Colofon

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Towards a YOUTH PACT 2020

Synthesis of the 3rd Flemish Youth Policy Plan & Priorities for the Governing Period 2010-2014
#1 from the Flemish Youth Policy Plan towards a Youth Pact
FROM THE FLEMISH YOUTH POLICY PLAN

towards a Youth Pact

A third of the population is under thirty years old. One out of five is younger than twenty. So children and young people literally ‘count’. Policy makers have to take into account this target group.

The Flemish Youth Policy Plan provides space for children and young people to help shape society from their perspective. Authorities should give children and young people a voice, a listening ear and space: space to play, to experiment, to fail and to try again. In Flanders both the youth policy plan as well as children’s rights fall under the authority of the Minister for Youth.

Youth work is an area where children and young people can experiment and shape their bit of society. It is a space where young people can commit themselves voluntarily, to each other and to children. Youth policy and youth work should start from young people’s and children’s capacities, rather than from their shortcomings.

The Flemish Government consciously selected the following priorities within the Flemish Youth Policy Plan.

1. The cooperation between different ministers should create an added value for the situation of children and young people in society.

2. This cooperation has been phrased in strategic goals, which are the basis for a future Youth Pact that will be developed still within this governing period between policy makers, non-governmental organisations and young people.

3. These strategic goals are translated into operational objectives, which the Flemish Government wants to put in practice by the end of its term in 2014.

The Flemish Youth Policy Plan is based on the perspective of children and young people. It has been developed in cooperation with the non-governmental sector and has been endorsed by the Flemish Government and the Flemish Parliament. This Plan has been based on research and consultations and was developed in working groups composed of both governmental and non-governmental representatives.

In the government programme for 2009-2014, the Flemish Government expresses the ambition to develop a future oriented Youth Pact between the Flemish Government, the social partners and young people themselves. The Minister for Youth chose to base this Youth Pact on the third Flemish Youth Policy Plan and on several consultations of young people about the themes from the ‘EU Youth Strategy’.

This way, the Flemish Government wants to make young people co-owners of the Flemish Policy Plans for the coming ten years.
#2 Mission & Vision and underlying principles
“Flemish youth policy provides all children and young people in Flanders and Brussels the biggest possible scope for development and the opportunities to be part of a democratic, open and tolerant society.”

Children and young people can be approached either individually or in group, and both in a formal or informal context. The perspective can be local, regional, federal or European. Flemish youth policy fits within the Pact 2020 of the Flemish authorities and the EU Council Resolution on a ‘renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)’. Flemish youth policy brings both political initiatives to live.
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

This mission and vision want to bring about the following social change:

All children and young people with the same talents get equal opportunities.

Flemish youth policy should uncover and fight the mechanisms responsible for undermining opportunities of certain groups in society.
The opportunities for development of children and young people increase.
Flemish youth policy should discover and develop young people’s and children’s talents and competences to improve their functioning in society.

Children and young people get (more) space to be non-adult.
Flemish youth policy should give children and young people space to experiment and make mistakes, to define their own leisure time, to shape their lives and to be themselves.

Children and young people participate fully in society.
Flemish youth policy should engage young people and children as early as possible in society by creating contexts in which they can shape their citizenship.
Flemish youth policy is based on children’s rights, but also on their talents, desires and opinions. Youth policy should do more than just safeguard the rights of children or intervene when their rights are violated. Youth policy should be more pro-active: it should create space for children to develop their talents. In Flanders, youth policy and children’s rights policy go hand in hand.


The Flemish Youth Policy Plan is a plan for the children and young people of today and tomorrow. That’s why this Plan aims to be a sustainable youth and children’s rights policy, which has an eye for ‘people-planet-profit’ in the longer term. It is a policy based on principles of good governance: it is evidence-based and participatory, it respects subsidiarity, entails regular evaluation and open transparent communication,...

The choice for sustainable youth policy means that children’s and young people’s participation is a structural part of policy and an instrument to develop their citizenship. Youth policy should also respond to relevant demographic developments such as increased urbanisation and diversity. Last but not least, sustainable youth policy should strive for a balance between economic, ecological and social agendas.
The Flemish Youth Policy Plan respects the principle of subsidiarity: it formulates goals which relate to the whole of Flanders and Brussels. But there are clear links to other administrative levels.

Youth and children’s right policies work best as close as possible to children and young people. More often than not this is the local level. It is vital that local authorities have enough strength and standing to carry out such a youth policy. The Flemish Youth Policy Plan pays attention to the particular needs and priorities of big cities, but also smaller municipalities need specific support. The Decree on local youth policy has an important role to play.

The Flemish youth policy is connected in several ways to the federal governmental level. For instance social affairs, parts of health and mobility policies, as well as labour market policy and justice are (partially) federal matters. The Flemish Government will negotiate issues with the Federal Government in the best interest of children and young people in Flanders, Brussels, but also in Belgium.

The Flemish Youth Policy Plan also has a European perspective. It is closely connected to the endeavours of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council and to the ‘European Youth Strategy 2010-2018’. After extensive consultations with young people and a series of youth policy stakeholders in the EU member states, eight priority themes were put forward: See page 15. The goals of this Youth Policy Plan correspond to these eight European themes. The Flemish Government will use its international cultural cooperation agreements to collect expertise and exchange approaches on these topics.
#3 linking to the European Youth strategy
The strategic goals (SG) of the Flemish youth policy are intricately connected to the themes of the European Youth Strategy 2010-2018.

The future of our children will depend more and more on a strong Europe and on the strength of their position in Europe.

The following long term ambitions serve as a basis for the triadogue about the Youth Pact 2020: between the authorities, young people and the non-governmental sector.
Participation & information

SG 1 The Flemish authorities involve children and young people actively and qualitatively in policy decisions and encourages others to do the same.

SG 2 All children and young people have access to proper youth information that supports them to make choices in life.

SG 3 The understanding of children and young people, their world and their future perspectives will be systematically improved.

Education (both formal, informal and non-formal)

SG 4 People and organisations working with children and young people have the necessary competences to deal with the growing diversity amongst young people.

SG 8 Socially vulnerable children below 6 years old have more opportunities for development.

SG 10 Children and young people grow up in diverse and inclusive quality learning environments.

SG 11 There are more ‘Wide Schools’ to give children and young people maximum opportunities to develop themselves in different areas of life and to participate in society.

SG 12 Children and young people gain media literacy.

SG 13 All children and young people get opportunities to develop competences in their free time and to have them identified and recognised.

SG 24 Children and young people are encouraged and supported to lead a sustainable life style and to be involved in global issues.

Health & sport

SG 5 The policy choices of the Flemish authorities take into account the effects on (the health of) children and young people of this and future generations.

SG 6 A coordinated approach to institutional violence, child abuse and bullying reduce suicide.

SG 7 More of the leisure time, educational and welfare offer is adapted to the needs of socially vulnerable children and young people.

SG 20 More children and young people grow up in good housing and a sustainable living environment.
Social inclusion

SG 4 People and organisations working with children and young people have the necessary competences to deal with the growing diversity amongst young people.

SG 7 More of the leisure time, educational and welfare offer is adapted to the needs of socially vulnerable children and young people.

SG 8 Socially vulnerable children below 6 years old have more opportunities for development.

SG 9 Cities are more child-friendly – they offer children and young people more opportunities for development.

SG 10 Children and young people grow up in diverse and inclusive quality learning environments.

SG 20 More children and young people grow up in good housing and a sustainable living environment.

Employment

SG 9 Cities are more child-friendly – they offer children and young people more opportunities for development.

SG 14 Young people take a more important place in the employment process.

Creativity & entrepreneurship

SG 12 Children and young people gain media literacy.

SG 15 The (interest in) creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship amongst young people is increased.

SG 16 More children and young people integrate art and culture in their daily life.

SG 17 Youth culture gets more space and support.
Youth & the world

SG 18 There is more specific quality space adapted to the needs of children, young people and their organisations.

SG 19 Children and young people are an obvious player in the public space.

SG 20 More children and young people grow up in good housing and a sustainable living environment.

SG 24 Children and young people are encouraged and supported to lead a sustainable lifestyle and to be involved in global issues.

Volunteering

SG 21 Children and young people can organise themselves more easily by simplifying the rules and administrative burden on organisations.

SG 22 There is more social commitment towards children and young people.

SG 23 There is more social appreciation for the commitments taken by children and young people.
Flemish Youth Policy Priorities
Policy participation has a social added value because policy decisions gain in efficiency and legitimacy. On the other hand, citizens’ participation strengthens the democratic capacity of society. Children and young people under 18 don’t have the right to vote. That’s why it is all the more important to create participatory processes to allow them to contribute to society and to help shape the environment they live in. A participatory process with children and young people should see consider things from their perspective. It is important to reach diverse groups of children and young people (diverse in age, gender, sexual preference, socio-economic and ethnic/cultural background, physical and psychic conditions,...). Socially vulnerable children and young people need some extra attention. Participation only makes sense if the results of participation initiatives are effectively taken on board.

SG1

The Flemish authorities involve children and young people actively and qualitatively in policy decisions and encourages others to do the same

OO 1.1 Knowledge and expertise about the participation of children and young people in different structures, institutions and provisions is collected and disseminated

- A Flemish Network on Youth Participation will be created to share and disseminate expertise and knowledge.
- A local policy participation barometer, linked to other indicators, supports the Network for Policy Participation by providing youth participation measurements at regular intervals.
- Different types of participation are promoted in schools. Schools can analyse their participation climate with a self-evaluation instrument.
- Flanders emphasises and defends the importance of youth participation at international forums.
- Local authorities need to show that children and young people and the non-governmental youth sector are involved in their strategic multiannual planning.

Social vulnerability is defined as “the risk to be repetitively exposed to negative situations (control, sanctions) when dealing with social institutions and profit less from the positive provisions” (Vettenburg, 1989). Socially vulnerable children and young people are young people who are at disadvantage or excluded in different spheres of life due to their origin, home situation, physical or mental condition or their status.
• The Flemish authorities, together with the Network on Youth Participation, develop and disseminate a quality frame for youth and children's participation.

• A Decree on the ‘juridical position of pupils in education’ will be based on the evaluation of the Decree on ‘participation in education’.

• The cooperation between the Flemish Youth Council and the Minority Forum will be evaluated to make sure that young people from immigrant background have a voice.

• Training will be organised for face-to-face workers to improve the quality of youth participation.

• The youth sector is made aware about its role in the promotion of youth participation.

• Flanders takes a leading role in international policy participation by young people.

• Specific target groups such as children and young people will be part of the Flemish Consultation Code.

Youth information has to be accessible, accurate and tailor-made to specific target groups. Youth information should provide children and young people with advice, data, insights, products,... for them to be able to make choices in life and actively participate in society. The information offer needs to be adapted to the needs of all children and young people and based on their perspective of life. At the same time, youth information services have to provide these products and understandings to educators (parents, teachers, leaders) for them to be able to guide children and young people in their choices. Youth information should be available as close as possible to the children and young people: this emphasises the important role of local authorities.
• The Flemish authorities develop and disseminate a quality frame for youth information.

• The Flemish Information Point for Youth (VIP Jeugd) looks into a quality label to guarantee the quality and reliability of youth information products.

• The Flemish authorities create one virtual access point for all youth information, in cooperation with existing structures and provisions.

• The Flemish authorities organise information days for young people about different policy domains.

• The efficiency and effectiveness of youth information channels and products will be analysed.

• The Flemish authorities will experiment with peer-to-peer communication to disseminate information and to make it more widely accessible.

• Information should be made more accessible for children and young people, by using diverse channels, but also by using simple and pleasant language. Where needed, information in different languages can be developed for parents who don’t speak Dutch.

• The knowledge about youth information will be expanded by an expert group of communication specialists from the media, advertising and research world.

• The Association of Flemish Youth Services and Councillors (VVJ) and the Flemish Information Point Youth (VIP Jeugd) train local authorities to gain competences in the field of youth information.

• Training, peer-support and education for policy makers and practitioners will improve youth information policy.

• Children and young people need to learn to critically approach media and information (see also the goal about media literacy page 38).
Evidence-based policy is gaining importance. Data and research findings are increasingly used to develop, implement and evaluate policy. That way, long-term policies are based on facts. A thorough understanding of children’s and young people’s lives is vital. Quality research findings have to be exploited and disseminated for the use of policy makers and practitioners.

**OO 3.1** Blind spots in the knowledge of children and young people will be detected and addressed with appropriate research

- A steering group about children and youth research lists blind spots in current research and will give advice about future research questions.
- The Research Unit of the Flemish Government will analyse the interest and feasibility of research into children’s and young people’s time use.

**OO 3.2** The future of children and young people and their vision of the future is a subject for research

- The Flemish authorities regularly makes new future projections regarding children and young people and disseminates those amongst relevant policy makers.
- A conference about future visions about and by children and young people will be organised.

**OO 3.3** The available knowledge about children, young people, their lives and visions of the future will be disseminated efficiently

- The Research Unit of the Flemish Government will develop annual data sheets with key figures about children and young people in Flanders.
- Research about children and young people will be better disseminated through a better coordination between the Youth Research Platform (JOP), the Knowledge Centre on Children’s Rights (Keki) and the Youth Department.
• The Flemish authorities disseminate a newsletter about research, detailing current and past research about children and young people.

• A website will be dedicated to research about children and young people and allow users to download research reports.

• With the contribution of the Network Group on Research, figures about children and young people can be interpreted and disseminated in order to promote a truthful image of children and young people in the media.

• To have impact on children and young people, parents and families have to be involved in the policy actions, because children’s opportunities in life are co-determined by their parents.

Diversity in Flanders is on the rise. In a number of big cities, in a few years’ time, more than half of the children will be of foreign origin. But there is more diversity than only ethnic-cultural diversity. Socio-economic differences, gender awareness, sexual identity and disability also contribute to diversity in society. Professionals and volunteers, but also children and young people need competences to manage this diversity. Policy makers and civil servants need to be aware of this diversity. Intercultural understanding needs to come from both directions. The growing diversity needs adaptation from the organisations but also from the new Flemish and Brussels youth themselves. Particularly in the fields of gender awareness and sexuality, organisations need to be equipped with instruments to strengthen understanding and tolerance amongst young people. Dutch as a common language is the basis for mutual understanding, even though multilingualism is considered an asset.

• The Flemish authorities will develop training about diversity amongst children and young people for policy makers.
The local sports sector will be supported regarding diversity and helps them implement the sports policy plans.

Flemings’ (from foreign background).

Different sectors commit themselves to diversity and monitor critically their achievements.

Good practices of associations dealing with diversity need to be more widely disseminated.

Higher education and universities are made aware to pay more attention to diversity in both professional and academic bachelor and master’s studies that lead to professions targeting children and young people.

The Equal Opportunities Unit will develop an information pack for schools and youth organisations about gender and sexual diversity.

Youth organisations are encouraged to address diversity and intercultural competences in their youth worker training.

The further training of teachers needs to make teachers aware to pay more attention to diversity and the importance of differentiation in the classroom.

At Flemish level, networks and structures will be developed to support youth work for and by young people of foreign origin.

Local policy needs to be encouraged to pay more attention to these types of youth work.
All children and young people have the right to a healthy body and a safe and healthy living environment. Health doesn’t only refer to physical, but also to mental and social health. Sustainable policy should have a ‘healthy effect’ on the future generations. Measuring those effects is crucial. The Flemish authorities emphasise the dissemination of tools to allow people to make their own choices.

**OO 5.1 More policy makers are aware about the impact of their policies on the (physical and mental) health of young people and children**

- The influence and effects of exaggerated medicalisation on the physical and mental health of children and young people should be debated.

**OO 5.2 The Flemish authorities develop further instruments to assess the impact of policy measures on the health of children and young people**

- The Youth and Child Effect Reports (abbreviated in Dutch as JoKER) will be further developed to measure the policy effects on (the well-being, of) children and this governing term will focus on the health of children and young people.
- JoKER training will also address health effects.
- The impact on the health of children and young people should be part of the future ‘social impact analysis’ of policy initiatives, amongst other elements.

**OO 5.3 Through participation projects, the attention to participation of children and young people in decision making processes about health issues should be increased**

- The topic of health and specific subtopics will be part of participation projects with children and young people in the preparation of the Youth Pact.
- Children and young people need to be made aware of their own responsibility to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Peer-educators can be used to do so.
• Children and young people are made aware of music related hearing damage.

• Movement and sports will be promoted towards children and young people. (also OO 8.4 page 34)

• The Flemish authorities develop a reference frame for medically and ethically responsible sports activities for children and young people.

The mental health and physical integrity of children and young people is crucial for their well-being, both now and in the future. Violence and bullying can have a particularly negative impact to young people’s and children’s well-being and further development. Absent or insufficient public provisions can cause children and young people physical or mental damage. The rights to provisions and protection listed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child make it the duty of the Flemish authorities to reduce these forms of violence. Attention should be paid to violence between children and young people. The Flemish authorities also aim to reduce suicide: society should give children and young people the space to talk about their problems, learn to cope with them and get appropriate help where needed.

• The right to learn (right to education) of children and minors needs to be properly responded to, even if the young person resides in an institution.

• The Decree on the ‘juridical position of minors in integral youth care’ will be optimalised.

• Each provision for children and young people in Flanders will develop a policy document regarding aggression and violence and makes staff familiar with its approach.

• Training and support regarding institutional violence needs to be offered to professionals working in child and youth care provisions.
**OO 6.2** An action plan to reduce bullying amongst children and young people will be developed and adhered to by the relevant ministers

- Actions against bullying will be carried out towards young people, parents, practitioners and policy makers.

**OO 6.3** A Flemish Forum on Child Abuse will be established bringing together organisations fighting child abuse, to discuss figures, approaches and problems

- A Flemish Forum on Child Abuse will be established to discuss, exchange data and raise awareness.
- The ‘Adriaenssens Report’ about child abuse in the Church will be taken up and its recommendations integrated in policy measures.

**OO 6.4** Workers from the youth and educational sectors cooperate to prevent suicide

- Face-to-face workers are made aware of the importance of a listening ear and about interpreting signs.
- Existing information products regarding suicide prevention will be better coordinated.
- Youth workers will be invited to a health conference about prevention and suicide.
The International Convention on the Rights of the Child says that all children have the right to a good health and health care (art. 24), to a decent standard of living (art. 27), to education (art. 28) and to leisure, rest and recreational activities (art. 31). This is particularly valid for those children in a more challenging situation in society than others, such as young people with a low educational attainment, children and young people with fewer opportunities or from foreign origin, or those with a physical or mental disability.

The Flemish authorities will make efforts to meet the needs of all children and young people in Flanders. Attention should be given to research, collecting and disseminating good practices, information and training. The provisions for children and young people should not only provide leisure time, education or individual well-being, but they should also contribute to social cohesion in society.

**OO 7.1** There is a strategy across policy domains, supporting organisations that work in an integrated way with socially vulnerable children and young people, at the crossroads of different policy areas

- A civil servant working group on ‘working with socially vulnerable children and young people’ examines policy initiatives towards this target group.
- The accessibility of youth care should be improved. For instance by involving representatives of the clients and self-organisations in the steering groups.
- The ‘leisure time pass’ will be further developed and can potentially be used for youth work and sports activities in the future.
- A coherent policy needs to be developed for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers.

**OO 7.2** Local and supra-local authorities gain expertise to enlarge the (demand or needs based) offer for socially vulnerable children and young people

- The activities for minors of the integration offices have to be further developed, in order to lead newcomers under 18 to pre-school education and leisure time activities, amongst others.
- The expertise of private initiatives working with socially vulnerable young people needs to be supported and consolidated.
• The Flemish authorities push for a European frame for international leisure time experiences with special attention for children and young people experiencing financial obstacles.

• The offer of group exchanges and coaching for these activities needs to be increased, in order to allow more socially vulnerable children and young people to participate.

• The Info Point for Accessible Traveling www.accessinfo.be provides tailor-made information, also for children and young people with a physical or mental disability.

“Each dollar invested in young children with fewer opportunities, will generate a return on investment of eight dollar” (James Heckman). Poor educational achievements are determined at an early age. That’s why it is essential to address shortcomings at an early age. However, the authorities should always keep in mind the right of the parents to make their own choices. Also the participation of the children themselves is crucial. The provisions for babies, toddlers, pre-schoolers and their parents (education, care, leisure time activities, play infrastructure, educational support,...) should be good, affordable and accessible. Informal networks between parents and with grandparents, the family, neighbours, friends,... are important for informal sharing of experiences. Furthermore, play incentives are very important for young children. Play areas, toy libraries and leisure time activities have to be easily accessible and pro-actively reach out to families.

• A new support frame needs to encourage maximum participation of young children in pre-school.

• The attribution percentage and class periods need to be adapted to have fewer children per class in pre-schools.
• Improved coordination of care in pre-school education will make it possible to support children on an individual basis.

• Local Networks for Education Support and Care Coordination need to be better integrated.

OO 8.3 The informal network of parents with children under 6 needs to be strengthened

• Family support will improve the opportunities for development of children and young people with fewer opportunities and those living in poverty.

• Professionals and volunteers who are in contact with children in difficult educational situations, will be trained to recognise signs and how to refer them to the correct services.

• Informal accessible educational support should be encouraged and supported and good practices need to be disseminated.

• The access to child care should be made easier.

• Parents who don’t speak Dutch should be encouraged to classes of Dutch as a second language (NT2).

OO 8.4 There are more opportunities to play for children under 6 and the play initiatives for them are more accessible

• Toddlers and pre-school children are encouraged to play outside.

• Pre-school children are encouraged to try out the sport and movement activities for young children.

• Schools should develop more green, creative and challenging play areas (also OO 20.5 page 52).

• Possibilities for playing in the cities need to be further developed and promoted, by adapting public spaces and developing educational activities.
The profile of children and young people in the cities is different from the average Flemish child or young person. Children and young people in the cities more often have a different ethnic background, they perform less well in school, they tend to live more in poverty and are more unemployed than average. On the upside, cities gather many facilities and young people, which gives rise to stronger youth cultures. Especially in the cities, the number of children and young people is on the rise.

It needs a holistic approach in the cities to make progress in the fields of education, employment, poverty, care and well-being of children and young people. Especially youth unemployment, quality green play areas, party halls, sports infrastructure and education need to be addressed.

**OO 9.1** There is an action plan to tackle structural youth unemployment in the cities

- A Citizens’ Forum will be convened about structural youth unemployment in the Flemish cities.
- For Brussels a cooperation agreement has been made regarding learning and working, socio-economic mobility, exchange of job offers and language learning on the job.

**OO 9.2** By the end of the governing period more expertise about urban youth has been created and disseminated

- The Flemish authorities will organise a colloquium about ‘growing up in the city’.
- Additional indicators about urban youth will be developed for the 2011 City Monitor.
Youth cultural areas will be promoted to give space to youth culture, physically but also figuratively speaking.

More sports and cultural infrastructure will be made available for recreational users.

Examples of good practices about child and youth friendly multi-functional public spaces and infrastructure need to be collected and disseminated.

For Brussels, specific cooperation projects have been set up with the French Community regarding meeting spaces and youth culture.

The Flemish Government starts from what children are able to do, rather than what they are not so good at. Each child should be able to fully participate in society, in education and in social life. The essence of youth policy is to support and develop tools that reinforce young people’s and children’s belief in their own abilities. Learning environments should provide children and young people a maximum of opportunities for self-development. These learning environments should be a reflection of reality, in which children and young people are treated equally. Language education is vital to guarantee equal opportunities.

These good practice examples address diversity of the target groups and the physical situation of children and young people.
• See actions under OO 4.3 (page 28).

**OO 10.2**  The expertise about diverse and inclusive learning environments amongst players in relevant sectors is improved and the concept has gained acceptance

• The overall accessibility of school infrastructure will be improved.

**OO 10.3**  The organisational, financial or practical barriers to inclusive learning processes in schools are systematically removed

• Projects to encourage the use of Dutch language, within or outside schools, need to be developed and disseminated.

**OO 10.4**  The possibilities to organise additional Dutch language education in and outside secondary education will be assessed before implementation

A ‘Wide School’ is a constructive cooperation project striving for the holistic development of children and young people and to improve their school results. The ‘Wide School’ is based on the needs and perspective of children and young people and aims to strengthen links with the local community by involving parents and organisations from the neighbourhood. A Wide School connects different sectors and is supported by different players from the community. A Wide School is based on the local needs and possibilities and therefore exists in as many formats as there are local networks.
The Project Group ‘Wide School’ will be re-convened and will develop a structural frame and vision about Wide Schools.

The Flemish authorities raise awareness about the added value of Wide Schools at local level.

The Flemish authorities encourage the sectors involved in the Wide Schools to cooperate in the best possible way to share the use of new and existing local infrastructure.

Research will be carried out into typologies of the space implications of Wide Schools.

Specifically for Brussels, the enlarged capacity of Dutch language education will be linked to the development of a network of initiatives in Dutch language around the school.

The Flemish authorities coordinate the exchange of good practices about the participation of children and young people in Wide Schools in Flanders.

New media are unmistakably part of young people’s lives. Their omnipresence and complexity require a certain critical approach and some strategic and practical skills. Besides unprecedented opportunities, the new media also comprise a number of threats: breach of privacy, inappropriate sexual behaviour, addiction, abuse,… The most efficient way to deal with the opportunities and threats of the new media, is a policy geared towards empowerment: children and young people get to know and use media as a positive and emancipatory tool in their lives.

Children and young people themselves also produce content within the new media. Their sometimes naïve but nevertheless critical view on the world brings needed and enriching content to the media. They need to be encouraged and supported to convey a correct image of society with respect to diversity, gender, etc.
In cooperation with all stakeholders, the Knowledge Centre on Media Literacy and other public players within the Flemish authorities encourage media literacy amongst children and young people, and amongst adults (educators and teachers).

- In the creation of the Knowledge Centre on Media Literacy, the Flemish authorities will pay attention to the participation of children and young people.
- The Knowledge Centre encourages media literacy of socially vulnerable children and young people.
- Parents are made aware of their role in media education, for instance regarding safe internet use and a critical attitude towards advertising.
- The Knowledge Centre on Media Literacy defines media competence and develops ways to recognise it.

Children and young people are encouraged to pass on their media skills to their peers and to other generations

- In the frame of youth information and youth media organisations, peer-to-peer projects and social media will be promoted.
- Educational institutions are made aware of peer-to-peer learning about media literacy.

Through networking between youth media initiatives, the output of these organisations will be strengthened and links and input to the Flemish media will be made

- Networking between youth media initiatives will be encouraged.
- The Flemish media need to encourage more exchange and cooperation with youth media.
- Youth ambassadors will be coached to convey young people’s and children’s views to journalists and editors in appropriate ways.
Everybody needs competences to function efficiently in society. Competences are not only needed on the labour market, but also in other areas of life. When young people participate voluntarily and put their interests and strengths to work, they are actually partaking in an interesting and motivating learning process. They discover their talents and interests and they develop quite a number of competences. Identifying your competences and having them recognised by others leads to an increased self-awareness and can positively influence choices in life. When everybody gets equal opportunities to get one’s competences recognised, the position of disadvantaged groups will be improved.

The leisure time and youth sector in particular has the power to make young people believe in themselves, to give them success experiences and to gain (often unconsciously) many competences that are useful for the job world or other spheres of life. It is the responsibility of the youth sector to give young people, especially the vulnerable ones, the opportunity to make their competences explicit, rather than focussing on their shortcomings.

**OO 13.1 The development and the implementation of tools and approaches to recognise competences is supported**

- Oscar, the tool for identifying and recognising competences in the Flemish socio-cultural sector, will be further developed and enlarged to encompass other relevant sectors.

- The Flemish authorities promote ‘learning mobility’ for all young people.

- Procedures for the recognition of competences acquired in sport activities will be further developed. The sport qualification frame will be developed in line with the ‘European Qualification Framework’.

- The Flemish tools for recognition and qualification needs to be made coherent with tools at European level.

**OO 13.2 Teachers, youth workers, employers, coaches, educators and parents are made aware and trained about competences of young people**

- A competence profile, and possibly a qualification profile, for youth workers will be developed.

- When restructuring the secondary education, competence oriented learning will be addressed in the whole spectrum of subjects.
• Socially vulnerable children and young people in cities need to be made aware of their competences and coached into different qualification processes based on those competences.

**OO 13.3** The policy fields of Culture, Youth, Employment & Social Economy and Education & Training develop a coherent complementary vision on the recognition of competences for higher education, adult education, culture, sports and youth addressing aims, concepts, procedures, tools, funding, offers and staff

• The Flemish authorities develop a concept paper detailing an integrated recognition strategy across different policy areas.

• A competence plan for youth work will be developed and the youth worker certificates will be adapted and integrated in the bigger frame for the recognition of competences.

**OO 13.4** Young people can get short cuts through education or training based on the recognition of their competences and/or get easier access to employment

• The Flemish authorities want to apply the recognition of competences within their own personnel management and that of local authorities.

• A list of profiles will be drawn up for which qualification certificates are needed.
Youth unemployment has risen sharply in the last twenty years, anywhere in the world. In Flanders, youth unemployment increased almost 50 per cent since 2007. In Antwerp, one out of three young people is unemployed. In Brussels even four out of ten. Half of them have limited schooling. The prospects of young people of foreign origin are worse than those of their indigenous peers. Strengthening the position of young people in the employment process is a pre-condition to keep our social system affordable, but at the same time it is an indicator for harmonious co-habitation in society.

Employment is also an important issue for young people themselves. For many young people, finding a paid job symbolises adulthood. Paid work is for many young people the key to more independence and gives them control over their lives. Young people should be able to fulfil their dreams and have a realistic perspective to a job with a decent wage. Just like older workers, young people are a precarious group on the labour market.

**OO 14.1 Young people are represented in the existing consultation bodies**

- The Flemish authorities will put the ‘career start’ debate on the agenda of the Flemish Economic Social Consultation Committee (Vlaams Economisch Sociaal Overlegcomité: VESOC).

- They will assess the possibility to integrate the input of the Flemish Youth Council into the work of the Diversity Commission of the Socio-Economic Council of Flanders (Sociaaleconomische Raad van Vlaanderen: SERV).

- Trade unions are encouraged to allow ‘true participation’ of young people in their activities.

**OO 14.2 There is a need for structural dialogue between players of the labour market and young people**

- Trade unions and employers’ organisations will be encouraged to help build a better representation of young people in the consultation structures.

- A permanent dialogue with young people will be set up around employment.

- A dialogue with the Brussels Minister for Employment will be held in order to increase the opportunities of Brussels young people on the labour market.
The Flemish authorities discuss the notion of ‘decent work’ with young people

- Discussions and activities about the meaning of ‘decent work’ for young people will be integrated in the frame of the Youth Pact, including international elements.

Tailor-made information and coaching for young people is provided for the transition to work

- More work needs to be done with young people to recognise their talents and interests. (also SG 13 page 40)
- Through contacts with the world of work, young people need to get a more realistic picture of the labour market.
- All young people exiting formal education need to be informed about the possibilities, channels and procedures of the labour market, with special attention for hard to reach target groups.

The (interest in) creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship amongst young people is increased

According to the Flemish ‘Pact 2020’, Flanders should rank amongst the top five of the knowledge intensive regions of Europe. The restructuring of higher education needs to contribute to this goal. The reforms need to encourage innovation and reach more groups with fewer opportunities. It is an opportunity to refresh our thinking about which knowledge and skills young people need in the future for the labour market. The restructuring of the secondary education has the ambition to increase pupils’ ability to make their own choices. Creativity and innovation will be two key competences which will be taken up in the curriculum. It is important to invest in creativity, both inside and out of school, in order to strengthen children’s and young people’s opportunities for development. This creativity is fertile soil for entrepreneurship, also in the (socio-)cultural heritage sector.
• Support for ‘bridge projects’ between education and the labour market will be continued and promoted. The participation of youth work as a ‘learning partner’ in those bridge projects will be explored.

• The innovation policy will focus on wide social innovation that can provide solutions for social issues.

• Specific attention will be paid to socially vulnerable groups when working on wide social innovation.

• Youth organisations will lead young people to the Agency for Entrepreneurship or other organisations that inform and coach young people to set up their own entrepreneurial projects.

• Entrepreneurship projects guide young job-seekers from groups with fewer opportunities to entrepreneurship and offer the possibility to use enterprise centres (incubators).

• Young graduates need to get the opportunity to do an assignment or traineeship abroad.

• Administrative obstacles to gain entrepreneurial experience through volunteering needs to be removed.

• At Study Information Days (SID-ins) at the end of education, entrepreneurship needs to be highlighted.

• Young entrepreneurs setting up their company need to have easy access to pre-starter advice and coaching at very low rates.
Art and culture are basic needs. They are the cornerstones of the identity of individuals and communities. They determine to which extent we can cope with change and diversity. Arts and cultural education is about developing creativity that can be used in one's life, career and leisure time. (also SG 15 page 43) It is important not to narrow down culture to art, nor to limit art to skills. Culture and art also constitute economic realities and a source of economic growth. Moreover, artists confront us with new interpretations of the world and they dare to provide us a different view of childhood and of being young.

**OO 16.1**  
The Ministers of Culture, Youth, Education and Architectural Heritage develop a structural, coherent and complementary policy for cultural education

- The Ministers for Culture, Education, Youth and Architectural Heritage develop a strategic frame for cultural education.
- The Flemish authorities encourage the development of networks around cultural education around the main Flemish cities and Brussels, tailor-made to children and young people.
- Local youth and culture services need to cooperate more and exchange expertise about cultural education at Flemish and regional level.
- Research into the availability, the quality and the cost of the current offer of cultural education enable policy to be more effective and efficient.
- Learning processes needs to be set up to come to a structural, coherent and complementary policy regarding cultural education.
- Parents need to be made aware of their role as socialising factor in the process of cultural competence building.

**OO 16.2**  
People active in youth culture need to be encouraged to involve socially vulnerable children and young people

- Tools need to be developed to screen and adapt cultural activities regarding diversity and inclusion.
- Exchange of expertise in managing diversity needs to be encouraged between regular youth work and organisations working with socially vulnerable young people.
• Cultural institutions need to be continuously encouraged to give a proper space to children and young people in their cultural programmes and educational work.

• Networking and exchange of practice needs to be encouraged between cultural players, youth work and educational organisations in the arts and culture sector.

• Expertise and tools need to be developed to trigger the participation of children and young people in the activities of cultural institutions.

Policy needs to support youth culture. The concept of youth culture needs to be interpreted more broadly: it refers both to the lives of children and young people and to their artistic expression. Policy needs to encourage children and young people to use creative means to grasp the world they live in. They need autonomous space, both physically as well as mentally.

• Physically in the sense that art and culture often require a physical space and sufficient adapted material. Besides that, often it requires coaching and specific attention to safety.

• Also mental space is important, in the sense that cultural and artistic experiments sometimes go together with failure. Failure can stimulate the learning process. Mental space also refers to recognition.

All children and young people can use easily accessible infrastructure and get sufficient support to be creative and experiment

• Local authorities need to be encouraged to provide young people creative spaces for experimenting.

• Research needs to be carried out into the need and feasibility of ‘youth cultural spaces’ all over Flanders.

• Expertise about cultural spaces has to be developed and good practice examples from different local contexts needs to be disseminated.

• Cultural and school infrastructure needs to be made accessible for creative young people outside the regular opening hours.
• Part-time Art Education can be offered in primary school buildings.

OO 17.2  We aim to coach children and young people in their creativity, according to their needs and/or wishes, for them to develop their talents and grow

• Intermediary organisations need pay more attention to discover talents and coach young people to further develop their talents. The expertise gathered needs to be disseminated.

• There need to be more educational provisions for top talents within specific artistic disciplines from a young age.

• A helpdesk for creative initiatives will be set up within appropriate intermediary organisations to support young people with creative plans.

• Different sectors need to cooperate to develop young people’s and children’s cultural talents.

• Pre-conditions need to be created for artists to coach young people in the development and implementation of their creative/artistic projects.

OO 17.3  The knowledge, visibility and image of youth culture improves

• A media network puts television and radio teams in contact with youth press agencies and youth media organisations, who bring them in contact with young talents in the fields of culture, art and media.

• The public broadcasting services will be encouraged to give space to youth culture and young media talent on their stations.

• More knowledge about youth culture needs to be developed by youth workers, youth civil servants, and others.

• Local policy makers have to be challenged to support youth culture initiatives.

SG18

There is more specific quality space adapted to the needs of children, young people and their organisations

Young people’s and children’s activities need space: both physical and mental space. Those spaces have to be accessible and open for all users, also those with a physical disability. Different kinds of users need to be able to use these spaces at different moments.
• The Flemish authorities are developing a user-friendly juridical frame for the shared use of infrastructure.

• A pilot project about shared use of school infrastructure by neighbourhood organisations will be set up.

• The Flemish authorities disseminate good practice examples of shared use of equipment and infrastructure in different sectors.

• Training and publication will inspire municipalities and cities to improve their infrastructure policy, taking into account the needs of the youth sector.

• Youth work infrastructure is one of the pre-conditions for a local youth policy. The Flemish authorities will examine how they can convince municipalities about this basic need.

• Child-friendliness is one of the assessment criteria for applications responding to the new call for proposals for city improvement projects.

• The City Monitor will contain indicators of the accessibility and satisfaction regarding play and youth provisions. (also OO 20.4 page 52).

• The Minister for Mobility and the Minister for Tourism will examine how they can improve the safety and quality of the access roads to the residential youth centres.

• At the same time, similar reflections will be made about the safety and quality of access roads to other leisure time spaces for young people.

• The action plan on residential youth centres will be implemented by the Task Force on Residential Youth Centres.
A content-based typology of residential youth centres needs to give a good overview of the existing and needed residential youth infrastructure.

The website www.jeugdverblijven.be (residential youth centres) will be expanded to integrate content criteria in its search function.

This content-based typology allows the Flemish Government to see where are possible lacks and shortcomings and remediate.

The Flemish authorities will examine to which extent it can support youth organisations to acquire residential youth centres or camp places in other regions in Belgium.

Sustainable use of spaces entails the maximum shared use of infrastructure by different target group, respecting the needs of each of the groups. The design and development of public spaces is a difficult balancing act between interaction and social contacts on the one hand, and subtly attributing certain spaces to specific groups on the other hand. This is especially the case in big cities where public spaces are scarcer. It is important to involve different groups in the debates around public spaces, also those that don’t have a formal voice. Last but not least, not only the public space itself needs to be accessible. The users also need to be able to reach the place as easily and independently as possible.

Local authorities will receive an evaluation tool for urban planning which needs to ensure that children and young people participate in urban planning processes.

The youth (sector) needs to be involved on equal terms in the development process of the Policy Plan on Public Spaces.

Flemish and local partners will be trained about the importance and the implementation of the participation of children and young people in planning processes.

Representatives of children, young people and their organisations are permanently involved in the development and restructuring of the Flemish Public Space Plan.
The ‘Hangman Project’ (about young people hanging around on the streets) will be followed up and good practices will be disseminated.

Actions will be taken about the right to play and to hang around in public spaces and against complaints about the noise of playing children.

Local authorities will be trained and made aware about how they can respond to questions and/or complaints about the use of public space by young people.

The Minister for Mobility promotes transport autonomy and encourages children to use sustainable mobility options.

The possibilities to make mobility for youth groups more easy and affordable will be examined and increased where possible.

Research into transport autonomy of teenagers and young people outside the city centres will uncover potential problems and issues.

The Minister for Environment and Nature integrates the effects on the mobility of different target groups in the environmental effect reports.

Civil servants working in the area of mobility will be made aware of youth mobility issues.

The quality of housing and the living environment has an enormous impact on the health, well-being and development of children and young people. Too many people in a small place or in a badly insulated, heated or illuminated home have a negative impact on young people’s schooling and health. The living environment is an educational factor in the life of children and has an impact on their citizenship.

Child-friendly cities are a good criterion for an open, accessible and pleasant city for everybody. Child and youth friendly policy focuses on child care, school and leisure time, play areas, living environment, public transport and the participation of children and young people, amongst others. Regarding housing policy and the housing market, the needs of children and teenagers, and those of young adults are very different. Young adults worry more about getting ‘access to the housing market’, whereas children and teenagers...
are more confronted with the consequences of the homes and living environment in which they grow up. Housing policy is not a purely Flemish matter. Therefore the following objectives only focus on the tools that Flanders has at its disposal.

**OO 20.1 Both the regular as well as the social housing market is made more accessible for young adults and minors**

- The Flemish authorities pay attention to young adults and starters in the research they carry out.
- The Flemish authorities develop interactive information campaigns, including information about housing, targeted at young people. (also SG 2 page 24)
- Rent subsidies (housing support) should be widely available to young people from institutions.
- A cooperation protocol for independent living will be developed for young adults.
- Projects for young adults can be submitted in the frame of the ‘Call for Pilot Projects on Housing and Well-being’.

**OO 20.2 Solutions need to be found for a number of concrete problems that families with children face on the social housing market or with tenant legislation**

- The shortage of family homes in the social housing sector needs to be examined and addressed.
- The access to the social housing market needs to become easier and administrative and financial hurdles need to be tackled.
- The consequences of co-parenthood for both children and parents need to be evaluated as part of the evaluation of the social housing framework.
- Housing inspection gets more powers to guarantee the quality of rented housing.

**OO 20.3 Child and youth friendliness is a central focus of Flemish city policy**

- Child-friendliness is one of the assessment criteria for applications responding to the new call for proposals for city improvement projects.
- The City Monitor will contain indicators of the accessibility and satisfaction regarding play and youth provisions.
- At the inspection visits of the City Fund, child friendliness will be one of the optional themes on which cities can share good practices.
The results of the 2003 research about housing satisfaction will be compared with data from the Youth Monitor (of the Youth Research Platform: JOP).

An update of the large scale housing research from 2005 needs to focus more on the situation of young adults on the housing market and the living conditions of children below 12.

The ‘Play Green’ projects, to make youth infrastructure greener, will be evaluated and a manual will be developed and disseminated amongst youth organisations and local authorities.

In the reorientation of the ‘Play Green’ projects, the possibility will be examined to also make school play grounds greener.

The good practice examples from the call for projects ‘Harmonious Park and Nature Management’ which focussed on children and young people, will be disseminated amongst local authorities.

The Flemish authorities encourage the creation of accessible (play) spaces in (city) forests and green spaces.

Tools will be developed to make it easier to create ‘green play tissue’ tailored to the needs of children and young people in the city or municipality.

Each child has the freedom of association and assembly according to article 15 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Flemish authorities strongly believe in the added value of associative life and want to offer the opportunity to all children and young people to participate in youth associations and organisations. The responsibility and administrative burden tends to be heavy for youth organisations and their (young) volunteers. Efforts are needed to simplify procedures where possible and inform young people sufficiently, coherently and in an easily understandable way about the legislation in place.

*play tissue* refers to the set of important spaces for children and young people and the connections between them.
• Cities and municipalities need to be informed in a coordinated way about the current legislation, in order for them to pass on the information directly to youth associations and individuals.

• Administrative simplification for local authorities and volunteers will considerably reduce the administrative burden related to planning and reporting.

• Negotiations will be held with the federal authorities about removing some problematic issues in the federal legislation.

• Local authorities should be relieved of part of the planning burden. At the same time, a signal will be given to local authorities that they themselves should also take into account the administrative burden they put on local associations.

• Good practice examples of easy and accessible procedures and rules for applying for funds, will be disseminated.

• The obstacles to be an active volunteer in youth or other organisations have to be removed, for instance for unemployed people, foreign volunteers, …

• Solutions need to be found for the insurance of young asylum seekers or unaccompanied minors in sports organisations.
“It takes a village to raise a child.” There are many types of educators in society who nicely complement each other. People who work face-to-face with children and young people (teachers, care workers, youth workers,…), but just as well neighbours, friends and family, they all need to take their responsibility for children and young people in society. This is an important commitment, not only towards the individual children and young people, but for society as a whole. The Flemish authorities therefore want to create opportunities for citizens’ (but also for children and young people) to make a positive commitment to children and young people.

• The support for social commitment is further extended.
• Extra efforts will be made to boost the knowledge and skills of non-professional service providers in interacting with children and young people.
• Good practice examples of voluntary Dutch language projects with children and young people will be disseminated.

• The (intergenerational) dialogue and solidarity need to be strengthened.
• Volunteers who improve the well-being of children, will be put in the spotlight in a yearly event.
• The number of foster families should be increased, as an alternative for long-term stays in care institutions.
Children and young people take on different kinds of responsibilities in their lives. These can vary from small scale, individual and short initiatives to long-term commitments in associations, ranging from local to international level. Making commitments favours ‘community building’. That's why the value of those commitments needs to be recognised. The efforts of children and young people have to be made visible and further encouraged. But not all children and young people are interested in taking on responsibilities. Commitment can only be taken on a voluntary basis.

**OO 23.1 The commitments taken by children and young people are made visible**

- A shared vision of the value of commitment and volunteering for children, young people and society, needs to be developed.

- In 2011, the European Year of Volunteering, Flanders will set up a campaign about young volunteers, with special attention to young people from socially vulnerable target groups.

- International commitment also needs to get the necessary recognition, appreciation and encouragement.

- On European level, Flanders defends the existence of a separate mobility programme for young people and their organisations, with adapted activity types and procedures.

**OO 23.2 Expertise about the activity types and techniques that encourage commitment is exchanged in a coordinated manner.**

- Practice oriented research needs to be encouraged to evaluate good practice examples and make them available.

- A consultation platform regarding young people’s and children’s commitment will share expertise and disseminate good practices.

- The current international cultural cooperation agreements will be used to gather expertise from abroad.
The Youth Policy Plan aims for a balance between the economic, ecological and social agenda. It aims to develop young people’s and children’s critical capacity regarding non-sustainable life styles, discuss them and help to find solutions. Children and young people need to become aware of the world around them, not only in Flanders and Brussels or Belgium, but also beyond. International learning experiences and education about sustainable development can contribute to this awareness.

Also the actions under OO 23.1 (page 55) and OO 7.3 (page 33).

- In 2011, the European Year of Volunteering, Flanders will set up a campaign about young volunteers, with special attention to young people from socially vulnerable target groups.

- International commitment also needs to get the necessary recognition, appreciation and encouragement.

- On European level, Flanders defends the existence of a separate mobility programme for young people and their organisations, with adapted activity types and procedures.

- Discussions and activities about the meaning of ‘decent work’ for young people will be integrated in the frame of the Youth Pact, including international elements.

- More socially vulnerable children and young people use international mobility programmes.

- The Flemish authorities push for a European frame for international leisure time experiences with special attention for children and young people experiencing financial obstacles.

- The offer of group exchanges and coaching for these activities needs to be increased, in order to allow more socially vulnerable children and young people to participate.

- The Info Point for Accessible Traveling www.toegankelijkreizen.be provides tailor-made information, also for children and young people with a physical or mental disability.

OO 24.1 Individual children and young people and groups are equipped with knowledge and insights about sustainable development and have the competences to make sustainable choices

- Local authorities organise integration projects and coaching between young people from foreign and local origin.
How did this Youth Policy Plan see the light?
THE SPIRIT OF THE PLAN

The third Flemish Youth Policy Plan orients the actions for children and young people in Flanders and Brussels. The youth sector needs to make sure that this plan effectively takes care of young people's and children's interests. Children and young people and their representatives need to have their say on the actions detailed in the plan. Consultations and debates make children and young people more critical and assertive. Adults have the task to provide children and young people with the space they need to take responsibility in these debates. And adults need to explain sometimes why this space for involvement is limited.

ROOTED IN A SITUATION ANALYSIS

The third Flemish Youth Policy Plan is based on principles of good governance. It is the fruit of a process of evidence-based policy preparation. The Plan is based on a situation analysis provided by the ‘State of the Youth’, as described in the Flemish Youth Monitor. The eight themes from the European Cooperation Framework for Youth provided the frame. Figures were collected from different publications, research units and studies. The situation analysis also gets inspired by several policy documents, memoranda and of course the government programme. Last but not least, many elements were taken from discussions with different organisations, support structures and experts.
The Flemish Youth Policy Plan was coordinated in tandem by the Youth Department and the advisor of the Minister for Youth. A planning team (with both governmental and non-governmental representatives) steered the process and were responsible for the quality of the final product. Based on the situation analysis and on the indications of the planning team, eight working groups were tackling the different themes. Small scale questionnaires and interviews asked children, young people and parents for their opinions on a number of themes of the Youth Policy Plan. The working groups reported back about their conclusions to the planning team. A meeting between the coordinators and representatives of the different project groups brought the conclusions together.

On 2 April 2010, a public consultation was held for everybody working with or for children and young people. The first results and orientations were presented at this public consultation. The working groups took on board the positive, constructive but also critical feedback in their further work. The working groups formulated strategic goals and operational objectives. A few expert organisations got the opportunity to screen the goals and objectives and comment on them from their field of expertise.

At the end of 2010, a draft of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan was presented to the different advisory councils.
#6 Who is Monitoring Flemish Youth Policy
Who is monitoring Flemish Youth Policy?
WHO IS MONITORING
FLEMISH YOUTH POLICY?

Many people are involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Youth Policy Plan.

- Within the Flemish Government, each minister has its tasks and responsibilities. The Minister for Youth oversees the overall implementation.

- The Flemish Parliament also monitors the progress made. Every two years, an intermediate report will be made, and a final report in the last year of its implementation. In the years in between, the coordinating administration will present a thematic dossier about youth and children’s rights policy.

- In 2011, a monitoring system will be developed that will be used for the reporting. This system will measure both the effects on strategic level, as well as the progress of the implementation on the operational level.

- The Minister for Youth will ask the Flemish Youth Council for an opinion about the progress made in the various policy areas in the frame of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan.

- The contact points for youth and children’s rights policy inform their own units or agencies about the Plan and put it in practice. They also provide information for the two-yearly reporting. The Youth Department supports them in their tasks.

- The Reflection Group on Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy is the central place where the implementation and the monitoring of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan are discussed with the non-governmental sector. This Reflection Group also prepares the thematic dossiers and formulates policy proposals for the future.

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3 In the complete version of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan, the ministers and departments responsible for each objective are listed. Each objective also suggests a number of stakeholders that could be involved in the implementation of the actions.
#7 The instances of Flemish Youth Policy
BUILDING A
FLEMISH HOUSE OF
YOUTH?

The Flemish Youth Council remains the protective structure of youth policy, just as youth work remains at the heart of youth policy. The Youth Council is the voice and mirror of Flemish youth. The structure of the Youth Council and its actions will be expanded to the eight fields of work mentioned in the European Youth Strategy 2010-2018.

The Youth Council currently is composed of a General Assembly of a non-profit organisation which employs a number of staff. The personnel is needed to prepare the many diverse requests for opinions. The Youth Council professionals feed policy, but so does the Support Centre for Youth, the Flemish Information Point Youth (VIP Jeugd), the Association of Flemish Youth Services and Councillors (VVJ) and Jint (Flemish coordination body for international youth work). In that sense, the Youth Council staff supports policy just as much as the other instances.

The Minister for Youth wants to strengthen the support structure for youth policy, not by increasing their funding, but rather by increasing the efficient use of the existing means. The goal is the biggest possible symbiosis between professional support structures for the youth sector and young people. The cooperation between the Flemish Youth Council and the Support Centre for Youth will be tightened, but also the functional cooperation with the other youth policy instances is necessary.

JoKER
A YOUTH AND CHILD EFFECT REPORT

Each decree proposal submitted to the Flemish Parliament needs to be accompanied by a ‘Youth and Child Effect Report’ (abbreviated in Dutch as JoKER) if the targeted decision has a direct influence on people younger than 25. The Youth and Children Effect Report is a public document describing the effect of the targeted decision on the situation of the child or young person, but it also gives alternatives for the decision that avoid, reduce or solve the negative consequences of the decision.
CONTACT POINTS FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS POLICY

The different departments and independent agencies of the Flemish authorities need to appoint a civil servant to be ‘contact point for youth and children’s rights policy’. The contact points contribute to the Flemish Youth Policy Plans. They assess the effects of the policy developed or implemented within their department or agency on children and young people. To support the contact points, competence profiles for civil servants or training can be provided.

REFLECTION GROUP FLEMISH YOUTH AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS POLICY

This reflection group is composed of the ‘contact points’, the institutions of Flemish youth policy, the Flemish Commission for Children's Rights and other organisations in the field of children's rights. The reflection group reflects, feeds and evaluates the Flemish youth and children’s rights policy. The reflection group meets at least four times per year and it is the place where the first-hand feedback on the implementation of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan is collected.
The Flemish Government publishes the ‘State of the Youth’. This is a scientific report about the live and world of young people, including longitudinal developments. The report is published at least once every five years and is the basis for the Flemish Youth Policy Plan and a rich source of information about the situation of children and young people.

The Minister for Youth is also the coordinator of Children's Rights in Flanders. Within this area, the Minister has a number of tools at his disposal, amongst which the Flemish Youth Policy Plan is an important one. The civil service is responsible for the administrative coordination of Flemish youth policy. The Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults coordinates the network of contact points for youth and children’s rights policy. The Agency also prepares the Flemish Youth Policy Plan and is responsible for the reporting. The same administration supports and chairs the Reflection Group on Flemish Youth and Children’s Rights Policy. It also oversees the implementation of the Youth and Child Effect Reports (JoKER).