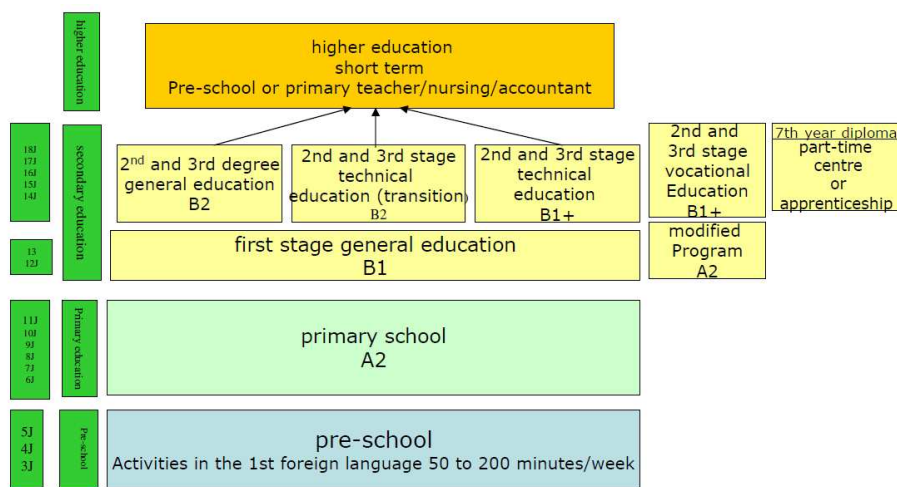
Therefore it seems at first glance rather surprising that the Belgian Communities defend so robustly their right to set up their own education systems so independently. The education system in the German-speaking Community bears a resemblance to the model in Germany or Austria: the concept of a dual vocational education and training system for apprentices, the 'dual system', is particularly similar – and this is quite different from the Flemish approach or the system that prevails within the French-speaking Community.

With the second state reform the three language Communities secured the right to decide on their education system and on schooling. Therefore since 1983 a law declares that education is compulsory from 6 to 18 years, where full time compulsory school has to be attended until the age of 15/16 and after that part-time compulsory schooling is provided up to the age of 18. Here part-time schooling is an opportunity for young people with various problems in schools to stay in the education system; this should not be confused with vocational training in enterprises and schools. At the time when the international review team visited the Arbeitsamt der DG in Sankt Vith, 35 pupils

were attending the part-time school. The strength of this system is that it enables teachers and social workers to provide young people at risk with tailor made approaches.

Within the German-speaking Community, some 45% of the pupils attend schools that are provided by the Community, about one quarter attends schools that are exclusively provided by private institutions (catholic schools), and the rest attend private schools that are subsidised by the municipalities.

The following diagram illustrates the education system from Kindergarten to tertiary education offered in the German-speaking Community. After a common primary education the secondary education provision starts to separate and after two years of observation even further increases the separation between general, technical and vocational education.



The non-obligatory Kindergarten that functions as pre-school for the three to six year old is regularly attended by 98% of the respective age group. Already in Kindergarten tutoring in the first foreign language beside German starts in a playful way but still involves up to 200 hours of such learning. Pre-school education is concerned with the development of the child's intellectual skills and creativity focusing on both mental and on physical development. The children should learn at that age to communicate and to express them. Pre-school should foster the children's initial independency and familiarise them with society. Since pre-schools have to have a minimum size of six children the decreasing birth rate in the DG jeopardizes that these pre-schools can be offered in the close surrounding of every child. There are already cases where people from the neighbouring villages bring their children to a certain Kindergarten in order to help keeping the pre-school running.

Primary schools are compulsory for the six to twelve year olds and provide a basic general education. In 2010-2011 in the German-speaking Community, its 60 primary schools, offering Kindergarten classes and primary education, are attended by 5,123 pupils.

After the common school for all a first separation directs children who did not successfully finish the primary school into a modified programme which theoretically can enable them to catch up with

their cohort, though in fact it usually leads those pupils into the dual apprenticeship-training in enterprises or the vocational field in schools.

The other pupils proceed in the first two years of the common secondary education. In this phase of observation the young people are guided into the different specified routes of secondary education – general academic education, technical education and an in-between hybrid form called technical education (transition) and vocational education. Parallel to these solely school-based forms of education there is vocational education and learning both in companies and in training centres, the so called *Zentren für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand und in kleineren und mittleren Unternehmen*. Here the theoretical elements of the vocational learning are provided in the centres and the practical training in the companies. Usually the teachers in the school who deliver this dual education are also practitioners in their respective disciplines. This education ends with examinations on general knowledge, on theory and a practical examination.

After successfully completing the apprenticeship-training the possibility is provided to make a voluntary additional 7th year that enables the young people to achieve the opportunity to attend university. This is organized in evening courses to offer the possibility to continue to work in the job. It is a main concern, indeed almost a grievance, of the German-speaking Community that the dual system of the vocational training is understood elsewhere in Belgium as no more than basic secondary education, and people successfully finishing their training in this way are seen – or even statistically counted – as early school leavers, since they are trained in companies as well as attend school. If the aim of education is understood primarily as preparation for the labour market (and, of course, some maintain that it is not, though others assert that it now has to be, more than ever), one has to respect the considerable success of this form of training: 95% of the approximately 750 young people that attend this education find a job directly after finishing their apprenticeship.

Further professional training is offered in master classes for the various professions and, in cooperation with the *Autonome Hochschule der DG* (higher education), a three year Master training in accountancy is established, which confers on successful students a *Meisterbrief* and a Bachelor degree.

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*) fosters the mobility of graduates. The cross-border master classes are established for butchery, bakery and confectionery in Eupen as well as and interior design in Cologne for students from both Germany and Belgium.

Officially the secondary education system in the DG offers the possibility to change between the different routes, but in fact changing after the phase of observation, after the first two years of secondary schooling, seldom occurs; as a result, young people at the age of fourteen or even sometimes at the age of twelve are already directed into one trajectory of education and training that will influence the rest of their life. The new approach of the optional 7th year of secondary education after the apprenticeship helps to increase, and restore, equality of educational opportunity for all young people. Nevertheless, despite the success of the dual system for achieving labour market insertion from groups of young people who elsewhere are often considered to be ‘at

risk', the critique concerning the early separation of vocational training and education in schools is also recurrently levelled at the very similar system that prevails in both Austria and Germany.

Opportunities for tertiary education exist in the German-speaking Community at the Autonomous College (*Autonome Hochschule in der DG*), which was founded 2005. The AHS offers three Bachelor courses, two in educational science and one in health and care science.

Tertiary education in all other sciences has to be followed outside the DG, but since the people are accustomed or encouraged to be mobile in the whole *Großregion* and in the Euregio Maas-Rhine, it is also normal to leave the German-Speaking Community in order to study.

A support structure for the education system is provided through the three PMS-Centres, the psycho-medico-social centres. Here young people can get support from trained staff such as medical doctors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists. They are contact-persons for parents, pupils and teachers providing consulting from pre-school to tertiary education. They offer pupils support in their mental, physical, psychological and social development. The services of the psycho-medico-social centres cover testing for school maturity, health care and health education, occupational orientation and mediation.

Labour market

In times of economic crisis, entry into the labour market is, arguably, the main issue in most young people's lives and consequently also a central issue in youth policy. To enhance the chances of young people having a smooth transition from education to the labour market is a key concern of youth policy makers. Employment has found its way into the European youth agenda by being one of the eight fields of action in the European Union youth Strategy 'Investing and Empowering', and it is also part of 'Youth on the move', a flagship element of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Though strictly part of other EU structures, it initially started to connect with evolving EU 'youth policy' through the 2004 European Youth Pact, which plugged gaps in the 2001 Youth White Paper and addressed the three issues of education, employment and work/life balance.

Youth unemployment throughout Europe is no longer a phenomenon affecting only young people without any school degrees or a poor education, though they may be hardest hit, but it affects all groups of young people. Unemployment rates of up to 40% (and, in some EU countries, even more) of young people under 25 are a source of political concern for reasons that span commitments to moral responsibility, to moral panic about youthful unrest. Youth unemployment is already perceived as one of the main threats to social stability in Europe and so for both economic and social reasons, addressing youth unemployment has become a major issue in European politics.

In the German-speaking Community, it is demographics on the one hand and the labour market competition with Germany and Luxembourg, which offer good working conditions, on the other hand rather than social (in)stability that are the main political drivers of attention to youth in the labour market. For the year 2015 it is estimated that there will be fewer people (young people) entering the labour market than leaving it. This trend is already detectable, despite the employment rate for 15 to 24 year olds is in the DG being already the highest in whole of Belgium. 35.8% of youth is employed. And while the percentage for young women in this age group, at approximately 31%, is

similar to Flanders, the 40%+ employment rate for male youth of the same age is way above the Belgian average. These facts might conceivably be connected to the dual vocational education, which both leads to a high percentage of young people who immediately get work and attracts more young men than women. It is also important to note that, as elsewhere in Belgium and in line with the EU trends, the employment rate for young people under 25 in the DG has been decreasing in recent years. So there is no room for either celebration or complacency.

In 2010 an average of 547 people younger than 25 were registered as unemployed, so they were immediately employable and searching for a job. The unemployment rate of young people aged 15 to 24 was in the year 2010 quite low with 13.8%, slightly lower than the rate in Flanders, but less than half of the comparable rates in Wallonia and in the Brussels Region. (The youth unemployment rate in Belgium that year was 22.4%²³). Compared to the general unemployment rate of 8.2%, youth unemployment is still significantly higher.

The biggest group of unemployed youth has in fact completed secondary education; for the first time people with secondary education were the biggest group of unemployed in the German-speaking Community. This fact is interpreted as a result of the changing patterns in education, where growing numbers of people finish secondary (school) education and less people choose the vocational training. But one quarter of all unemployed under 24 years of age have finished only the observation phase of the secondary education and about one fifth has only finished primary education. Both levels of educational (under) achievement are disproportionately high represented amongst the young unemployed.

Overall, however, youth unemployment is not perceived as a major problem in the labour market policy of the German-speaking Community. And compared to other Regions of Belgium or other European countries it is relatively unproblematic, though it is still evident that for some groups of young people successful entry into the labour market is characterised by significant difficulties. People who did not finish any secondary education – school or vocational training – are more likely to face unemployment than others.

Transition to the labour market

Due to the Belgian labour market policy young people finishing school or universities can register at the employment centre and have the right to be supported – with both an allowance and advice - in their search for a job. This holds also for the *Arbeitsamt* in the DG. Around 80% of young people under the age of 30 are supported proactively to integrate them into the labour market. More than half of all people supported by the *Arbeitsamt* are younger than 30 years.

The support for unemployed young people – as for the others who are unemployed as well – is structured in three main steps: a first interactive day helps to inform about the modalities of further steps and on job-seeking, the second step is a profiling followed thirdly by a contract where the future measures and tasks are defined. These future interventions might be direct integration in the first labour market, further education or training, the promotion of social competences or support

²³ Eurostat data, download from
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database on 26th Nov. 2011

for the employer. Unemployed young people are more often directed towards additional qualification and training than other age groups.

In the year 2010 approximately 270 young people under the age of 25 finished one of the different measures for integration in the labour market. The absolute number has remained quite stable since 2005, but the percentage of youth in relation to all participants in such measures decreased over this time from over 40% to under 35%. That would suggest that more people overall are involved in this kind of interventions now than only five years before.

The opportunities for this training are manifold. Mostly the additional qualification is organised as an individual job-training in an enterprise (*Individuelle Berufsausbildung im Unternehmen IBU*) or as an integration measure in special projects. In an IBU the job seeker receives a further qualification tailor made for a particular job in a particular enterprise. The qualification lasts between 4 and 26 weeks during which the trainee receives – if applicable – unemployment benefits from the employment office and additionally a ‘productivity bonus’ – different from the official wage – from the employer. After the qualification the trainee has to be employed for at least the same time as the duration of the training. This measure has turned out to be quite successful for getting unemployed young people into the labour market.

The other models with a disproportionate ratio of young people are integration measures. Here the qualification focuses on the social skills of the young people in order to prepare them for further measures. These integration measures are carried out by partner organisations of the Employment Office and are attended by more young unemployed than older people who have lost their job.

The opportunity for internships allows unemployed young people to experience the work conditions in a possible new field of occupation. Two different models of internships allow young people, on the one hand, to learn about the occupational field or, on the other, to experience the working conditions directly in the enterprise.

For some occupational fields training is offered in special training institutions, the *Berufsbildungszentren*, of the employment service and not in enterprises. Unlike the individual job-training this is a general course.

All in all, since all interventions are open for all unemployed it remains questionable if the measures are too unspecific for young people or not,. On the other hand any more or less open financial support for employing a special group of unemployed provides this group with better chances to get employed – but not only in comparison with their chances before the implementation of the measure but also compared to other (unemployed) people in the labour market. It might even lead to the quaint fact that (young) people fulfilling the needs for the IBU have better chances for a longer lasting job than ordinary youth, since they are cheaper for the enterprises. Labour market measures that target especially young people often – if not always – have the effect of disadvantaging older unemployed and thus have to be balanced by special measures for this group.

Occupational Information

One key obstacle to a smooth transition from education to the labour market is considered to be the lack of information of the young people. Information on jobs, further education and studying are needed to help young people to decide on and develop their orientation for their further professional direction.

Therefore information on the labour market and opportunities is a main element of education, starting perhaps in Kindergarten. The information is targeted on the different age groups and according to their level of education. Moreover, parents are also perceived as an important target group for job information that may be useful and relevant for their children.

There are various providers of information on education and labour market: schools, psycho-medical-social centres, youth information centres, the Employment Office, professional associations and more. A working group involving different stakeholders develops concepts and guidelines for job information. The aim of the information is to enable young people searching for their education, studying and job opportunities to do so 'progressively, autonomously and actively'.

This kind of information can be accessed in different forms and media and at various locations. The job information cells, called BIZ (*Berufsinformationszellen*), are providing a wide range of multi-media information on professions, occupations and the labour market. The BIZ, which are part of the German BIZ-network, are, alongside others, at the youth information centres, the employment centres and the mediatheks in secondary schools.

In cooperation with the German employment service a mobile job information centre is providing information during the job information week.

Various information evenings are organised for young people and their parents and a wide range of online information on job profiles is available on the homepage of the employment service. In a monthly information exchange interested people can learn about opportunities in the tertiary education.

Once a year a so called *Schnupperwoche* is organised that offers young people in the 1st and 2nd years of secondary education and in the modified programme the opportunity to experience different professional (cf vocational) fields in different companies that offer contracts for apprenticeship.

Obviously such information is helpful, structured and accessible for those who actively decide to start an apprenticeship. But for people finishing secondary education the information already provided during the later years of their school time appears to be less structured and organised – at least the international review team did not learn of special offers for this target group. Here organised information in the school curriculum seems to be worth pursuing too. Especially those young people who are insecure about their professional future and not autonomous enough to find their own way to the information needed could do with some structures on how to gather useful information. Thus young people hear more on different fields of professional life and various chances so they can make informed decisions in time rather than reacting only after finishing a certain education.

Youth and Culture / Youth culture / media

Youth and culture are situated in the same department in the Ministry of the German-speaking Community and the same Minister, Isabelle Weykmans, is responsible for both policy domains.

Cultural policy focuses on maintenance of the language and on arts and cultural heritage, but the media is also a concern of youth policy. The main features of the current cultural policy are promotion of amateur arts, folklore activities, and the protection and conservation of cultural heritage, as well as training of young talents and artists.

Youth and culture meet in the field of amateur art, art education and youth culture. Amateur art is seen as an active, low threshold way for young people to access and engage in cultural activities and as a mechanism for the promotion of creativity. Art education, which is provided out of school in a special academy, has the aim to generate interest in art and to “ease the access to culture by learning different techniques and by conveying different art movements”²⁴.

Youth culture is understood as culture performed by young people. It is a new field of activities for the youth policy, and its aim is to support creativity and development primarily; access to culture is a secondary consideration. Especially in open youth work young people already have contact with youth culture in the sense of every day culture, which does not mean that young people have to perform themselves. Within the new youth policy, ‘cultural’ projects of young people should be supported and the jury for the selection project should be composed of young people themselves. The projects should be supported but not led by adults. Such a methodology, notwithstanding any substantive distinctions, establishes the difference of youth cultural activity from amateur art.

Sometimes expressions of youth culture become matters for policing and sometimes matters for street youth work. There is until now no established link and dialogue between culture policy, youth policy and social policy. The international review team hopes that new measures may promote fresh thinking in these relationships and their responses to young people.

In the more rural areas in the south, cultural activity is very traditional. But the access to cultural activities like cinemas is difficult because public transport does not cover the whole area and is scarce in the late evening. Putting events on in the more urban areas did attract young people but carried the risk of them drinking and driving, so innovative approaches to the use of taxi services have been tried²⁵.

The media landscape in the German-speaking Community is influenced strongly by the size and the geographical situation of the area. German, Dutch, French Belgian media have a strong impact. Beside one daily German language newspaper – the *Grenz-Echo* also has a monthly magazine for youth included – two public German language Radio stations and one public TV station exist in the DG. There also exist a couple of private radio stations. Furthermore an open channel exist, which

²⁴ Presentation on cultural policy of the German-speaking Community in Belgium

²⁵ For example In Trondheim in Norway, there is a fixed taxi fare for young people to get home. The difference in cost is subsidised by the municipality. It is a feature of youth policy, in the interests of more inclusive participation in social activities and leisure opportunities and in the interests of the personal safety of young people.

allows interested people to highlight various topics, but it has a small and quite selective audience. To get involved with this kind of open media needs time and knowledge.

Members of the international review team had the chance to visit the media centre in Eupen that serves as a library, a ludothek for renting games, a mediathek for music and videos, as an internet access point and as a site for equipment rental. The last offer especially is of high interest for young people and youth work. Here it is made possible for youth to rent items from tents for camps to audio or video equipment and even a whole stage can be rented. Small material can be delivered, which makes it very easy for young people to make use of the offer, but bigger things like the stage have to be collected by the group who is renting it.

Furthermore, the media centre is a training provider for media competence and offers courses for filming, audio, internet and cutting of videos. It also offers a processing laboratory for copying videos. It offers information evenings about new developments in the internet and the opportunities and risks that are connected to these. A survey on the usage of the internet by young people showed that many of them are not aware – or don't care – about the dangers in the world wide web, especially the data protection issues connected to social networking sites.

The media centre has around 2,200 regular individual visitors; children up to the age of 12 are coming and again from the age of 20, but teenagers are hard to reach – though they do make use of the centre for CDs, games or videos, but little more. Migrants use the media centre for educational books and migrant youth also for internet access, but mostly the media centre has only indirect contact with migrants via migrant organisations.

Health and prevention

The international review team did not have the chance to receive special information on health issues, but as mentioned before by young people and professionals working with youth abuse of alcohol is seen as the biggest problem for young people in the German-speaking Community. This perception is supported by recent research on addiction and drugs as well as on health issues. A national Belgian study on health²⁶ showed that young people from the German-speaking Community display a higher consumption of alcohol than people of the same age in the other Communities. 41% of 15 to 24 year olds said that they drink more than six glasses of alcohol at least once a week, whereas 12% is the national average for this level of consumption. A similar tendency can be seen regarding tobacco consumption. More than 30% of the germanophone 15 to 24 year olds are smoking daily. The average for the whole country is just 19%. Other significant results of the research show that a higher percentage of young people are being affected by psychological indisposition than people over 65.

Health education in schools is provided in cooperation with the psycho-medico-social centres. Here the focus lays on different health promotion and prevention fields from dental care training in Kindergarten and primary school to sex education and HIV prevention in secondary schools. The PMS centres also provide regular health and dental checks for school children.

²⁶ wiv-isp: Rapport VII: Communauté Germanophone, 2008

HIV- and AIDS-prevention are also important topics, alongside a broader range of health issues such as nutrition, obesity and alcohol misuse, in the preventive work undertaken in at least some youth work.

It needs a clear and specific policy concerning interventions and measures to deal with the topic of alcohol consumption of young people. Preventing young people's drinking at all or focusing on the habit of binge drinking, following a culture of abstinence or of pleasurable consumption – anyway it needs the multidisciplinary cooperation of experts and a cross-sectoral policy. In the development of a common approach experts, practitioners and policy makers from such diverse fields like schools, youth work, police, medicine, prevention, youth policy, health policy, driving schools, (public) transport, gastronomy, health education, media and more. Not only the policy but also its implementation has to be developed – be it health education in schools, prevention in cooperation with youth work or sport clubs, or cooperation in economic field of transport, gastronomy and youth culture.

A similar approach is needed regarding abuse of Tobacco, taking drugs, sexual transmitted diseases and HIV, nutrition or violence.

Migration

The topic of migration was reflected at different occasions during the visit of the international review team to the DG. Since Germans are the biggest group of migrants in the German-speaking Community, problems concerning language are not a significant issue. More problematic seems to be the concentration of other migrants in the municipality of Eupen. Here youth workers are reporting that youth centres are used mainly by migrants and report on the need for more robust intercultural knowledge and understanding. Youth organisations do not report having many members with migration backgrounds other than German, but nevertheless the Council of German-Speaking Youth has commendably produced information leaflets in seven different languages. The Youth Council's membership is furthermore not restricted to citizenship, so anybody interested could volunteer to become a member, so long as they are living in the German-speaking Community.

Conclusion and recommendations

The German-speaking Community has presented its youth policy as clearly acknowledging youth work as a key delivery mechanism but with the expectation that it will contribute, more than in the past, to the tackling of a broader range of different topics and challenging themes.

Youth policy can focus on, and valorise, youth work and youth work development because the size of the area and its population allows direct contact between all institutions having a strong influence on young people's life. And since some Regional competences were transferred to the DG the exchange between the German-speaking Community institutions on most issues affecting youth has strengthened.

The short ways – between the institutions and between the involved people – enables fast and efficient exchange and the resolution of problems.

The shortcomings of this system lie in what often remains an informal structure that makes it vulnerable and strongly influenced by personal relationships or even party political opinions.

Youth policy development

It is clear that youth policy makers are eager to face the challenges and are interested in correcting obvious weaknesses and improving provision in the main fields of youth policy. The new structure of the Council of German-speaking Youth will especially help to establish an independent advisory and consulting body representing young people. Also the targeted approach to delivery of youth policy via youth work and youth agencies has very positive elements. As long as the actors are involved in the concept development and not reduced to servants implementing the strategy the approach can also be successful.

Problematic can be seen the long time span not of the strategy but of the concepts that are designed for a matching delivery. A period of five years enables youth services to focus on their work instead on the development of concepts, on the other hand new developments in society – be it economic crises, ecological or natural challenges or technological developments – might need reactions of youth policy and changes in the strategy. Youth policy should be open to sudden changes while keeping the overall direction.

The training for voluntary youth workers is comprehensively described in the new decree; especially the practical part of this training is of high importance for the quality of youth work. On the other hand further training is only mentioned for professional youth workers and not for volunteers.

Education

The education system is also, again due to the size of the population, well structured, with relevant opportunities seemingly offered to all groups of young people. The part-time schools, as a measure to retain and motivate young people who are at risk of dropping out the school system, is a good example: a small group of pupils can easily receive individual assistance and training.

What is problematic, however, is the early separation between the types of secondary schools; it is critical that the possibility of changing tracks – for those young people who may have been allocated to, or accidentally chosen, the wrong path – should be made very possible at different points on those journeys²⁷.

Labour market

Even though the unemployment rate in the group of 15 to 24 year olds is with approx. 14% quite low – while an employment rate of more than 35% is high for this group – unemployed young people are a problem for the German-speaking Community.

²⁷ This problem is already dealt with in the Regionales Entwicklungskonzept as a project for the future. Within this project a reform of the school system is foreseen to counteract the effects described in this paragraph

Especially those with lower educations are at risk of failing at the labour market, but also the group of youth with a degree of the secondary school are not unaffected by unemployment.

The measures to get young people into jobs are in any cases successful, but that group which is most at risk of failing needs often integration measures that do commonly not lead directly back in the first labour market.

Health

The worrying results of research on alcohol consumption by young people show the need for intervention. Health education in schools concentrates now on sex education and HIV prevention, and here broader approaches seem to be needed.

Recommendations to the German-speaking Community

Youth policy and youth work

RECOMMENDATION 1

Youth policy in the DG is a transversal topic but the international review team got the impression that most links between the different policy fields concerning young people are rather based on personal contacts than on established connections – this good cooperation is due to the size of the DG, where “everybody knows everybody”. Nevertheless the international review team finds it advisable to establish links between the different departments in the ministries as well to other relevant institutions concerning youth topics.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Thus also a broader and more transversal approach to youth policy will be institutionalised. The international review team encourages the department for youth in the Ministry of the DG initialises this cooperation and establishes a network on youth in the DG involving beside the youth field representatives of the formal education system, employment, culture, health, media and sport.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The structure of the youth forum in the DG disagrees with the principles of the European Youth Forum, therefore the youth forum will be newly structured. The international review team welcomes this development and invites the government of the DG to involve this structure in decision making processes not only in youth policy but also other policy fields.

RECOMMENDATION 4

To provide a clear frame for youth policy development by working along a five year strategy is welcomed by the international review team. But having in mind the fast changing challenges of youth work – due to economic developments, new youth cultures and connected problems and needs or ever faster moving technological developments – such a mid term strategy has to be very

open. Short term programmes and projects might even change the over-all direction of the strategy. This should be possible to not obstruct youth work to stay up to date and fulfil their tasks in reaching as many young people as possible. These possible changes should be reflected also in the evaluation of the youth policy and the assessments of youth NGOs, youth office and youth information.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Since evaluation should not be narrowed down to an instrument for quality measurement as basis for further funding but also be a means for improvement of approaches and methods of work, evaluation results (made anonymous) should be made available for other youth NGOs as well. Preferably this evaluation results should not just provided every five years since the effects of feedback are the higher the closer they are to the end of the performance. The international review team encourages the youth commission to use the yearly assessments not only for adjusting the work programmes of youth NGOs but for providing this feedback for the work in NGOs.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Initial training of voluntary youth workers and further training of professional youth workers is defined by the new decree rather comprehensive. The international review team finds it advisable to foster also further training of voluntary youth workers.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Also the content of further training of professional youth workers should be described more detailed – preferably not by given topics but as being in connection with the themes of the five year strategy and the short term programmes of youth work developments.

Education and Employment

RECOMMENDATION 8

The good structure of the education system in the DG allows young people to receive training and education in all fields. Secondary schools focus either on general or on technical education, and the vocational training in the dual system in enterprises and in school allows an early entry in the labour market. Also the opportunity to attend tertiary education also after the end of the vocational training via a voluntary 7th year in secondary school makes this career path interesting for young people. On the other hand the rather early selection in different roads of education and vocational training might lead to the “wrong” decision. Concerning latter the international review team suggests the development of bridges between the different roads of education to enable changing of educational careers. Therefore the international review team welcomes the development already mentioned in the REK (Regionales Entwicklungskonzept) “Gerechter Zugang zur Bildung”, where a reform of the secondary school system is planned to allow permeability of the school systems and enable more equitable access to the different education branches.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Extra-curricular youth work and the education system lack established links and cooperation. Since youth work also provides non-formal education cooperation between these areas is advisable.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Labour market information is well developed in the DG starting already in Kindergarten and offering contact to enterprises in the first two grades of secondary schools via “Schnupperwochen”. But the international review team did not learn of offers on special information on the labour market and/or further training and education later in the secondary school. If this is not provided already special (school) information on options after the degree should be developed.

RECOMMENDATION 11

Concerning training for unemployed people until now no special training measures for youth as target group are developed (even integration measures and the IBU are more likely to be used by young people). Since IBU is – a more or less open – financial incentive for training and employing young people that are registered unemployed might result in disadvantages for those not registered unemployed and older unemployed people. Here other measures have to balance this injustice.

Health and prevention

RECOMMENDATION 12

Since alcohol consumption of young people is seen as a major problem for young people in the DG, measures for prevention and health provision concerning this topic should be fostered. The international review team suggests a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation for the development of a common prevention approach that might be delivered in the formal as well as in the non-formal education system, in youth work, medicine, labour market, gastronomy. A similar common approach should furthermore be developed for prevention of tobacco use.

Chapter 5

A case study – dealing with youth unemployment

Making sense of employment policy – from national to local level

“It may be complicated, but sometimes it is more simple: there is a way out of the labyrinth”

Though it took some time to absorb the detail, the international review team incrementally came to understand how different pieces and stages of what might broadly be called ‘employment policy’ for young people linked together. There may be questions as to whether even greater synchronicity would produce better results, and there are the ubiquitous questions about issues such as qualification inflation, sanctions, and the efficacy of measures such as job subsidies, but there appeared to be general consensus – with which the international team would largely concur – that the Federal and Regional levels, and indeed the Community level, all play a complementary part within a purposefully overlapping framework (though this has not stopped the German-speaking Community seeking and securing more integrated control over youth training and employment initiatives). Nonetheless, on account of the layers of governance, there are acknowledged difficulties of embracing and engaging institutional collaboration with formal education (that might provide more consistent pre-vocational orientation, for example) and with community-based organisations and other NGOs (that might offer ‘first-step’ contact and support for those most distant and excluded from qualifications and the labour market).

Employment policy in Belgium spans all levels of governance. The federal administration is responsible for social security and unemployment insurance, labour law, and taxation and fiscal policy. Regional administrations²⁸ are responsible for job placement services (matching and guidance) and vocational training. And although it was asserted that “Communities intervene far less on employment matters”, it was clear that many activities and initiatives that are the responsibility of the Communities do touch explicitly or implicitly on matters of vocational orientation, employability and employment. Indeed, it was accepted that there were actors and stakeholders at three levels:

- Federal: through ONEM/RVA, the National Employment Offices
- Regional: ACTIRIS (in Brussels), VDAB (Flemish Region), FOREM (Wallonia), ADG (German-speaking Community)
- Local: non-profit associations, Missions Locales (usually subsidised by the Region and/or by the Community)

²⁸ As one respondent put it, there are in fact four regional Public Employment Services, because beyond the three Regions (Flanders, Brussels, Wallonia), the German-speaking Community has, since the early 1990s, ‘received’ the Regional competencies from the Walloon Region. Another respondent noted that there were five employment services: federal, Flemish, Brussels, Walloon and the GC.

Relationships between these levels and the procedures within and between them – especially with regard to apparently different approaches across the Regions – has been a ‘significant factor’ in the inability of Belgium to form a federal government throughout the review period. There has been debate and dissent around ‘who pays?’ and ‘who controls?’ because, though the federal level controls and assesses job-seeking behaviour and eligibility for social security payments, the Regions are in charge of placement services, yet not getting any return on their success²⁹. Moreover, in 2004, there was apparently a ‘fight’ between Wallonia and Flanders about the differential application of sanctions and the basis upon which this was decided: there were allegations that Wallonia was not strict enough and that Flanders was perhaps too strict in assessing job-seeking behaviour and applying sanctions. The debate would have been a complex one, invoking wider taxation and economic questions, because ultimately the resultant social security payments would still have been made by the central (federal) administration, and that remains a somewhat sacrosanct position, however much some might wish to argue that job-seeking guidance and placement, and sanctions (or payments), should be harmonised. As one respondent put it, “social security is a central pillar of the state, and if you shake it, there are a lot of after-shocks”. The approach to social security in Belgium is distinctive and unusual. It is governed by the social partners, employers and the trade unions, with the government as an observer. The unions actually pay the allowances to the unemployed (those who are not members of a trade union can go to the ‘neutral’ government office).

The ‘fight’ mentioned above no doubt derived, in part at least, from the differential economic performance of the Regions. Flanders was, and remains the most prosperous Region – all Flemish provinces have lower unemployment rates than all provinces in the Walloon Region. Youth unemployment is disproportionately higher throughout Belgium, though so far Belgium has managed the current European economic crisis more successfully than most neighbouring countries, with the exception of Germany. There are, predictably, prospective challenges beyond the immediate ones, especially demographic change, wherein Flanders has an ageing population and Brussels a strikingly youthful one. The employment rate in Belgium is ‘excellent’ for those aged 30-54 and for highly qualified people. Current and future concerns relate to young people, older workers and non-EU citizens (a proxy for ‘migrants’, about whom it is in fact rather difficult to have a conversation – see below). A major tension concerns the balance to be struck between attention to older workers (many of whom ‘retreat’ from the labour market at an average age of 59, even though the pensionable age is 65) and measures directed towards young people.

The broad characteristics of the unemployment regime in Belgium are that allowances are unlimited in time (though they do decline over time) and individuals become eligible for full benefits once they have worked full-time for over a year. There are, however, ‘controls’ that relate to an evaluation of the efforts being made to find a job, such as job applications, job search, CV construction and contact with services. Evaluations take place over three stages and, after the third stage, benefits can be withdrawn. Allowances are based on previous job and on the duration of unemployment.

²⁹ This is always an issue for structural separation within the same policy area. In England and Wales, its classic illustration is within the youth justice system, where community penalties have to be resourced by municipalities whereas custodial sentences are financed by the state. There are currently measures to look at how municipalities that reduce the numbers of their young people entering custody (below estimated expected levels) can be rewarded for that achievement. The parallel with Belgium would be that additional job placement success, saving Federal social security payments, would reward the Regions in some way.

And, as one expert informed us, “rather than a single, and simple, cut-off point, we believe it is more fair, even if it is more complicated, to have controls that can distinguish between those who are making an effort to find work and those who may not be”. Sanctions are sparingly applied, largely only when there is outright refusal to engage in what is considered to be a generous and fair-minded process, one that was described as ‘pretty humane’. Even if individuals are not in receipt of unemployment benefit or social assistance, they can still be helped by the Employment Service.

Young people who have had no previous job can access ‘waiting allowances’, a special allowance available whenever someone decides they have finished their studies. Differential allowances are payable, depending on age and family conditions, and young people become eligible for them nine months after leaving their studies. The rationale behind this system was explained:

The advantage of this system, which is very particular to Belgium, is that they [young people] are immediately registered with the regional employment service. If there was no allowance, they could easily become lost to the system³⁰. Young people register straight away, so that they can get the waiting allowance at the earliest opportunity, and so there can be engagement with them right from the start.

Throughout Europe, there are discussions and arguments about processes and practices for labour market insertion, developing ‘employability’, creating jobs and stimulating employment demand for young people. The European and national rhetoric concerning ‘knowledge-based economies’ rings rather hollow for well-educated young people who are struggling to get a first foothold in the labour market. There is a contemporary debate about ‘qualification inflation’, young people taking work that is not commensurate with their qualifications, and particular concerns about young people being expected or compelled to take such work. Though it may be subjected to critique, there appeared to be some clarity of perspective around the position and procedure adopted in Belgium:

If you don’t accept the offer of a suitable job, then benefits can be stopped, for different periods – four weeks, eight weeks, or even more. Employment law defines what counts as ‘suitable’: level of salary, distance from home, employment conditions. There are discussions about philosophical and religious refusals, and in such cases there is arbitration by a judge.

It is difficult to describe any more what are ‘normal’ paths into the labour market. There are many different routes. Some young people are already inserted into the labour market, before ending their studies. Others are not. After one year, qualifications and experience become almost irrelevant, so then, theoretically at least, cleaning can become a ‘suitable’ job even for somebody with a university degree. This may not be applied, but it can be a tool to force, or incentivise, people to look beyond their original aspirations. And it is important for people’s thinking and effort to find work that they know they will be evaluated in due course. So these are important signals.

³⁰ This is exactly what happened in the UK when social security entitlement was withdrawn from 16 and 17 year olds in 1988. Many young people simply vanished, seeing no purpose in turning up to the Careers Service or Job Centre if there was no money to be had for doing so. It took another six years before the phenomenon of what is now referred to as the ‘NEETs’ (young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training) was ‘discovered’, researched, and politically acknowledged (see Istance *et al* 1994). Two decades further on, the UK and many other countries are still grappling with policy measures for young people who are NEET, though the definition of this phenomenon has now stretched to include school drop-outs, those excluded from school and young adults aged 18-24. This may be technically accurate, but it muddies the water and confuses the policy debate.

There are always trade-offs³¹ between getting a job quite fast that may not be the ideal, and hold out for a job closer to the ideal. And holding out can produce new disadvantages, such as the decreasing relevance of skills, the attitudes of employers to those who have been out of the labour market for a year.

The point was made that there are relatively few temporary or casual jobs in Belgium, nor are there so many people (compared to elsewhere) working at levels below their qualifications (see the OECD 'PISA' studies). There are also supported opportunities, both 'passive' and 'active', for young people to consider self-employment and entrepreneurship. 'Passively', they can always try and, if they fail, they can simply re-engage with the unemployment process as a 'worker' and claim unemployment benefit. More actively, subject to an acceptable business plan, an individual can receive an advance of unemployment benefits and, if the business subsequently fails, calculations are made regarding the balance between what has been received and what the individual would have received had they remained unemployed.

The issue in Belgium is not in fact about young people within the labour market, whose situation is rarely precarious (unlike elsewhere); the issue is about enabling young people's orientation and access to appropriate positions within the labour market. One respondent observed that "We would probably have a better labour market if we had the 'flexicurity' model of the Euro, but a lot of people have to be persuaded of this". Belgium does, however, have one of the highest minimum salaries in Europe, which clearly confers considerable security and protection for those 'already in', but this may act as a deterrent to employers to take recruitment risks in precarious times. This is the reason for what is proclaimed by the National Employment Office to be a 'win-win' ACTIVA programme to incentivise employers to hire unemployed people. The programme includes financial incentives to recruit young people who have been receiving unemployment allowances for more than a specified period.

Though employment policy, even for young people, may not specifically be a Community responsibility, it became apparent to the international review team that, especially in declining industrial areas and more isolated rural areas, both sites of significant youth unemployment, a variety of community and cultural project do touch on employment issues. They sometimes attempt to correct or supplement what they see as 'bad choices in school orientation', often made not by students but by the school or their parents; they try to boost young people's motivation in circumstances where growing poverty, a decreasing number of jobs, and few small companies, that produce very limited job openings for young people and damage their hope and aspirations; and they sometimes get closely involved in the provision of training and accreditation, because although "we know not all will get jobs, but we have to try to get them closer to the labour market":

This area has a lot of unemployment, a lot of failure – people think that they are doomed. We want to develop self-esteem, belief that people can change things for the better from the inside. We have to help people to be more realistic... Otherwise, we leave them on the side of the road. We want to offer support, but not produce dependency. [One of our projects] is about trying to re-ignite hope and belief in young people who may appear to have given up.

³¹ This was a point made long ago, though from the position and perspective of unemployed young people. They, like most of us, engage in 'trade-offs': the big question is on what criteria they do so and whether or not we are aware of, let alone understand, those criteria. They may be very different from our own. See Williamson (1982)

This particular public centre for social assistance in the French-speaking Community provided an impressively wide-ranging set of opportunities, activities and experiences, supporting schooling, family life, parents, culture, health and employment. It has, through myriad funding sources, established 'multiple approaches and a range of partnerships', enabling around 200 young people aged 18-30 to participate in a range of its social inclusion, training and skills programmes, even though "we do not have a specifically targeted policy towards this age group". This is 'first-step' community development and vocational orientation activity but a critical component of overall policy regarding training and the labour market.

There were some aspects of the relationship between employment policy and social security policy that somewhat perplexed the international review team, including the apparently unequal opportunity structures for young people depending on whether or not they held Belgian nationality. Non-Belgians have the right to waiting allowances but they are not entitled to the integration contract (ie. Charleroi): the question remains as to what is the logic behind this measure in terms of sensitive integration. Secondly, even the Brussels, with its distinctive demographic profile in terms of the balance between indigenous and immigrant young people, lacks targeted unemployment measures for immigrants, despite their disproportionate presence in the Brussels-Capital Region and their relatively high unemployment rate.

Despite what may appear, reasonably, as a comprehensive and considered system linking labour markets and unemployment, Belgium clearly faces a number of challenges on this front, some of which are linked to the federal structure, others of which address relevance and sustainability.

First, economists are always preoccupied with three questions around labour market insertion strategies: deadweight (it would have happened anyway), substitution (one group of unemployed workers makes way for another) and displacement (one type of, for example, young person is displaced by another). It was cautiously acknowledged that one or more of these was probably widespread, and that they needed to be more robustly explored. In the case of deadweight, it was accepted that an important question was whether or not, in the context of the ACTIVA programme, employers were now waiting to take on people in categories they routinely recruited from *only* after they reached the eligibility period, so that they can benefit from the subsidies.

Secondly (and this does not just relate to employment) there is a significant question about mobility inside Belgium. In part, this relates to language questions, though language barriers to employment transcend mobility questions. In the Brussels region, for example, some inhabitants (immigrants) do not speak either of the main languages. However, there are different employment issues for French-speaking people working in Flanders; it is, of course, easier for them to work in the Brussels region. And others, nevertheless, do work in Flanders. But, time and again, the international review team heard that Belgium people are 'born with a brick in their stomach': they don't want to move. During a visit to a rural municipality, we were told,

We are in the middle of no-where here, and they [young people] don't think of possibilities further afield.... Children are not open to the outside world. Some are, of course. And more are beginning to be. But here in the little villages, they are really stuck here – even though we are on the border, just 10km away

The question of internal mobility arose in discussions elsewhere during the visits of the international review team. A range of factors do, indeed, conspire to produce that brick in the stomach. We did not detect a great deal of motivation to address this, although it does affect labour market and employment mobility, even if, technically, “the definition of a ‘suitable’ job does not stop at any regional borders... the definition is 12 hours, including travelling time, within a radius of 25 km”. One respondent, working as a cultural animateur, felt that more mobility – even *within* the same linguistic region – would help to open minds and horizons:

I think if we could build connections – even though there are many already, our young people do not make use of it, and even Namur is too far away. People don’t take these opportunities, so opening horizons and getting these young people to meet other young people facing similar realities....

Our young people are not particularly attracted to the idea of European exchange; they are afraid, frightened, and this place is also their comfort zone, where they feel ‘at home’, which of course they are. But meeting other people would be something really interesting. One of our youth centres really should be doing something like this.

Third, the observation that ‘some inhabitants don’t speak either of the main languages’ causes some concern, not *per se* but because of the apparent political and perhaps cultural reluctance to face up to the issue. As one respondent noted, “we don’t have a target group measure for immigrants, because it is too difficult and delicate”. The international review team learned that there was a ‘massive difference’ between labour market participation of EU citizens and that of immigrants, and there was hardly veiled acknowledgement that there was ‘clear discrimination against immigrants’. The openness of Belgian society had welcomed a significant flow of immigration and immigrants now comprised some 12% of the population, but there had been a failure to address the ‘second step’, which “is about the integration of immigrants into Belgian society”. It was suggested that the French speaking Community in particular needed to do more on the question of integration (see Chapter 3).

The international review team would also like to comment, in relation to young people and self-employment, on the question of the ‘fourth side of the triangle’³². There has been a prolonged debate as to whether all but a tiny minority of young people are appropriately equipped and motivated to engage successfully, over time, in entrepreneurship (see MacDonald and Coffield 1991). Business plans, the necessary business start-up finance, and appropriate business mentoring and support (the usual triangle of entrepreneurial development) need to be supplemented by a gritty resilience to cope with the ups and downs of enterprise activity. Some have argued that young people do not have the requisite life experience for such resilience. There is certainly some evidence that prospectively successful youth-initiated businesses collapse at the very points when success is imminent – either because of demoralisation that it will never happen (when it is just around the corner) or because the first wave of success produces overspending and bankruptcy. None of these issues were discussed in relation to the technical presentation of structures for enterprise support; perhaps they need more serious consideration.

³² This was a phrase coined by Williamson during an evaluation of the enterprise initiatives within the PETRA programme: see Williamson, H., Caniglia, P., Delaunois, G. and Limoncelli, L. (1993), *Training for Enterprise*, Luxembourg: Commission of the European Communities

The biggest issue in relation to employment policy, however, was the ubiquitous issue of the separation of responsibilities across levels, regions and language communities. While there may be some fortuitous or even more planned complementarity between social security distribution, labour market insert measures and vocational orientation activities, a number of commentators observed that it remained problematic to establish sustained connections: “The institutional context in Belgium makes it difficult to work with all actors”. This critique becomes more evident and more pronounced as soon one looks at what might be called ‘adjacent’ policy areas. Schools were routinely criticised for failure to provide quality vocational guidance and pre-vocational education. There was a perceived ‘rupture’ between education and work. Local associations and specialist bodies working with particular groups of people (such as offenders) were perceived not to make the contribution they could do, through their lack of involvement in institutional partnerships (though we did witness them making a more individualised contribution to the employment agenda).

Moreover, the perceived and alleged rupture was not only at an institutional and administrative level. It prevailed, perhaps significantly as a consequence of this but also for entrenched cultural reasons, in the life course of individual young people, on account of the fact that in Belgium there is no tradition of combining educational studies and work³³. As a result, young people finish their studies without any work experience, making the transition to the labour market – irrespective of other policies and structures – all the more difficult.

All in all, the prevailing view expressed by a number of respondents was that the current framework for employment policy was unsustainable, inefficient, overgenerous, and disadvantageous to young people – who have been excluded from labour market participation because of the protection afforded to older workers still able to take a range of generously supported career breaks. The argument was that there needed to be more coherence between education (schooling), vocational training and employment. The international review team might suggest that the German-speaking Community has harnessed and linked these responsibilities rather more effectively than elsewhere in Belgium, despite the demeaning of the status of ‘apprenticeships’ in some quarters, which quite evidently irritates the GSC and is a central plank of its youth employment strategy. There was, indeed, a prevailing view that, in hard economic times, Belgium needs to look hard at its current arrangements and improve the integration and connection of education, training and employment for young people. Though general education should arguably retain some autonomy and independence from the labour market, schooling nevertheless needs to tackle some labour market relevant activity, such as careers advice and information and possibility, increasingly, work experience and job-tasting. Attention also needed to be given to vocational guidance and training, with more value attached to the latter, and to the structures and practices around social security payments. That such competencies are embedded in different levels of governance means that this important debate is unhelpfully meshed with wider political discussion, but as one expert in the employment field put it:

³³ The exception is within the German-speaking Community, which has developed the ‘dual system’ of education and training that prevails in Germany and Austria (see Chapter 4). But far from this being celebrated as bringing the world of work closer to learning, and promoting access and opportunity for young people less focused or interested in academic pathways, it seems to be depicted in the wider Belgium as removing young people from learning prematurely – hence the DG’s apparently disproportionate number of ‘early school leavers’, many of whom are in fact doing apprenticeships.

There are simply not enough links. The complexity of education as a Community responsibility, guidance as a Regional responsibility, and benefits as a Federal responsibility makes it difficult to establish the necessary integration

Everyone we spoke to seemed to be aware of this and we were told that there is a current debate about the development, recognition and transfer of competencies, including the relationship and responsibilities between the federal level and the regions of Belgium. For the growing population of young people already on the margins of the labour market or at risk of becoming so, such greater coherence cannot come soon enough.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Some concluding challenges for the country as a whole

One of the more recent procedural innovations in the Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy has been to provide immediate and initial feedback to representatives of the governmental authorities. This is always tentative, provisional and has the possibility of being revoked. Nevertheless, it provides an opportunity to test initial ideas with those 'inside' the policy framework and to gauge their reactions. The international review team does not necessarily, at this point, speak with one voice: concerns and issues are expressed by different members and all the team does is agree on what constitute the priority issues to be shared with governmental officials in the time available. Further debate often does, however, consolidate a consensus on the significance of the issues raised, even though the arguments within them may be subject to some refinement.

In Belgium, of course, the preliminary feedback had to relate to the three Communities. The team endeavoured to produce thoughts that had resonance *across* the three Communities, albeit perhaps in different ways. More specific issues for just one of the Communities were left to the deliberations of the individual rapporteurs for those Communities. These are attended to in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

Seven issues – speculatively labelled as 'for Belgium as a whole' - were raised and discussed. By and large, the points were accepted, though not universally agreed. Some clarification of our concerns were promised and provided, and some revision and development has been attempted. There was a similar response when these issues were raised during the national hearing, held in February 2012. From a youth policy perspective, a number of these themes are fairly closely connected; they have been separated for conceptual clarity. The most contentious, by far, has been our analysis of and commentary on 'mobility', but few have disputed that the following issues, including mobility, merit further discussion within the context of Belgium's mosaic of policy and politics.

(i) The (in)coherence of transition routes to the labour market

The international review team remained perplexed at the apparent lack of connection between, for example, economic awareness in formal education, vocational preparation, vocational training, labour market insertion programmes, and unemployment benefits and social security policy. To put it in the vernacular, things seemed to be (with some exceptions, such as in the German-speaking Community) 'all over the place'.

After some discussion, the international review team conceded that it had still not fully grasped the complexities of the administrative arrangements for young people at different stages of this journey. It was noted that the international review team had not had the opportunity to engage with *regional* (indeed Regional) employment policy and, as a result, its perspectives were based on incomplete information. [This is always a risk for the international review process.] The policy challenge, those from Belgium maintained, was not to force greater collaboration but to ensure appropriate coherence, through the reinforcement of the roles and responsibilities of each 'segment' and having confidence that each knows its boundaries and limits. The international review team was not wholly convinced (hence Chapter Five): while, on receipt of further information, it could see greater coherence between vocational education/training, labour market programmes and social security policy, it remained unsure whether such vertical links (between Community, Regional and Federal activity) made sufficient effort to engage *horizontally* with other policy sectors (including youth work) which could have, and arguably should make, a key contribution to reaching young people not in education and employment and supporting what might be called 'first step' vocational orientation.

(ii) Values and the drivers of 'youth policy'

The French-speaking Community is absolutely clear about its value-base for youth policy: it is one that aims to support the emergence of Citizens with *Responsible, Active, Critical and Solidary* attributes and capacities (CRACS). Elsewhere, it seems rather more difficult to understand, let alone interpret, the essential philosophical base for youth policy. The rhetoric of emancipation often clashed with the drive for efficiency. The language of empowerment sometimes disguised an interest in regulation and control.

There are, of course, inevitable tensions here. No-one would argue against aspirations for 'good democratic governance' or something called 'sustainable civil society'. To those ends, there will be the predictable use of terms such as participation, citizenship and social inclusion. And as soon there is any attempt to rein things in, whether individuals or organisations, there will always be cries of hypocrisy and tokenism. The democratic impulse does not like restrictive conditionality.

On the other hand, in times of huge challenges in young people's lives and the societies in which they live, ideas such as creating platforms for young people to develop 'on their own terms', or indeed for youth work to develop 'on its own terms' are, in the words of one member of the international review team, "large freedoms". During the National Hearing there was, indeed, a robust defence from within the Flemish Community of its commitment to 'emancipatory' youth work and the desire to stimulate the active participation of young people: in times of austerity, youth policy should try to 'resist tightening the belts of young people'. This is, absolutely, a laudable position to take and one which, in some respects, the international review team commends wholeheartedly. Yet it was once noted in a study of delinquency that 'freedom, to the adolescent, can look suspiciously like neglect'. There are debates to be had about where youth work and youth policy sit on the continuum between individualisation and instrumentalisation – a discussion where Filip Coussée, himself from Flanders, has been at the forefront in the Council of Europe's studies of the histories of youth work in Europe.

There is, certainly, a difficult balance to strike. As Julius Nyrere, the first black President of Tanzania observed in his inaugural speech: Freedom without discipline is anarchy, discipline without freedom

is tyranny, and you have to find a path between the two. In a different vein, it has often been noted that ‘freedom for the pike means death for the minnow’³⁴.

All this is simply to argue that there should not be a problem with conditionality, for young people, for youth organisations or for other ‘independent’ bodies. Everything hinges on the conditions that are attached and, like our colleagues in Belgium, we would deplore moves that take youth work in the direction of only being supported if it promotes the elusive goal of ‘employability’. However, what were perceived as the ‘large freedoms’ sometimes given or claimed would appear to us to be luxuries and indulgences in austere times. Just as the German-speaking Community is eager to adapt its youth work to a primary task of encouraging and helping young people to stay, so the international review team believes that there should be a more explicit articulation of the potential wider objectives of youth (work) provision; if it is not simply about young people’s personal development, then what, more honestly, are those wider objectives – citizenship, inclusion, integration, welfare, crime prevention, employability, or something else?

(iii) Missing links

The international review team believes that it secured a strong understanding of youth policy as it is formulated and delivered through the three Communities. Building on this foundation, it garnered a reasonable knowledge of Regional and Federal activity that, in various ways, affect the lives of young people. But, in support of the assertion ‘c’est plus compliqué que ça’, the international review team remained bemused by the role of both municipalities and provinces: what do, or should, they do? In particular, there was puzzlement about the role of municipalities in the Brussels Region (which is not a province) and curiosity about the role of the province in the context of Antwerp, a focal point of the international review team’s deliberations and the European youth capital of 2011.

Seemingly, our Belgian colleagues concurred with our perplexity. It was emphasised how much of a challenge it was to co-ordinate all of these levels of administration, especially where there was ‘not even a decree’ to frame development. Once more, however, it was suggested that perhaps the international review team, looking as it did from the outside, had not properly absorbed the ‘reality’. Despite assertions in other debates that there were clear boundaries of responsibility, here it was argued that where there were weaknesses in provision at one level, other more active policy levels were able to ‘plug the gap’. In other words, weaknesses were compensated by strengths elsewhere. Moreover, there was a cautionary note about not wishing to impose too formally (and legalistically, through decree) on local policy: it was important to respect the autonomy and independence of local structures. What needed to be done was to persuade them of a vision that needed to be implemented, not to control or subordinate them. And there were umbrella (youth) organisations, in the provinces, whose role was to support the development and execution of local youth work and local youth services.

The international review team was not wholly convinced, not least if such arrangements are largely voluntary and permissive. In tough economic times, without statutory requirement, they are very likely to retreat. And where the international review team is completely unable to comment is

³⁴ For a recent illustration of the application of this idea to contemporary (higher education) policy in the UK, see Simon Szreter’s lecture on The Idea of a University. Szreter is Professor of History and Public Policy at the University of Cambridge

Brussels (though see below); as one of our colleagues from Belgium remarked, “it is completely different there, Brussels is another world”.

(iv) Differentiated access and variable approaches

The international review team was struck by the apparently quite separate forms of youth provision not on the basis of language but on the basis of ethnicity – and therefore presumably on the basis of migration and integration. This was perhaps less evident in French-speaking Community cities such as Charleroi than in Flemish Community cities such as Antwerp, but it was still evident. And it was very evident in Brussels, where young people from migration backgrounds represent a very significant proportion of the youth population. Given the specificities of Belgium, the international review team concluded that integration should be a fundamental aspect of youth policy and youth practice (largely, it is not at present) and that youth policy should be carefully aligned to integration policy.

There seemed to be reasonable support for this analysis and recommended direction amongst our Belgian colleagues, though there was doubt as to how it might be effectively addressed. Immigration was a “very complex issue” with, at the Federal level, four different Ministries responsible for different elements of migration: immigration, citizenship, asylum, refugees and so on. It was also accepted that models for youth policy that command a considerable consensus within the French-speaking and Flemish Communities do not fit or sit well in the context of Brussels, yet those are the sources of youth policy making in Brussels. There was a concession that there was a ‘big gap’ in relation to Brussels that was often conveniently overlooked yet demanded rather urgent attention. Sometimes it took ‘strangers in a strange land’ (such as the international review team) to remind those living there of this issue. Indeed, during the national hearing, the validity of such observations was acknowledged, though it was asserted that there were already some ‘steps forward’, not least the political announcement at the national hearing that there was to be a common platform between the French-speaking and Flemish Communities to give attention to these issues and for the development of youth policy in Brussels.

(v) Youth Councils

The international review team has noted that neither the Youth Council of the French-speaking Community nor the Youth Council of the German-speaking Community are constituted in ways that meet the criteria for national youth councils as formulated by the Youth Forum Jeunesse (the European Youth Forum). Yet all three Youth Councils in Belgium are represented within the YFJ. The Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, promoted by the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, does, however, talk of building structures for youth participation that are responsive to local and regional circumstances.

Without wishing to step on the toes of established perspectives and formulations in relation to Youth Councils, the international review team had mixed views concerning all the youth councils in Belgium. There are conceptual and constitutional issues but there are also pragmatic and operational ones. In the French-speaking Community, the Youth Council might be criticised for being too closely harnessed to youth policy development and implementation, but it is certainly and commendably involved by the authorities in those processes. In contrast, the Youth Councils of both the German-speaking Community and the Flemish Community said they routinely proffered advice

and were often consulted (this is a legal requirement, on any matters to do with young people, in the Flemish Community), yet the impact is not satisfactory on every domain. Young people in the German-speaking Community were eager to point out that they were all volunteers on the Youth Council; their commitment is, therefore, all the more impressive. The more structured and independent Flemish Youth Council organizes working groups, youth panels, inquiries and conventions on a number of contemporary topics, besides their central General Assembly. Though clearly representing young people in an active and committed way, the international review was somewhat taken by surprise when one member of the Flemish Youth Council depicted himself as being there to serve the Flemish government and its policies towards youth, rather than questioning and challenging, on behalf of young people, its development and implementation. At a local level, at least officially, there is a youth council in every municipality in Flanders, though the international review team learned that many are hardly visible or active. And – whatever efforts have been and are being made to stimulate youth participation – the youth councils are sometimes regarded as “a network of often the same people” that arguably has not done enough to engage with a more diverse constituency of young people. [During the national hearing officials did concede that, despite the value of youth councils in the co-production of youth policy, there could be “too much conversations, discussion and meetings” and that there were other ways of setting up consultative practices with young people, especially in order to hear the voices of minorities.]

The J-Club, the unofficial co-operation between the three Youth Councils, has existed since 2006 and deals with “everything that is federal, European and international (UN)”. It also shares views on their respective Community issues, and seeks to establish “as broad co-operation as possible”. Yet, despite the international review team hearing from ‘ordinary’ young people that they find many of the current structural features of Belgium both absurd and surreal, and would welcome more fluidity and contact across linguistic and cultural borders within the country, those speaking for the J-Club were extremely cautious about addressing anything that smacked of internal politics: “we work with the realities in which we are located”. This may be realistic but it is also resting within a comfort zone that does not reflect the changing perspectives of at least some young people in Belgium.

The international review team therefore saw both strengths and weaknesses in the constitutional and operational arrangements for the three different ‘national’ Youth Councils in Belgium (and, indeed, their unofficial composite). Whatever their strengths, there is a case for interrogating the value and validity of some of their weaknesses. Currently there is some attention to some of these; perhaps there should be more.

(vi) Mobility

It is perhaps the question of internal mobility and migration in Belgium that throws many broader issues into relief. When the international review team raised the matter, it clearly hit a nerve. We approached it gently, but it was definitely very sensitive territory. Mention was made immediately of the Bel’J programme that promotes internal mobility. The international review team did not fully pick up the role of Belgium’s three National Agencies (which are responsible for the Youth in Action programme) in promoting it. What had been made clear to the international review team was that working across those NAs, in order to develop a group of young people from the three Communities in order for them to participate in an international exchange elsewhere, was not part of the task of the three National Agencies. The international review team was quite amazed to hear that “what is

being proposed goes beyond the role that a National Agency should fulfil". The point was re-stated at the National Hearing. But this then begs the question of who could or should be acting more *pro-actively* on this front. It was asserted, certainly in the case of Brussels, that a 'mixed group' (not defined, but presumably including both French-speaking and Dutch-speaking young people, and perhaps others) could approach either JINT or BIJ, the Flemish and French Community National Agencies, who would *react* supportively to their inquiry and interest. After all, the point was made that "everybody accepts the reality of Brussels". But apparently there is no role to stimulate such mixed engagement.

This is certainly, otherwise, as one individual put it, a 'turbulent issue'. It is also an issue that confirms, to an extent, the paradox of Belgium: despite the complexity, much is made to work very well indeed, certainly on an international front. Young people in Belgium do get the opportunity to join youth exchanges, do European Voluntary Service, and so on; disadvantaged and marginalised young people, if they are made aware of these opportunities, are given excellent support to take up youth initiatives. But there are two factors often missing. The first is information and it was suggested by some respondents that "youth information networks are not so strong". The second is internal mobility and the *promotion* of greater cultural and linguistic knowledge and understanding between young people from the different Communities.³⁵ It was argued that that is much easier to achieve once young people have been elsewhere and had international experiences, but the international review team found this perspective rather disingenuous. Once more, and writ large, the international review team witnessed impressive vertical expertise and professionalism in parallel with what might be almost cruelly depicted as horizontal myopia, denial and inaction.

(vii) The training of youth workers

For well over a decade, there have been European level debates about the concept and contribution of 'non-formal education/learning' (a.k.a. youth work) and the methods and mechanisms for advancing its recognition in the youth field. At the time of writing, the participants at a symposium held in November 2011, produced a statement entitled 'Getting There....'³⁶. But is it? The international review team raised the question of recognition and reciprocity around training and qualifications in the youth field *between* the Communities of Belgium. We were told that there has been a 'long, ongoing discussion'. After all, without formal recognition and certification throughout Belgium, qualifications conferred in one Community may have no value, credibility or currency in any other.

The last five years has, however, seen the allocation of support and finance for the development of instruments for qualification and recognition in the field of non-formal education/learning in the youth sector (social cultural work) (for example, www.oscaronline.be, www.c-sticks.be,

³⁵ Various Belgian public authorities disagreed strongly with these assertions, maintaining that 'There's a lot of exchange in the formal education and the non-formal education/learning systems, e.g. Bel'J, Prince Philippe, Fondation Roi Baudouin, classes d'immersion entre les communautés...'.

³⁶ Getting There.... Working together to 'establish a **common ground** for a medium and long-term co-ordinated strategy **toward** recognition of youth work and non-formal learning in Europe **with** the involvement of actors and stakeholders from the various sectors of policy concerned'. Statement by participants of the Symposium 'Recognition of Youth Work and Non-Formal Learning/Education in the Youth Field, 14-16 November, 2011, European Youth Centre Strasbourg.

competentiesprint) and for setting up tools for cooperation with formal education partners and employment actors.

There are, of course, European level initiatives around qualifications in the field of both formal and non-formal education (for example, the European Qualifications Framework, the Portfolio for the Training of Youth Workers and Youth Leaders). But their translation into the Belgium context is, predictably, 'very complicated' (although it has to be acknowledged that this 'translation' is likely to be challenging in any context). Very recently, the French-speaking Community did give recognition to qualifications achieved within the German-speaking Community. The prevailing view is that, ultimately, it is employers (and not exclusively the administrations, though of course it includes them) who define the profile of professionals that they need. Therefore, only if there is some form of equivalence between structural arrangements and operational procedures and practice can there be 'transferability' of qualifications and the practitioners who hold them³⁷.

Beyond the external, significantly political and administrative, tensions on this front, there is also an internal professional anxiety about moves to validate and 'professionalise' the youth work field. The concern here is that more independent NGOs would lose control of their own approaches to training, qualification and practice, and the argument is that diversity in the youth work field is its richness and strength. And there are legitimate arguments both ways. In the middle is the position whereby quality standards are specified and delivery is tested against them. In every Community training quality standards for (voluntary) youth workers have been developed (by the sector together with the administration) and are used in practice, but some more formally than others (for example 'kadervorming' in the Flemish Community, or 'basisopleiding' German speaking community) - and they look quite similar.

Here the qualifications that lie behind the practice are technically irrelevant. Furthermore, there is nothing formal to prevent a municipality within one Community from recruiting practitioners from other Communities; that, largely, they do not is the consequence of many factors, some more explicit (such as language competence) than others.

All seven of these issues were debated robustly during the national hearing and, despite specific criticisms, concerns and corrections, there was general acknowledgement that they merited more protracted consideration and debate between relevant parties within Belgium itself. Should that take place, and a review of decisions and development is conducted in two years' time (part of the follow-up process to the international review, to which the Belgian authorities have already made a commitment), then the 'critical complicity' in which the international review is engaged has already served a useful purpose. Never have the reviews sought simply to provide some 'cosy confirmation' of what is already going on. Nonetheless, by way of a final conclusion, it should be said that, wherever you may be in Belgium, there remains a strong political will to serve young people well and

³⁷ This is an important point. It is pertinent, from the other direction, to the United Kingdom, where many qualifications in the learning field (teacher training, youth work, career guidance) have a formal currency across the UK, yet these are usual devolved functions and so there is increasing divergence in what is expected from practitioners in these fields between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There is ongoing debate about what are the essentials of training in the field and what needs to be 'top-up' training and qualification that equip practitioners for working in distinctive policy environments.

a range of constructive and opportunity-focused youth provision. It is certainly diverse, and so does raise questions about the equity of service in different places, but – certainly if contrasted with the lives of young people elsewhere in Europe – any part of Belgium, if you are young, remains a good place to be.

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Appendices

The programme for the international review team

I

First Visit – 10–16 April 2011

Sunday 10 April 2011

- Arrival of Team members
- Check in at Hotel Aris
- 19h20 Meeting in the lobby (Guide Jan Vanhee)
- 19h30 Dinner @ Restaurant Aux Armes de Bruxelles, Rue des Bouchers 13, 1000
Brussels
5 minutes walk from the hotel

Monday 11 April 2011

- 08h35 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide Jan Balliu)
- 08h45 Departure from the hotel to the Federal Senate (Room M)
- 09h00 Welcome coffee
- 09h30 **First session:**
 - The Belgian State structures: Belgium as a Federal State. By Mr. Benjamin Dalle
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 **Second session:**
 - The Belgian State structures: Belgium as a Federal State – Q&A and discussion
- 13h00 End and departure for Jint v.z.w (group 1)(Guides Jan Vanhee en Jan Balliu
and the Ministry of the French Community (group 2)(Guide Laurence Hermand).

Afternoon: 2 concurrent sessions

Group 1. Flemish Community @ Jint v.z.w.

- 13h20 Lunch
- 14h30 **Third Session:**

- Introduction to youth policy in the Flemish Community. By Mr. Johan Van Gaens, Head of the Youth Division. (introduction: 50 minutes)
- 16h00 Coffee break
- 16h30 **Fourth Session:**
 - Decree on Children and Youth Policy. By Ms. Hilde Van Dyck, Advisor at the Youth Division (introduction: 15 minutes)
 - Decree on Local Youth Policy. By Ms. Els Cuisinier, Coordinator Team Local Youth Policy at the Youth Division. (introduction: 15 minutes)
 - Flemish Youth Policy Plan. By Ms. Gerda Van Roelen (Advisor) and Mr. Seppe Dams, Policy Unit at the Youth Division (introduction: 15 minutes)
- 18h00 End of meetings

Group 2. French Community @ the Ministry

- 13h20 Lunch
 - 14h30 **Third Session:** Meeting with Youth department of the Ministry and “BIJ”:
 - presentation of the report and of the program for the review, presentation of the youth sector
 - presentation of priorities and actions from BIJ.
 - 16h00 Coffee break
 - 16h30 **Fourth Session:** Meeting with youth care department of the ministry:
 - structure, decrees and practicalities, challenges and priorities for the sector.
 - 18h00 End of meetings
- ALL**
- 19h15 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide Laurence Hermand)
 - 19h30 Dinner offered by the French Community @ the Atomium

Tuesday 12 April 2011 2 concurrent sessions

Group 1. Flemish Community: Local Youth Policy in Kortrijk – all day visit

- Meeting with all relevant stakeholders for the development of youth policy (aldermen, youth service, youth organisations, youth council, youth experts,...)
- Meeting with VVJ (Flemish Association of Municipal Youth Services)
- 07h35 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide Ms. Els Cuisinier)
- 07h45 Departure from the hotel to train station
- 08h09 Train departure

- 09h21 Arrival in Kortrijk and transfer to City Hall (Guide Ms. Cornelia Hauspie)
- 09h30 **First Session** by the Aldermen for Youth Mr. Alain Cnudde
 - o Presentation of the context: the urban policy in Kortrijk
 - o Introduction to the youth policy
- 10h15 Coffee break
- 10h30 **Second Session** by Mr. Filip Stallaert
 - o V.V.J. (Flemish Association of Local Youth Services)
- 11h30 **Third Session** by Ms. Cornelia Hauspie & Ms. Bieke Vertriest (Youth Service city of Kortrijk)
 - o Presentation of the youth policy in Kortrijk
- 12h30 Aperitif with speciality of Kortrijk: 'Omer'
Lunch, in the presence of the youth council
- 13h30 **Fourth Session** by Mr. Bert Nauwynck
 - o Visit to youth culture camp (Youth Meeting Centre)
- 15h00 **Fifth Session** by Mr. Hannes Vanmeenen
 - o Visit to the play areas of the Warande
- 16h00 Coffee break with speciality of Kortrijk
- 16h30 **Sixth Session** by ...
 - o Visit to the site of youth club Chiro Stine & den Ast
- 18h15 Train departure to Brussels
- 19h24 Arrival in Brussels

Group 2. French Community @ the Cabinet (morning) and the Ministry (afternoon)

- 08h55 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide Laurence Hermand)
- 09h00 Departure from the hotel to the Ministry of the French Community
- 09h30 **First session:** Meeting with the cabinet of the Ministers for Education, Childhood and the Minister-president of the French-speaking Community and Walloon region
 - o Presentation of the policies, challenges and future perspectives
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 **Second session:** Meeting with minister Evelyne Huytebroeck (in charge of youth and youth care Affairs):
 - o Youth Plan, challenges and priorities
- 13h00 end of morning sessions
- 13h00 lunch @ cabinet of the Minister
- 14h30 **Third Session:** Meeting with advisory bodies in the youth field:
 - o commission for youth organisation (CCOJ) and commission for youth centres (CCMCJ)
 - o presentation of the sector, challenges and priorities
- 16h00 Coffee break

- 16h30 **Fourth Session:** Meeting with advisory bodies in the youth care field
 - community Council and borough councils: structure, role, challenges and priorities
- 18h00 End of meetings

ALL

- Dinner to be organised by the International Team

Wednesday 13 April 2011

All: Check-out from hotel (!)

Group 1. Flemish Community

- 08h40 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide David Wemel)
- 08h45 Departure from the hotel to Jeugd en Stad v.z.w. (Youth and the City) (www.jes.be)
- 09h15 welcome and coffee
- 09h30 Presentation of Jeugd en Stad
- 10h15 Tour of the premises
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h15 Presentations and discussion:
 - Youth in an urban setting – urban challenges: bigger, greener and more coloured
 - Urban Youth Policy in Brussels:
 - need for a bi- and co- community approach
 - Internationalisation
 - On a Flemish level (Ghent and Antwerp):
 - An Urban platform
 - (youth) competences as an answer
- 12h30 End and departure for Jint v.z.w. (Guide David Wemel)
- 13h00 Lunch @ Jint
- 14h00 (rough schedule)
 - 14h00
 - The Flemish Youth Support Centre by Mr. Bram Vermeiren (introduction: 20 minutes)
 - Flemish Youth Council by Pieter Lietaer (introduction: 20 minutes)
 - Q&A
 - 15h00
 - Jint (the National Agency) by Mr. David Wemel (introduction: 20 minutes)
 - VIP Jeugd (Flemish Youth Information Centre) by Ms. Kathleen De Smedt, member of staff. (introduction: 20 minutes)
 - Q&A
 - 16h00

- JOP (Youth Research Platform) by Mr. Johan Put and Mr.Diederik Cops (introduction: 20 minutes)
- Keki (The Children's Rights Knowledge Centre by Ms. Ellen Desmet (introduction: 20 minutes)
- Q&A
- 17h20 End of meeting and walk to train station (with eventual stop at hotel
Aris to
pick up luggage) (Guide David Wemel)

Group 2. French Community @ BIJ

- 09h00 Departure from the hotel to BIJ (Guide Laurence Hermand)
- 09h30 **First session:** Meeting with the Youth Council of the French-speaking Community: structure, priorities, challenges
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 **Second session:** Meeting with sector of active/educative leisure time: centres de vacances, Ecoles de devoirs and ATL: advisory bodies and administration in charge of these sectors: structure, priorities, challenges
- 13h00 end of morning sessions
- 13h00 lunch @ BIJ
- 14h30 **Third Session:** Meeting with Observatory for childhood, youth and youth

care and with the general delegate for Children's rights: evaluation and monitoring or policies, research and reports
- 16h00 Coffee break
- 16h30 **Fourth Session:** Meeting with local and provincial authorities about youth

Participation
- 17h20 End of meeting and walk to train station (with eventual stop at hotel
Aris to
pick up luggage) (Guide Laurence Hermand)

ALL

- 17h45 Meeting 2 groups at the train station
- 18h01 Train departure for Eupen
- 19h47 Arrival in Eupen and transfer to the Ambassador Hotel (Guide Mr. Armand Meys)
- 20h30 Dinner in the Ambassador Hotel hosted by the German-speaking Community.

Thursday 14 April 2011

- **Check out from hotel**
- 09h00 Meeting in hotel lobby and transfer to the Ministry (Guide Mr. Armand Meys)
- 09h30 **First session: 2 groups**
 - @ The Ministry of the German-speaking Community, Department of cultural and social affairs:
 - Introduction to youth policy in the German-speaking Community, by Ms. Carmen Xhonneux, Head of division Youth and adult education
 - Short introduction to other policies in the department of culture and social affairs affecting young people, by Mr. Leonhard Neycken, Head of department/director cultural and social affairs -**simultaneous translation into ENGLISH**
 - @ the “Medienzentrum der DG”: Young people, media, creativity and media literacy in the GSC: The supporting role of the “Medienzentrum der DG”, by Ms. Rita Bertemes, (director). ENGLISH
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 **Second session: 2 groups**
 - The Youth Office (Jugendbüro der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft) (www.jugendbuero.be) by Mr. Peter Ohn (President) and Ms. Irene Engel (director); ENGLISH
 - **Parallel:** The Youth Council of the German-speaking Community (www.rdj.be) by Ms. Céline Lissem, Mr. Marc David Niessen, Mr. Joel Arens. ENGLISH
- 13h00 Lunch
- 14h30 **Third session: all**
 - Meeting with Minister Isabelle Weykmans (in charge of youth affairs): The new funding decree for youth work Deutsch **simultaneous translation into ENGLISH**
- 16h00 Coffee break
- 16h30 **Fourth session: 2 groups**
 - Youth information centres (www.jugendinfo.be) by Mr. Jan Hilgers and Mr. David Langela. ENGLISH
 - Culture and Youth in the German-speaking Community by Ms. Sabine Herzet, Head of division Culture. ENGLISH
- 17h40 End of meetings
- 18h12 Train departure for Brussels
- 19h59 arrival in Brussels
- Check-in at hotel Aris

- Dinner to be organised by the International Team

Friday 15 April 2011 @ Jint v.z.w.

- 09h15 Meeting in hotel lobby and walk to Jint (Guide ?? XX)
- 09h30 International Team Meeting
- 13h00 Lunch
- 14h30 International Team Meeting (Continued)
- 17h00 Meeting International Team with representatives of the ministries from the respective Communities, Francoise Cremer and Laurence Hermand, Thierry Dufour, Jan Vanhee and Armand Meys)
- 18h30 End of meeting and
- 19h30 Dinner offered by the Flemish Community @ Little Asia (Rue St Catherine, 8 1000 Brussels

Saturday 16 April 2011

Departure of the International Team

II

Second Visit – 18-24 September 2011

Sunday 18 September 2011

- Arrival of Team members
- Check in at Hotel Aris
Hotel Aris
Rue Marché aux Herbes 78-80 Grasmart
Bruxelles 1000 Brussel
T.: +32 2 514 43 00
- 19h20 Meeting in the lobby (Guide Jan Vanhee)
- 19h30 Dinner @ Restaurant Aux Armes de Bruxelles
Rue des Bouchers 13
1000 Brussel

Monday 19 September 2011

- 08h35 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide Jan Vanhee)
- 08h45 Departure from the hotel to
Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism
(www.diversiteit.be)
Koningsstraat/rue Royale 138, 1000 Brussel

Morning: ALL: mini-review Brussels

- **“Top-down”: federal issues on immigration; youth policy in Brussels: Flemish speaking and French speaking Communities**
- 09h30 **First session:** Youth Policy in Brussels
Reference persons: Catherine Lemaitre (cabinet minister Huytebroeck) and Neal Raes (VGC)
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 Second session: (im-)migration; by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and
Opposition to Racism (www.diversiteit.be)
Reference persons: Ms. Julie Lejeune and Mr. Koen Dewulf
- 13h00 Lunch in the Centre

Afternoon: 2 concurrent groups – site visits in Brussels

- **“Bottom up” (2 of 19 Brussels municipal provision, special projects, youth initiatives)**

Group 1. Flemish Community @ 2 youth initiatives in Brussels: D’Broej (dbroej.wordpress.com) and Youth Centre Chicago (www.chicago.be)

Vaartstraat 41
1000 Brussel
02 217 34 64

Reference persons: Bie Vancraeynest (Chicago) and Bruno Bauwens D’Broej)
(guide: Kurt Uyttersprot)

- 14h30 **Third Session:**
 - General introduction D’Broej
 - video presentation about pour activism week and other good practices.
 - Focus on employment projects
- 16h00 **Break with mint tea and moroccon pastries**
- 16h30 **Fourth Session:**
 - -Guided tour Of Chicago Neighbourhood and Youth Club with a focus on 'Tenir les Murs' murals in the streets and the history of migration and diversity.
 - -Presentation of the Project: 'Khoroto' a manga from the hood.
- 18h00 End of meetings

Group 2. French Community @ 2 youth initiatives in Brussels: Mission locale de Molenbeek (<http://www.mlloc1080.be/mlm/>) and CEDAS (www.cedas.be)

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Boulevard Léopold II, 101-103 | rue Verte 210 |
| 1080 Brussels | 1030 Brussels |
| 02/421.68.60 | 02/242.20.83 |

Reference persons: Eliana Rosselli (MLM) and Thierry Barez (CEDAS)

(guide: Françoise Crémer)

- 14h30 **Third Session:**
 - General introduction and visit
 - **Explanations of the projects, trainings and work done**
 - Focus on employment
 - Coffee during the session...
- 16h00 Travel to CEDAS
- 16h30 **Fourth Session:**
 - **General presentation of the structure (Homework school, youth club, creative activities, alpha)**
 - EDD at work
 - **Focus on immigration and disadvantaged public**
- 18h00 End of meetings

Evening: All

- 19h15 **Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide: Françoise Crémer)**
- 19h30 **Dinner offered by the French Community @ Le Grand Café**
Boulevard Anspach 78
1000 Bruxelles

Tuesday 20 September 2011

All day visit - 2 concurrent sessions

Group 1. Flemish Community: Antwerp – all day visit

- **Education and schooling system / mixed cultures, immigration**
 - **Youth club, youth information centre and youth council**
- Included (traditional) and Non-included youth organisations re Flemish community**

Reference Persons:

Youth: Maarten Caestecker

Education: Koen Bastiaens

- **08h Departure from the hotel to train station**
- 08h20 Train departure
Train to Antwerp
Departure: Brussel Centraal 8h20 (direction Amsterdam CS)
Arrival: Antwerpen Centraal 8h57
- **09h Arrival in Antwerp and transfer to Den Bell (Guide Lieve Caluwaerts)**
Den Bell
Meeting Room Panorama
Francis Wellesplein 1
2018 Antwerpen
- **09h15 First Session Panel discussion 'Education'**

Introduction: Koen Bastiaens

Experts: Onthaalbureau Atlas (an open house where anyone is welcome, it's a governmental service concerning equal opportunities, Dutch language and integration)

OKAN

GOK (Equal Educational Opportunities)

KAAP: is the Antwerp translation of the concept 'Parents in (inter)Action!'

(Dutch for parents with a different language)

- 10h45 Coffee break
- **11h30 Second Session Panel Discussion 'Youth'**
Introduction: Maarten Caestecker
Experts: Formaat Plus, JES, PAJ, Chiro, Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen
- 12h30 Lunch @ Habbekrats
- **13h30 Thirth Session A number of site visits**
 - Tour Habbekrats
 - JCC Zappa
 - Kras Noord
- 18h Train departure to Brussels
- 19h Arrival in Brussels

Group 2. French Community Namur, Charleroi and Couvin – all day visit

- **07h25 Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide: Françoise Crémer)**
- 07h30 Departure from the hotel
- **8h40 Arrival in Saint Servais (Namur)**
196, Rue de Bricgniot
5002 Saint-Servais
tél. : +32(0)81/73.18.10
Reference person: Marie-Christine Delbovier
- 8h45 **First session: IPPJ Saint Servais: Residential institution for youth aid and correction**
 - **Open status and not open status, girls only**
 - General presentation and visit
 - Coffee during the session...
- 10h45 Travel to Charleroi
Rue Dagnelies 3
6000 Charleroi
+32 (0) 71/233.023
Reference person : Luisa DI FELICE
- 11h30 **Second session:**
 - **CPAS of Charleroi - Social assistance/action centre**
 - **General presentation and visit of local projects and actions towards youth**

- **Lunch at a social restaurant (citizen space)**
- **14h00** **end of morning sessions – transfer to Couvin (rural area)**
Rue du Bon Temps 404 Faubourg Saint germain 23 Rue de la Marcelle
22
5660 COUVIN
+32 60 34 64 60 +32 60 34 67 55 +32 60 34 48 84
Reference persons : Xavier Petre (CJ), Katia Raimondi (CIJ), Xavier Dupuis (AMO)
- 14h40 **Third Session:**
 - **Youth information center, youth center and Open youth aid (AMO)**
 - **Visit and presentation of the structures**
 - **Presentation of the projects and actions, networking**
 - Focus on Rural youth
 - Coffee during the session
- 16h40 Transfer to Fosses-la-Ville
Centre culturel de l'entité fossoise
place du marché 12
5070 Fosses-la-Ville
+32 71 71 46 24
Reference person : Alain Lambert
- 16h30 **Fourth Session:**
 - Local Youth Council of participation
 - General presentation of the council
 - Meeting with young members
- 18h30 Departure for Brussels
- Arrival at Brussels +/- 19h30

Evening: All

- **Dinner to be organised by the International Team**

Wednesday 21 September 2011

NOTE: **Group 3 (see “afternoon”) needs to check out from hotel**

- **08h35** **Meeting in the hotel lobby (Guide: Jan Vanhee)**
- **08h45** **Departure from the hotel to Cabinet of the Minister for Work and Equal**

Opportunities, in charge of Migration and Asylum Policy

Morning: ALL – Youth and Employment; Federal level and Regional aspects

Cabinet Minister Milquet
Kunstlaan 7

1210 Brussel

T 02 220 20 11

reference person: Antoine de Borman (Cabinet Minister Milquet)

- 09h30 **First session**
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h30 **Second session**
- 13h00 end of morning sessions
- 13h00 lunch @ cabinet

Afternoon: 3 concurrent groups – site visits in the 3 Belgian Communities

Group 1. Flemish Community @ 2 youth employment initiatives in Brussels (Guide: David Wemel)

Reference persons Patrick Mangelinckx en Inge Van Brabant (JES) and Vincent Verrijdt (Tracé Brussel)

Werkhuizenstraat 3

1080 Brussel

tel. 02/411 68 83

- **14h30 Third Session: visit and tour of JES, introduction in the projects**
- 16h00 Coffee break
- **16h30 Fourth Session: introduction in the project of Tracé Brussel: Jump to work**
- 18h00 End of meetings
- **dinner to be organised by the International Team**

Group 2. French Community (Guide Françoise Crémer)

- 13h50 Transfer to Liège

EDD Tchicass or Eclat de rire

Place Saint Barbe 16

4020 Liège

- 15h00 **Third Session:**
 - **Homework school at work in Liège**
 - General presentation, networking
 - **Focus on relation school/parents/young people**
 - **Migration, disadvantaged people, alpha, needs of the public**
 - Coffee during the session...
- 16h30 transfer to le Péri (Liège)

Terrain d'Aventures du Péri
Rue du Péri 115
4000 Liège

Reference person : Stéphane Van Collie
- 16h30 **Fourth Session:**
 - Presentation and visit
 - Youth center at work

- **Focus on creativity and multiculturality/social cohesion**
- 18h30 Departure to Brussels
- **Arrival in Brussels at 19h45 and dinner to be organised by the team**
- Group 3. German-speaking Community (Guide Armand Meys)**
- **13h00 Departure for Eupen (with minibuss)**
- **15h00 First session (Eupen): Education and schooling by Dr. Verena Greten, Ministry of the German-speaking Community, department of education and vocational training (English)**
- 16h15 Coffee break
- **16h30 Second session: The dual system in the German-speaking Community by Mr. Thomas Pankert, director of the ZAWM Eupen (English)**
- **17h45 Departure to Bütgenbach and transfer to the hotel Bütgenbacher Hof
Marktplatz 8
Bütgenbach
<http://www.hotelbutgenbacherhof.com>**
- 18h15 Check in hotel
- **18h30 Visit of open youth work (youth club) in Büllingen by Jessica Beckers (youth worker) and meeting with young people (English)
<http://ojb.jimdo.com/>**
- **20h Transfer back to the hotel in Bütgenbach**
- 20h15 Dinner hosted by GC

Thursday 22 September 2011

Morning 3 concurrent groups (Continued)

- Group 1. Flemish Community. Focus: early school leavers, school drop-out,... the situation +
are there project and is there a link with youth policy/youth organisations?)
(Guide Ronald Keersmaekers)**
- De Foyer
Werkhuizenstraat 25
1080 Brussel
- **11h00 first session: meeting with the directors of 6 organisations dealing with the topic**
 - De Foyer
 - Lejo
 - Arktos
 - Groep Intro
 - Aura

- De Werf
- 13h00 Lunch
- Group 2. French Community (In Liege) (Guide Françoise Crémer)**
- **07h20 Meeting at the hotel lobby in Brussels**
- **07h30 Departure to Liège (Angleur)**
Rue d'Ougrée 65
4031 Angleur
02/413.37.65
Reference person : Michel Vandekerke
- 09h30 **First session:**
 - **Observatory/research: social condition of young people in FC**
 - Coffee during the session...
- **11h00 Transfer to Seraing (Liège)**
Rue de Rotheux 194
4100 Seraing
04 3309710
Reference person: Alain Moriau
- 11h30 **Second session:**
 - SAS Compas-Format
 - **General presentation, actions and projects, networking**
 - **Focus: early school leavers, school drop-out, link with youth organisations**
- **13h00 Departure for Brussels and lunch**
- 14h15 Arrival in Brussels (*BIJ*)
- Group 3. German-speaking Community (guide Armand Meys)**
- **09h00 Check out from hotel; Meeting in hotel lobby and departure to the employment office in St. Vith**
- **09h30 First session: (Youth) employment, by Mr. Robert Nelles, director of the employment office of the GSC (German with English interpretation)**
<http://www.adg.be/desktopdefault.aspx>
- 11h00 Coffee break
- 11h15 **Second session: Culture and Youth : Agora Theatre and cultural education, by Ms. Helga Kohnen, educational consultant (German with English interpretation)** <http://www.agora-theater.net/>
- 12h30 (12h45) Departure for Brussels by minibus
- 14h15 Arrival in Brussels (*BIJ*)

- Afternoon
- 14h30 ALL @ BIJ: Intern(ation)al(ity): mobility and initiative
Third session: Mobility and international work; debate with the 3 National Agencies and representatives of beneficial youth organisations in the Youth in Action Programme
 - 16h00 Coffee break
 - 16h30 **Fourth session:** Debate with representatives from the youth councils from the three communities (J-Club)
 - 18h00 End of meetings

Evening: All

- Dinner to be organised by the International Team

Friday 23 September 2011 @ Jint v.z.w.

- 09h15 Meeting in hotel lobby and walk to Jint
Gretrystraat 26
1000 Brussel
T 02 209 07 20
www.jint.be
- 09h30 International Team Meeting
- 13h00 Lunch @ JINT
- 15h30 Meeting with government officials from the three communities: representatives of the ministerial Cabinets and from the ministries from the respective Communities
- 18h00 End of meeting
- 19h30 Dinner offered by the Flemish Community @ Scheltema
Rue des Dominicains 7
1000 Brussel

Saturday 24 September 2011

Departure of the International Team