



# Youth policy in the three communities of Belgium

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## COLOFON

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# Belgium in a nutshell: Introduction to the State structures

## Belgium: a federal state

■ Belgium is a federal state, consisting of 3 Communities (the Flemish Community, the French Community and the German-Speaking Community) and 3 Regions (the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region and the Brussels Capital Region)<sup>1</sup>. There is NO hierarchy between the federal, the Community and the Regional levels.

This division into three Communities and three Regions is for a unique characteristic of Belgian federalism. Both types of entities have their own exclusive competences. Their territories overlap geographically, since in fact they correspond to different combinations of Belgium's four linguistic areas (the Dutch language area, the French language area, the German language area and the French-Dutch bilingual area).

- Surface: 32.545 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population: 10.666.866 (2008)
- Federal capital: Brussels
- Head of State: King Albert II (Belgium is a kingdom)
- Prime minister federal government: Yves Leterme (resigning)
- Official languages: Dutch, French and German

Each entity has its specific area of responsibility. The federal level has the competence on important policy fields such as justice, social security, employment and tax legislation. The responsibilities of the Region are linked to its "territory" and include environment, agriculture, urban planning, housing,... The competences of the Communities are "person-related" matters such as Education, Health care, Culture, **Youth**,...



**3 Communities of Belgium**  
Orange: Flemish Community  
Green: French Community  
Purple: German-Speaking



**3 Regions of Belgium**  
Yellow: Flemish Region  
Red: Walloon Region  
Black: Brussels Capital Region

<sup>1</sup> Art. 1, 2 and 3 of the Constitution

# Three Ministers for Youth

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

The Communities have a minister responsible for Youth, a parliamentary commission and a number of administrative departments with 'youth' in their title and a large number of specific youth-related budget items. Given the fact that every Community has its own Minister for Youth, this means Belgium has three.

## Citizen participation

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■ Belgium has compulsory voting for all citizens of Belgian nationality from the age of 18.

They elect members of:

- the European parliament
- the federal parliament
- the different parliaments on Regional and Community level
- the provincial councils
- the municipal councils



# Youth Policy in the Flemish Community

# 1. The Flemish Community: some facts and figures

■ The Flemish Community comprises the inhabitants of Flanders and the Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the bilingual Brussels Capital Region. In 2008, there were 6.161.600 inhabitants populating a surface area of 13.522 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Flemish youth population (under 30 years of age) amounted to 2.104.372 persons.

0 - 4	325,972
5 - 9	322,626
10 - 14	345,065
15 - 19	366,566
20 - 24	357,942
25 - 29	386,421

In the frame of a programme for 'Better Administrative Policy', the Flemish public administration has been subjected to a reform in 2006. This programme was designed to make the public administration more efficient, to make Flanders a place where people enjoy working and living.

The tasks of the Flemish public administration are now organised on the basis of 13 policy areas. Each policy area is supported by a civil service department and a number of autonomous agencies. The departments support and advice the Government on policy-making, whereas the agencies apply the policy through services to citizens, companies and organisations. These agencies operate with a big degree of autonomy depending on their terms of reference.

**One of these policy areas is "Culture, Youth, Sports and Media".**

A Flemish ministry was created for each of these policy units, one of them being the Flemish Ministry for Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, which has a department and several agencies within its remit. The agencies are assigned a clearly defined mandate and have substantial autonomy in putting it into practice.

The 'Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults' is part of the 'Culture, Youth, Sports and Media' policy unit. The Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults consists of a 'Youth Division' and a 'Division for Adult Education and Local Cultural Policy'. Together,

these two divisions promote a rich and diverse offer of non-commercial socio-cultural activities to improve their general development and to improve social and cultural participation of all citizens, regardless their age.



Flemish politicians decided in 1980 to merge the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region. As a result, Flanders has one Flemish Parliament and one Flemish Government with competence over Community matters as well as over Regional matters.

- The parliament is directly elected by the Flemish population by way of five-yearly elections. The parliament has 124 members.
- The Flemish Government has 9 ministers. Pascal Smet is currently the Flemish Minister for Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels.

## 2. Youth Policy: concept and boundaries

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

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

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

A group-oriented implementation of policy creates a number of policy cross roads, where it encounters sectorial policies. Youth policy is based on an interactive, participatory style of government and a comprehensive or inclusive approach to policy. This makes youth policy a special and supplementary policy. It provides many opportunities for a more democratic and democratising policy implementation.

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## 3. Main orientations of policies for children and young people in the Flemish Community

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■ The Flemish Parliament Act of 18 July 2008 defines the policy for youth and children's rights, as follows:

"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 basic instruments to implement this policy on youth and children's rights.

This Act led the Flemish Government to implement this categorical policy for children and young people up to and including the age of 30. This policy covers several policy areas.

Since 2004, the Flemish Government has allocated the 'coordination of the children's rights policy' and responsibility for 'youth' to the same **Minister**. The current Flemish Minister for Youth is Pascal Smet.

The key instrument of the Flemish Government in the implementation of its youth policy is the **Flemish Youth Policy Plan**. It describes the aims of the Flemish government within these areas of competence and embeds them in a general vision on youth, youth policy and children's rights. The 2008 Act requires the Flemish Government to submit a Flemish Youth Policy Plan to the Flemish Parliament no later than 18 months after the start of the term in office. Currently, this means that the Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2011-2014 is to be submitted by the end of 2010. Various stakeholders will be consulted and involved, such as the Flemish Youth Council, experts on youth affairs, the associations mentioned in the Act, as well as of local and provincial authorities and the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels<sup>2</sup>.

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2 A body representing the Flemish in Brussels Region



This strategic youth policy plan should formulate the desired social effects deemed crucial for children and young people within the policy period. The following four objectives have been established for the **period 2011-2014**:

- Creating equal opportunities for all children and young people. Incentives must be given for interculturalism and there should be permanent attention to exclusion and deprivation.
- Increasing opportunities for young people to develop their talents and competences.
- Providing space to children and young people to be young. 'Space' in this context refers to three dimensions: policy space (attention by authorities for youth), mental space (respect for young people's personality and culture) and physical space (literally the space to be young together). Young people are part of the public space where they play, hang out, live and move around, but they also need mental space to be creative, take risks and cherish positive feelings.
- Empowering young people to participate as full members of society. Giving them the opportunity to help shape society, whether it is in school, at work, in their area, in organisations, in municipalities... This implies they should be well informed about possibilities.

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child serves as an ethical framework for this youth policy plan.

An inventory was made of the big challenges that young people are facing nowadays, based on an analysis of the life circumstances of children and young people. They could be clustered around eight topics:

- organisations and voluntary activities
- health, identity, sexuality and well-being
- education and training
- employment and entrepreneurship
- creativity, culture and media
- space for young people and care for the world
- participation and information
- social inclusion and diversity

These fields of action bare lots of resemblance to the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field for 2010-2018. Not a surprise if you know that this European framework was used as a basis for the Flemish analysis.

**Other instruments** created in order to implement the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights, are:

- **Impact study of new legislation on children and youth:** any draft Act submitted to the Flemish Parliament has to be accompanied by a report regarding its impact on children and youth, whenever the proposal directly affects people under the age of 25.
- **Contact points for youth and children's rights and an increased coordination:** all Departments and Agencies of the Flemish Authorities should appoint one member of staff to be the contact point for the policy on youth and children's rights. They will be asked to contribute to future Flemish Youth Policy Plans. They will also be involved in the monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Flemish Youth Policy Plan. They will be responsible to estimate the impact of the policy prepared or implemented by their department or agency on children and young people and their rights.
- **A 'Youth Progress Report' to monitor the situation of youth:** this is a scientific report concerning youth developments in Flanders. The report will appear at least every five years.





## 4. The tasks of the ministry: the ‘Division for Youth’ of the ‘Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults’ – ‘Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media’

([www.sociaal-cultureel.be](http://www.sociaal-cultureel.be))

■ The ‘Division for Youth’ of the ‘Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults’ ensures the administrative follow-up of the Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights. Furthermore, the Division implements youth policy as a socio-cultural matter. It stimulates and supports a rich and varied offer of non-commercial socio-cultural activities for young people, mainly through subsidies to associations and local authorities.

In short, the tasks of the Division for Youth are as follows:

- Preparation, follow-up, evaluation and implementation of legislation (e.g. the Flemish Youth Policy Plan)
- Funding support structures, youth organisations, youth projects, youth hostels and

- accommodation centres, as well as municipal and provincial youth (work) policy
- Providing material support for youth work: e.g. the lending service for camping equipment for youth associations
- Providing information on youth (work) policy (e.g. via the website and an e-zine)
- Representing Flanders at international forums. On the one hand, the Division for Youth is involved in bilateral cooperation projects that Flanders established with other countries or regions in the context of cultural or partnership agreements. This cooperation mainly consists of exchange programmes. On the other hand, the Division for Youth participates in multilateral forums, which have a youth agenda, such as the Benelux, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

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## 5. Child and youth related legislation in the Flemish Community

■ **The Flemish Parliament Act of 18 July 2008 on ‘conducting a Flemish policy on youth and children’s rights’**, on the one hand describes the basic instruments to implement this policy, and on the other hand it specifies the conditions for accreditation and funding of a large number of private organisation, youth-related associations and young people. It is worth noting that these entities generally work for/with children and young people throughout the whole of Flanders, as opposed to purely focusing on local or regional initiatives.

- **National Youth Associations:** these are associations engaged in youth work covering the entire Flemish Community. An association can be recognised as a National Youth Association if it offers a sufficiently large range of activities: such as support for local youth associations, an own range of activities for young people, training for youth workers, products spe-

cifically for youth work – or a combination of the above. Recognised National Youth Associations receive funding for their operational costs and can apply for additional project subsidies.

- **Experimental Initiatives:** these are initiatives set up in response to new developments and needs that arise in youth work or among young people themselves. Experimental Initiatives are granted project subsidies based on their methodical approach or innovative content, but for a maximum period of 36 consecutive months.
- **Initiatives for Participation and Information:** these projects aims to involve young people more closely in policy-making, whether it be of authorities, of private organisations or other institutions. These Initiatives stimulate a positive image of young people, they favour positive communication with them and meet their

information needs. Associations that work structurally on participation and information can apply for an operational subsidy based on a policy paper, possible complemented by project subsidies.

- **Youth Culture Initiatives:** these projects stimulate young people's artistic creativity. Young people who carry out an artistic project or produce art, or associations who implement and support such projects or products for young people, can apply for funding. Art Education Associations working with young people also receive support through this type of subsidy. These organisations primarily organise activities to develop children or young people's artistic expression or awareness of cultural heritage, individually or in groups.
- **International Youth Projects:** these projects aim is to stimulate international solidarity.

■ **The Flemish Parliament Act of 14 February 2003 on 'supporting and stimulating the municipal, inter-municipal and provincial youth policy and youth work policy'**, determines the funding conditions applicable to local authorities, provincial authorities and the Flemish Community Commission (in Brussels) with respect to designing and implementing a youth policy plan. Municipal authorities should develop a youth policy plan that covers a three-year period if they want to receive subsidies. For the Flemish Community Commission this period is five years. Provincial authorities establish a plan for the full six-year legislature. Communicative planning is at the centre of these policy plans: they should be developed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with local youth work initiatives as well as with child and youth experts, with the youth councils and with the children and young people themselves.

■ **The Flemish Parliament Act of 3 March 2004 on 'the accreditation and funding of youth hostels, youth residences, support structures and the 'Awlgemene Dienst voor Jeugdtoerisme' (General Service for Youth Tourism)'**, determines the funding conditions for hostels and youth residences and their activities.

## 6. The budget

■ In 2010, the Division for Youth has a budget of 62,279,000 euro to achieve its objectives. Most of the money is allocated to the Act on local and provincial youth policy (21,869,000 euro) and the Act on the Flemish policy on youth and children's rights (National Youth Associations: 23,261,00 euro, Experimental Initiatives, Participation and Information, Youth Cul-

ture, International Youth Projects: 5,044,904 euro, Flemish Youth Council: 639,000 euro, Youth Support Centre: 1,001,000 euro, JINT: 890,000 euro, VIP: 625,000 euro, VVJ: 327,000 euro).



## 7. The role of youth organisations in implementing youth policy

■ Youth organisations play an important role in the implementation of Flanders' youth policy. Dozens of accredited youth organisations are active at Flemish level dedicated to youth work and young people in many different ways in a leisure time setting.

Youth organisations or youth associations usually receive funding based on specific funding regulations or grant schemes. The legislator has assigned some specific tasks to the following organisations:

- **JINT** (coordinating body for international youth work) was established to implement the European Youth programmes within the Flemish Community: [www.jint.be](http://www.jint.be).
- **Steunpunt Jeugd** (Youth Support Centre) supports all partners involved in working with children, young people and their organisations. Steunpunt Jeugd develops knowledge, expertise and networks to analyse and strengthen the position of children and young people as well as of youth work in society: [www.steunpuntjeugd.be](http://www.steunpuntjeugd.be).
- **VVJ** (Association for Local Youth Services and Youth Coordinators) is an organisation, whose members are local authorities from the Dutch language area of Belgium and the bilingual Brussels Capital Region, the Flemish provincial authorities as well as the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels. Most of the municipal authorities are members of this support organisation: [www.vvj.be](http://www.vvj.be).

- **VIP** (Flemish Information Point) coordinates youth information within the Flemish Community: [www.vipjeugd.be](http://www.vipjeugd.be).
- **Knowledge Centre on Children's Rights** aims to increase knowledge of children's rights at national and international level. The Knowledge Centre on Children's Rights takes an interdisciplinary approach to children's rights based on scientific research: [www.keki.be](http://www.keki.be).
- **ADJ** (General Service for Youth Tourism) manages two youth facilities of the Division for Youth. It develops a policy paper to obtain an annual operating grant from the Division. The centres in question are: *Training Centre Destelheide* in Dworp focuses on management training initiatives for accredited youth associations and for consultation relating to young people and youth work: [www.destelheide.be](http://www.destelheide.be). *Youth Centre Hoge Rielen* in Lichtaart hosts young people and associations for camping and bivouac activities and educational initiatives. It is also suitable for nature classes, reflection or training sessions and seminars: [www.hogerielen.be](http://www.hogerielen.be).

**The Flemish Youth Council** is another important body. It advises the Flemish Government or the Flemish Parliament, at its own initiative or at request, on all areas related to children, young people and their organisations in Flanders. It ensures that the voice of children, young people, youth organisations and youth advisory bodies (youth councils and pupil councils) is heard by policymakers.

The general assembly of the Youth Council is composed of at least 16 and at most 24 members, of whom at least one-third are under the age of 25 at the start of the general assembly's mandate. A maximum two-thirds of members shall be of the same sex. Membership of the Youth Council is incompatible with a political mandate. The general assembly is elected every three years through a public call for candidates. At least half and at the most 60 per cent of members are selected from recognised youth associations and youth organisations: [www.vlaamsejeugdraad.be](http://www.vlaamsejeugdraad.be).

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# The French Community at a glance



■ The French Community of Belgium is a federate entity with its own parliament and its own government.

The area inhabited by the French Community coincides with the area of Wallonia excluding the German-Speaking Community and the Brussels Capital Region. It has 4.3 million inhabitants living in an area of 17,005 km<sup>2</sup>. The population density is 253 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.

In 2008, the youth population (under 30 years of age) in the French Community consisted of 1.649.243 persons<sup>3</sup>:

- 962,115 young people aged 0-17 years
- 391,204 young people aged 18-24 years
- 295,924 young people aged 25-29 years

The French Community manages the matters allocated to it by the Constitution and the institutional reform laws. In short, these are competences related to the individual and the use of the French language, for example: Culture, Education, Research and Training, Health (exclusively preventive medicine), Youth Care, Children, Youth, Infrastructures, Sports, Intra-Belgian Co-operation and International Relations.

The Parliament of the French Community exercises its legislative powers by adopting decrees. Its Government is composed of seven ministers. Currently, Minister Huytebroeck is responsible for Youth.

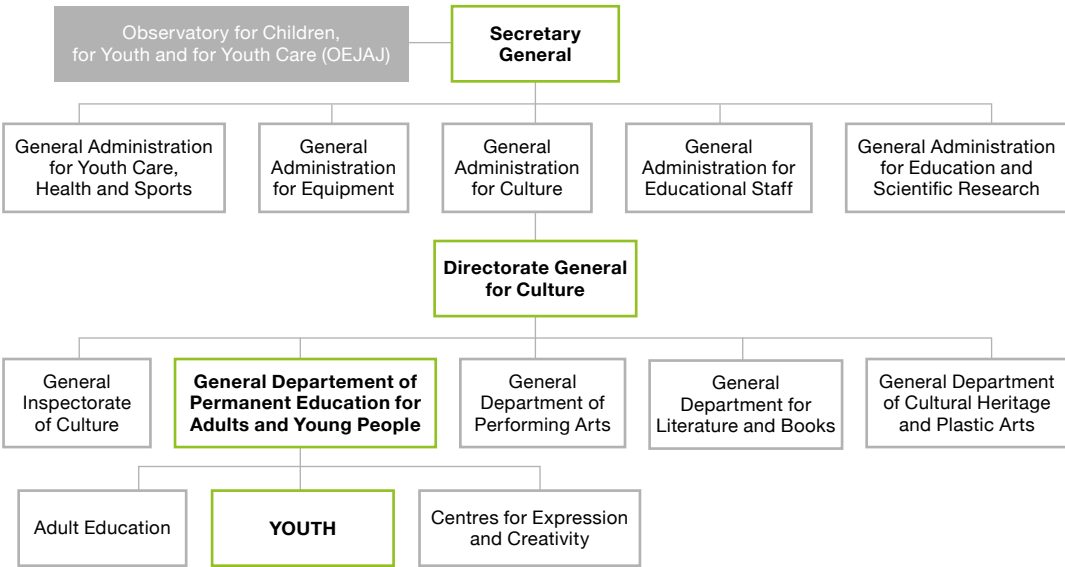
■ **The structures related to Youth in the French Community:**

Within the internal organisation of the Ministry of the French Community of Belgium, youth policies are part of Culture. The Youth Department, which is the central public administration of the youth sector, is part of the General Department of Permanent Education for Adults and Young People. Therefore, youth policy should be seen to empower young people and developing their active and creative citizenship. Minister Huytebroeck is also responsible for Youth Care. Within the ministry, these competences are structurally related to Health and Sports.

The Minister is also assisted by the Observatory for Children, for Youth and for Youth Care (OEJAJ). This body is directly placed under the authority of the Secretary General of the ministry. Its mission is to inform public authorities and citizens about policies aimed at children and young people in the French Community.

- It supports and promotes these policies through analysis and research.
- It promotes policy initiatives in line with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and which promote the welfare of children and young people.

The French Community has an international agency, the 'Bureau International Jeunesse-BIJ' (International Youth Office). 'BIJ' manages and promotes a range of exchange programs and works on both European and transcontinental levels. The funds available to support these international activities are under the responsibility of both the Minister for Youth and the Prime Minister of the French Community.



3 (Source : SPF Economie - Direction générale Statistique et Information économique, Données démographiques de base - 1/01/2008)



There are two main types of youth structures approved by decree: the Youth Centres and the Youth Organisations. Youth Centres are active at local level and Youth Organisations focus their activities at Community-wide level. We will detail their tasks and the procedure for approval and funding further on.

Youth also includes the structures of the 'Ecoles de devoirs' (homework support initiatives), active at regional or Community level. It should be noted that all structures of the

"Ecoles de devoirs" working on the local level fall under the authority of the Minister for Children.

Finally, the youth sector also includes all young people from the French Community. The Youth Council of the French Community represent all young people towards society and government, the same way as the Flemish and German Youth Councils do in the other parts of Belgium.

## a. Youth Centres

■ The sector of Youth Centres is ruled by the decree of 20 July 2000, which defines the general mission and the specific procedures to approve and fund associations that are active on the local level.

In 2010, there were 193 approved Youth Centres spread over the entire territory of the French Community. They are recognised for a four-year term, currently until 2012. All these associations are dedicated to promoting the development of critical, active and responsible citizenship (CRAC), especially among young people aged 12-26. They do so by raising awareness about social realities and by promoting responsible attitudes, through social, economic, cultural and political participation and socio-cultural practices.

Among these 193 associations:

- 146 are approved '**Youth Centres**'. These associations host young people during out-of-school or non-work-related activities. They implement activities in a democratic way, co-decided by and for young people. Hence the presence of one third of persons aged less than 26 in its decision-making bodies.
- 22 are approved as '**Youth Hostels**'. They have the facilities to provide full accommodation for a minimum of 50 young people. They also organise short residential activities for individuals or groups.
- 25 associations are approved as '**Youth Information Centres**'. They reply directly to questions raised by young people and they analyse and raise awareness about the issues and conditions of young people's life.

8 associations of Youth Centres are also approved in the decree on youth organisations as Federations of Youth Centres.

In 2010, a budget of 12,032,000 euro is dedicated to support the sector of Youth Centres. This budget provides each centre with a grant to cover the costs of activities and projects, plus a part of the staff. This grant depends on the category in which the centre is recognized. This category is determined by the number and size of activities.

About 2,000,000 euro are dedicated to the implementation of different mechanisms to support the qualitative and quantitative development of the youth sector. These mechanisms include employment support, training of coordinators and the promotion of quality practices. One of the four special measures of the decree can be called upon for specific projects. These measures are:

- 'Equal Opportunities' is destined for Youth Centres developing specific educational methods to allow young people with fewer opportunities to participate in their projects.
- 'Cooperation for youth information' is geared towards Youth Information Centres investing in partnerships with associations or local public authorities to facilitate access and ownership of information by young people.
- 'Decentralisation' is granted to Youth Hostels and Youth Centres trying to facilitate the access to activities for young people facing geographical or socio-cultural disadvantages.
- 'Support for creation' is granted to Youth Hostels and Youth Centres which specifically focus their activities on developing socio-artistic expression.

## b. Youth Organisations

■ The sector of Youth Organisations is structured by the decree of 26 March 2009. This decree defines the general tasks and specific procedures to approve and subsidise associations active at Community level. Those associations should develop their activities at least throughout three of the six areas of the French Community. Those six areas correspond to the five provinces of Wallonia and the Brussels Capital Region.

At the moment, 91 Youth Organisations, spread over the entire territory of the French Community, are approved for four-year term, currently until 2012. All these associations are dedicated to promoting the development of critical, active and responsible citizenship (CRAC) among people between 3-30 years old.

All of them develop a variety of actions ranging from entertainment to training, media education, artistic creativity, social awareness, activism, discovery of culture heritage, promotion of positive human relationship, etc. All these modes of action are decided “by and for” young people. Similar to the Youth Centres, Youth Organisations have to mobilise two thirds of people under 35 in their decision-making bodies.

These 91 Youth Organisations have been grouped into 6 categories:

- 15 Thematic Movements with volunteers, analysing social issues and raising awareness of citizens' questions.
- 6 Youth Movements composed of local groups of children and young people engaged in activities and animation projects such as camps, supervised by voluntary youth leaders.
- 51 Youth Services contributing to the development of young people's sense of responsibility, through several actions such as animation, socio-cultural expression, awareness, training, information, meetings and residential activities or international mobility.
- 8 Federations of Youth Centres and five Federations of Youth Organisations, which provide technical and educational support such as training, coordination, networking, information and representation of their members.
- 5 Youth Groups developing activities mentioned in the decree on Youth Organisations but which still do not meet all formal conditions of approval, such as geographical deployment, for example.

In 2010, a budget of 13,711,000 euro is dedicated to funding the sector of Youth Organisations.

For each approved Youth Organisation, this budget provides a grant which covers the costs of activities, structural expenses and a part of staff costs. Similar to the Youth Centres, this grant is determined by the size and volume of activities and the number of members or local groups for each type of association mentioned above.

A similar amount for the Youth Centres, approximately 3,500,000 euro, is dedicated to the implementation of different mechanisms that ensure the development of the sector of Youth Organisations, beyond the activities approved in their work plans. These mechanisms focus on financial support for staff and quality care. One of the eight special mechanisms of the decree can be granted on the basis of specific activities. These mechanisms are:

- 'Decentralised Youth Movement' supports Youth Organisations to create and coach local groups and for networking amongst them.
- 'Training and Educational Expertise' supports Youth Organisations specialised in training or those developing many training activities.
- 'Animation in Schools' supports partnerships between Youth Organisations and schools that develop educational and socio-cultural activities for young people as well as learning tools adapted to the needs of young people within their environment.
- 'Political Awareness and Student Participation' focuses on Thematic Movements to support their awareness-raising actions throughout the French Community.
- 'Combating Extremist Movements' supports actions and the educational tools combating all forms of extremism.
- 'Specific Target Audiences' supports Youth Organisations that mainly develop activities for a special target groups, such as young people from working-class background, young people with disabilities or victims of discriminations.
- 'Media Education' is aimed at Youth Organisations developing activities for media education with young people and which are involved as an expert towards different partners.
- 'Linking Youth Centres & Youth Organisations' encourages cooperation between youth clubs and local groups of youth movements.

## c. 'Ecoles de Devoirs' (homework support initiatives)

■ The sector of the 'Ecoles de Devoirs' falls under the joint authority of the Minister for Children and the Minister for Youth. The Minister for Children is competent for local 'Ecoles de Devoirs' structures and the Minister for Youth is responsible for their regional coordination and for the Federation of 'Ecoles de Devoirs' at Community level. 'Ecoles de Devoirs' are dedicated to children and youngsters aged 6–15. They provide after-school space and activities to support school work, but also to promote social integration and carry out socio-cultural projects.

5 Regional Coordination bodies support the local structures of the 'Ecoles de Devoirs'. They are spread over the whole territory of the French Community. They support the leaders and coordinators of local structures with training and information, they develop and disseminate educational tools and help setting up new local structures.

The Federation of 'Ecoles de Devoirs' provides additional support through a publication, a permanent phone line and a resources centre available to the whole sector. The Federation

also represents local 'Ecoles de Devoirs' towards others sectors and the government.

A budget of 333,000 euro is dedicated to support staff costs, activities and structural expenses of the 6 associations (5 Regional Coordination bodies and the Federation).



## d. Advisory Bodies

■ In order to ensure democratic consultation and youth participation in these structures, each of the sectors above is officially represented by an Advisory Body:

- Advisory Committee of Youth Clubs and Youth Centres (CCMCJ)
- Advisory Committee of Youth Organisations (CCOJ)
- Advisory Committee of 'Ecoles de Devoirs'
  - under the authority of the Minister for Children

The Youth Council of the French Community ensures the participation and representation of all young people of the French Community. It is officially defined in the decree of 14 November 2008 which lays down the conditions

to approve and support the Youth Council.

The Youth Council is a unique association. Its General Assembly is composed of 30 to 50 young people between 18 and 30 years old. They are elected by young people over 16 from the whole Community. 60% of its members come from Youth Organisations or Youth Centres. The other members come from the local councils of youth welfare and from representative bodies for students. At least 10% of its members should come from groups of young people which are not related to Youth Organisations or Youth Clubs. All members of the Youth Council's General Assembly are elected for a two-year term and can be re-elected only twice.

The aims of the Youth Council are the following:

- expressing opinions on matters affecting youth and to represent those in all relevant consultation structures
- informing its members, civil society and decision-makers on issues, analyses, actions and studies on youth
- promoting networking between associations active in the field of youth
- promoting youth participation in civic life

The Youth Council organises decentralised activities to reach this last aim:

- Once a year, the Youth Council organises a so-called 'Agora' event at Community level. This reflection day allows young people to explore and to re-appropriate different topics.

- Twice a year, the Youth Council organises collective reflections at local level (so-called 'Forums') which allow young people to explore and to appropriate different thematic approaches.
- Six months before Regional or Community elections, the Youth Council initiates discussions all over the French Community in order to form a youth position on the issues of the next legislative term. This process is called 'Caucus'.

The Youth Council of the French Community is approved for a five-year term based on the aims set out and the membership criteria described above. In 2010, a budget of 152,000 euro has been dedicated to cover part of the staff costs, activities and structural expenses.

## e. Non-Decree Policy Perspectives

■ The French Community also supports several other dimensions of youth policy which are not ruled by the decrees mentioned above. Here is an overview.

One of the key priorities of the youth policy for the period 2009-2014 is the training of youth leaders, whether they are volunteers or paid staff. Training young volunteers or professional staff responsible for activities with young people contributes to the development of 'Critical, Responsible and Active Citizens' (CRACs). In 2010, a sum of 1,385,000 euro has been dedicated to this purpose.

Within the youth policy, special support is given to initiatives with a cultural scope. Therefore, a budget of 1,113,000 euro was earmarked for projects focusing on "living together", artistic creation, broadcast production and change management within organisations. Those projects are implemented by Youth Organisations, Youth Centres but also not officially recognised associations or independent groups of young people.

Special attention is also given to youth facilities and their equipment. A special sum of 350,000 euro is earmarked for that purpose.

Finally, since the beginning of 2010 a special credit line of 100,000 euro has been created to support trans-sectorial initiatives for youth. This budget supports associations to develop projects at the crossroads with socio-cultural youth policies from other fields, such as the support to young people in difficult situations or the integration of persons with disabilities.

*Author: **Cabinet of Minister Huytebroeck**  
Minister for Youth  
and Youth Care*





# Youth policy in the German-Speaking Community



■ The German-Speaking Community is the smallest of the three Belgian Communities and the smallest constituent state in Europe. It is legally recognized by article 2 of the Belgian constitution.

The German-Speaking Community is situated in the east of Belgium. It is a predominantly rural area. It borders Germany, Luxembourg

and the French Community and is only a stone's throw away from the Netherlands and Flanders. It covers 854 km<sup>2</sup> and consists of 9 municipalities with 74,169 inhabitants (01.01.2008).

The official language of the Community, as well as in schools and in court, is German.



## Competences of the German-Speaking Community

■ Culture, Social Policy, Education and Employment are - in general terms - the areas of responsibility of the German-Speaking Community. It also has the competence to draw up treaties and agreements with other Communities, Regions or States.

The following list of competences gives a more detailed overview of the policy domains within the remit of the German-Speaking Community:

- Cultural policy, including language support and promotion, fine arts, cultural heritage and museums, arts and crafts education, media (radio, television, libraries and media centres), **youth policy**, adult and popular education, sports, leisure time and cultural activities, tourism and socio-historical tourism.
- Person-related policy, including **youth welfare**, family, social affairs, care and health, coordination and integration of immigrants, reintegration support for former prisoners, care for people with disabilities.

- **Education and Training.** This Policy concerns kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, special needs schools, training and vocational schools as well as an independent higher education college. It also includes the educational content and curricula, language, transport for pupils, financial assistance to families, staff salaries, maintenance of infrastructure, facilities and buildings.
- **Regional competency:** Article 139 of the Belgian constitution allows by mutual agreement the transfer of competences from the Walloon Region to the German-Speaking Community. Within this context landscape and monument conservation (1994), archaeology (2000), employment and vocational guidance (2000) as well as the supervision of local authorities (2005) became part of the jurisdiction of the German-Speaking Community.



# The German-Speaking Community in political terms

■ The German-Speaking Community has a directly elected parliament with 25 members. It has a government with 4 ministers elected by the parliament. The German-Speaking Community is represented in the Belgian Senate by a co-opted Senator who is elected by the parliament of the German-Speaking Community. It also has one directly elected member of the European Parliament.



Moreover the German-Speaking Community has its own ministry with three departments (Youth affairs are treated by the Department for Cultural and Social affairs) and some public services like ‘BRF’ public radio and television, ‘ADG’ employment office, ‘IAWM’ institution for training in the small and medium-sized enterprises, ‘DPB’ agency for persons with a disability, ‘WFG’ East-Belgian business promotion agency and ‘VAO’ tourist board.

The German-Speaking Community is not allowed to collect taxes. The budget of the Community is therefore exclusively fed by the endowment of the federal state and the money transfer of the Walloon Region linked to the competencies transferred under article 139 of the constitution.

## Youth policy in the German-Speaking Community

■ In 2008, statistics showed that of a total Belgian population of 10,666,866 inhabitants, 74,169 were living in the German-Speaking Community. To frame the specific situation of the German-Speaking Community and their young people,

the table below provides information about the total Belgian population, the total German-Speaking Community population and the number of young people between 12 and 30 years old. The data also show the relevant percentages and the gender balance.

Population	Men	Women	Total
<b>Belgium</b> 12-30 years	1.254.577	1.228.123	2.482.700
Belgium Total	5.224.309	5.442.557	10.666.866
% 12-30	24,01%	22,57%	23,27%
<b>DG</b> 12-30 years	8.628	8.136	16.764
DG Total	36.889	37.280	74.169
% 12-30	23,39%	21,82%	22,60%

# Legal basis of Youth Policy in the German-Speaking Community

■ Article 4 of the special law of 8 of August 1980 refers to terminology of youth policy in Belgium. The actual youth policy in the German-Speaking Community is in line with this overall interpretation:

*“Youth policy doesn’t apply to school but to education, both of organized and non-organized young people, excluding the legislation on youth welfare (penal, social and civil law). This policy encompasses the procedures to fund socio-cultural education for young people and to subsidise the social promotion of young people.”<sup>4</sup>*

However, recently the German-Speaking Community developed more cross-sectorial approaches. This is outlined in the chapter ‘Political priorities and a forecast on a future youth policy in the German-Speaking Community’ below.

## ■ CURRENT YOUTH POLICY AND ITS LEGAL BASIS

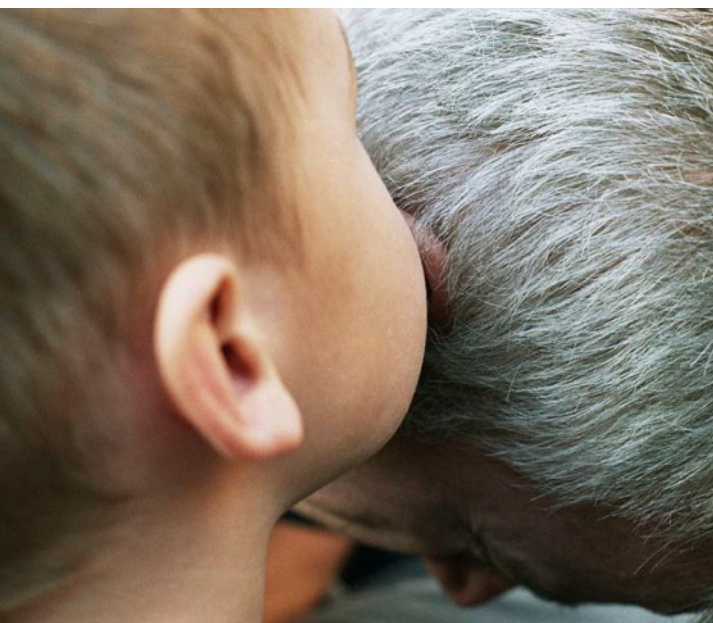
The legislation of the German-Speaking Community on youth work doesn’t define a specific target age group. However, the main age group mentioned in the decree on the financial support for operating costs of accredited youth associations, youth services and youth

centres, is young people between 12 and 26 years old. Moreover, the legislation also concerns youth workers and youth leaders.

## ■ SUBSIDIES AND FUNDING

Basically, the subsidies supporting youth policy in the German-Speaking Community are related to structural funding. Most of the available budget goes towards subsidising youth work structures and personnel costs.

- The decree of 23 March 1992 regulates the funding of personnel costs of professional youth workers in the German-Speaking Community. Following this regulation, youth workers can get subsidies for their salaries up to 75% of the allowed maximum amount.
- The decree of 14 December 1998 regulates the subsidies towards operating costs for accredited youth associations, youth services and youth centres. This system provides funding on a quantitative basis, which means that calculation is made upon the number of admissible activities conducted by the concerned association, service or centre.
- The decree of 18 March 2002 regulates the funding of youth infrastructure.
- The enactment of 04 February 1980 regulates the funding of material.
- Training of youth workers and youth leaders is regulated by the ministerial circular of 22 April 2002.
- The funding of special or innovative projects in aid of the German-Speaking Community is regulated by the ministerial circular of 22 April 2002.
- Funding of projects with the other Belgian Communities and international projects are regulated by the ministerial circular of July 1994.
- Furthermore, legislation also foresees structural funding for the Youth Office (Jugendbüro der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft). This funding is regulated by a convention between the Government and the Youth Office.
- The Council of the German-Speaking Youth, established by royal enactment of 30 December 1983, can obtain funding for projects and fees for attendance. Operating is guaranteed by secondment of a person working for the Youth Office (see duties of the Youth Office below). Moreover the Youth Council can also count on a lot of volunteers within its members.



4 Roger Blanpain, *Bevoegdheden van Gemeenschappen en Gewesten*, 1988, Brügge, S.146

# The youth sector of the German-Speaking Community and its main actors

## ■ THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Within the Parliament of the German-Speaking Community, Youth Affairs are treated by the Committee for Culture.

Within the current government of the German-Speaking Community, the Minister for Culture, Media and Tourism is also responsible for Youth Affairs. At the moment, this is Ms. Isabelle Weykmans.

## ■ THE ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

At the ministry of the German-Speaking Community, Youth Affairs are settled in the Department of Cultural and Social Affairs. The head of the Department is Mr. Leonhard Neycken. By delegation of the minister, this Department is also the National Authority for the European Youth in Action programme in the German-Speaking Community.

(See contact details and links below)

## ■ THE YOUTH SECTOR IN FACTS

Generally, youth work in the German-Speaking Community has the aim to provide socio-cultural out-of-school activities for children and young people on a voluntary basis. They do so using non-formal education methods to enable the beneficiaries of these activities to become active and confident citizens. They do so by fostering their skills and enhancing their knowledge, their participation in society and their autonomy.

Youth work in the German-Speaking Community addresses those taking part in the activities as well as those providing these activities, such as youth workers and youth leaders.

Therefore, there are some key actors in the field of youth work in the German-Speaking Community:

- There are **7 approved youth organisations**,
- in total **19 youth centres/clubs** (locations) out of which **11 covered by a Performance Contract** (more details below),
- **2 information centres**,
- **the Youth Council** and
- **the Youth Office**

This text will not go into detail concerning youth organisations, youth centres not working under the umbrella of a Performance Contract and the youth information centres, as they don't differ that much from the general European understanding. However useful links will be mentioned under the useful links section.

We will go into more detail about two specific structures of youth work in the German-Speaking Community: the Youth Council and the Youth Office (including the Performance Contracts).

## ■ THE COUNCIL OF THE GERMAN-SPEAKING YOUTH (RDJ)

The Youth Council was established by royal enactment on 30 December 1983. It is the independent federation of individual young people, youth centres, local youth councils, youth organisations of the political parties, youth organisations and youth services in the German-Speaking Community.

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

The Youth Council is steered by a Steering Committee and a General Assembly. Members must not be older than 35 years by the time that they are nominated. Different working groups develop projects and contribute to the overall work of the Youth Council.

To fulfil its tasks, the Youth Council receives attendance fees and the secretarial and organisational work is done by a person working for the Youth Office. Moreover the Youth Council can get funding for specific projects.

## ■ THE YOUTH OFFICE (JUGENDBÜRO DER DEUTSCH- SPRACHIGEN GEMEINSCHAFT)

Besides the above mentioned youth organisations, youth centres, information centres and the Youth Council, the Youth Office is one of the most important support structures for Youth Work in the German-Speaking Community.

The Youth Office is in some way the “technical bureau” for youth work in the German-Speaking Community. It is an NGO steered by a General Assembly and an Administrative Board, in which the majority is held by youth organisations and youth centres. The Government and the Ministry represent one single voice within this Administrative Board. The collaboration with the Government of the German-Speaking Community and the funding received are regulated by a convention between the Government and the Youth Office. This convention runs over 2 years and foresees amongst other things the principle of funding by donation, the allocated amount and the mission of the office.

This mission implies:

- assistance to the Youth Council;
- practical guidance/monitoring for youth organisations;
- coordination and development of open youth work and street work (street work is regulated by a Performance Contract between the government, the Youth Office and an accompanying committee);
- promotion of national and international cooperation in the youth field (for instance the programmes Youth in Action , Bel’J, ASA and Quebec-Wallonie-Bruxelles) - the Youth Office is also the National Agency of the German-Speaking Community for the European Youth in Action programme;
- promotion of EURO <26;
- IT-services;
- services concerning financial management.

## ■ THE SYSTEM OF PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS AND OPEN YOUTH WORK

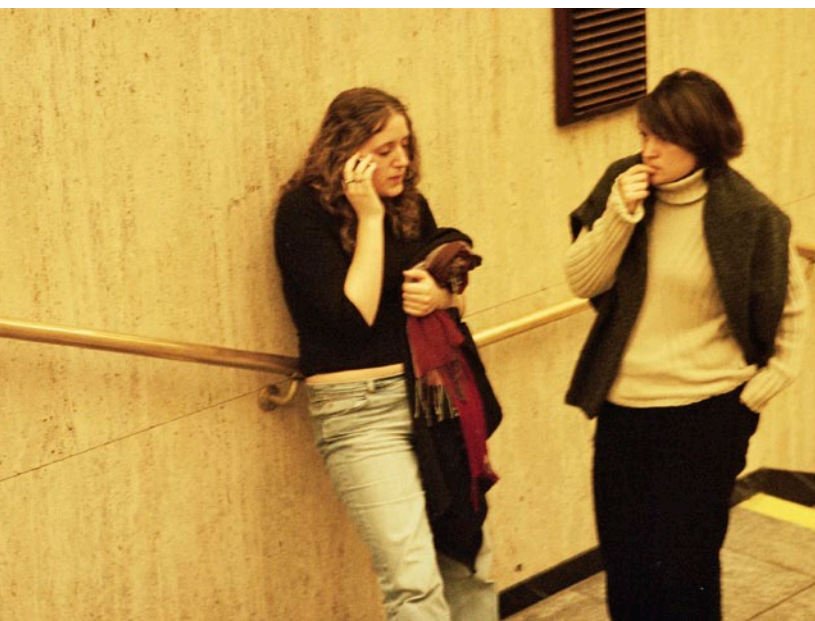
The system of Performance Contracts exists for several years now, next to the regular funding system described above. It has been a step forward in the German-Speaking Community’s youth work. This system applies to open youth work and seeks for a strong involvement of the municipalities. Furthermore it allows funding on the basis of work plans and quality management. At the moment, all youth workers under Performance Contract are employees of the Youth Office which is also responsible for the management and guidance of the contracted staff.

Within this system, a professional youth worker is responsible for the overall work and the coordination of several locations of a main youth centre. These locations (up to a maximum defined in the contract) should respect the ‘meeting reality’ of young people and cover the territory of the whole municipality. The professional youth worker is meant to establish good functioning teams of volunteers to guarantee minimum opening hours and the self-management, participation and self-responsibility of the youth club visitors.

The following outlines some guiding principles of the Performance Contracts:

Performance Contracts constitute a partnership between the Government, the municipality, the Youth Office and a local NGO. The

Contracts regulate the duties and services, the financial support, the available means as well as the staff. Their implementation is monitored and supervised by a mixed committee representing all partners and delegates of the concerned youth centres (local NGO). Within this system of Performance Contracts the German-Speaking Community contributes up to 87,5 % to the salary costs of a professional youth worker. The remaining 12,5 % are covered by the municipalities.





# The budget

■ **The overall budget of the German-Speaking Community in 2009 was 188,686,000 euro.** Of this sum, **1,333,000 euro was allocated to the budget of the youth programme** (0,7% of the overall budget). This sum was split up in the following way:

- 46% of this budget was dedicated to salary costs of youth organisations, youth centres and youth services (street workers, Youth Council and Youth Office not included);
- 23% was dedicated to the operating costs of youth organisations, youth services and youth centres;
- a part of these funds mentioned in the bullet-points above was transferred to the Youth Office, because the Youth Office manages some youth centres under the umbrella of a Performance Contract. Furthermore, the Youth Office received funds for salary costs and operating costs linked

to own projects (street work, EURO<26, IT-services, co-funding of Youth in Action, etc.) and for the assistance to the Youth Council. This means that the Youth Office in total obtains 38% of the budget available in the youth programme.

Additionally, there was also 8,000 euro available in the youth programme dedicated to specified credits and 113,000 euro dedicated to credits for expenditure for facilities and infrastructure.

To get a complete picture of all youth related posts within the overall budget of the German-Speaking Community, we add the 2009 budgets for Education and for Youth Welfare (excluding budgets available for specified credits and credits for expenditure):

- Education: 100,383,000 euro
- Youth Welfare: 3,529,000 euro

## Political priorities and forecast of a future youth policy in the German-Speaking Community

### ■ **CONSIDERING THE PAST, INCLUDING THE PRESENT AND PREPARING THE FUTURE**

The current developments and youth policy design in the German-Speaking Community are based on the structured youth consultations which took place in 2005/2006, as well as on the concept for regional development for 2009-2025, which were incorporated in the policy statements of the government in September 2007 and 2009.

The main priority is the development of instruments and methods to come to a comprehensive and high quality youth policy based on knowledge and information.

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

That is why policy-makers in the German-Speaking Community decided to work on a new integrated youth decree. This new decree will put the young person in the centre and focus on their specific capacities. It will start from the current situation and evolution while maintaining flexibility and sustainability. Moreover, this new decree will also reorganise training for youth workers and youth leaders. It will allow for evaluation which will be the basis for the Government to establish a strategic youth policy plan. This decree should be ready by 2012.

Compared to the current situation, this new integrated decree would allow:

- a more transversal and a better cross-sectorial approach, which puts young people in the centre (of all efforts) and deals with them more holistically;
- increased participation of young people and the youth sector (also in the design of youth policy and in other decision-making);

- funding based on quality and not only quantity - this comes with quality criteria and quality standards for training and for the evaluation of concepts and work plans, etc.;
- reorganisation of youth information;
- contribution of municipalities to the impact of youth policy.

## INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL COOPERATION

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

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

### International

Therefore, the German-Speaking Community is very active in international initiatives and networks such as the new European framework for cooperation in the youth field, the Benelux cooperation, the cooperation in the framework of the Greater-Region, as well as some bilateral treaties.

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

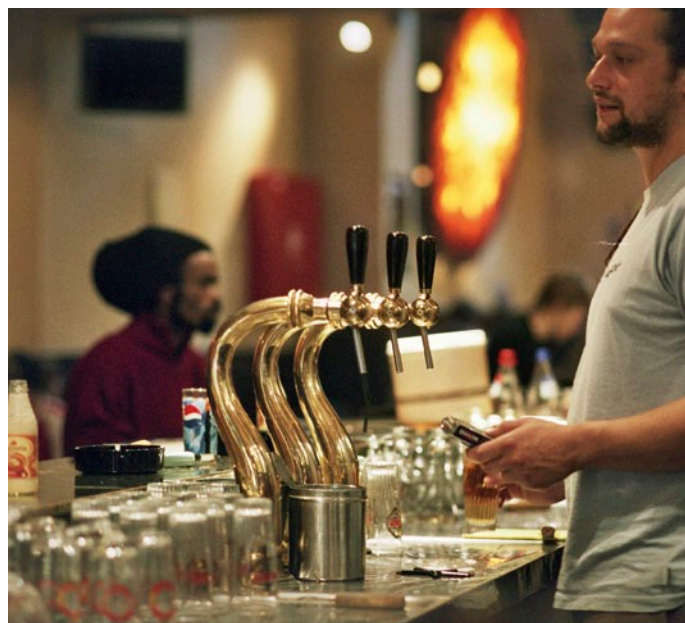
The German-Speaking Community benefits greatly from the cooperation on European youth policy design and has close contacts with its national partners, the partners in the Benelux and the Greater-Region as well as other partner countries.

### National

In the context of European cooperation, the three Belgian Communities work closely together in order to coordinate a single Belgian position regarding the competences under the responsibility of the Communities. The leading role and the role as Belgian spokesperson in the European Council are carried out in turn by all three Communities. This close cooperation will be even more intense during the Belgian Presidency of the European Council in 2010. Flanders will lead the presidency in the field of youth policy, while the German-Speaking Community will have the role as Belgian spokesman.

This interaction between the three Belgian Communities in the field of youth policy also exists in its own right at Community level. The German-Speaking Community has cooperation agreements with the French Community and with Flanders. The Communities frequently share information regarding new developments, transfer knowledge or invite each other to participate in events.

The three Communities also have a common programme for youth exchanges and projects for creative and active citizenship. This programme is called 'Bel'J' and was initiated in march 2009 by the three Ministers for Youth. It gives young people between 14 and 20 the opportunity to discover the other Communities. Bel'J is managed by the Youth Office in the German-Speaking Community. .





# Useful links and addresses

- The Parliament of the German-Speaking Community: [www.dgparlament.be](http://www.dgparlament.be)
- The internet portal of the German-Speaking Community: [www.dglive.be](http://www.dglive.be)
- Specific information about the youth sector: [www.dglive.be/jugend](http://www.dglive.be/jugend)
- Government of the German-Speaking Community,  
Ms. Isabelle Weykmans,  
Minister for Culture, Media and Tourism  
(also responsible for Youth),  
Klötzerbahn 32, B-4700 Eupen  
Tel. ++32 87 596 400  
Fax. ++32 87 557 021  
Email: [kab.weykmans@dgov.be](mailto:kab.weykmans@dgov.be)
- Ministry of the German-Speaking Community, Department of Cultural and Social affairs, Head of department,  
Mr. Leonhard Neycken,  
Gospertstraße 1, B-4700 Eupen  
Tel. ++32 87 596 300  
Fax. ++32 556 476  
Email: [kultur-soziales@dgov.be](mailto:kultur-soziales@dgov.be)  
(also the National Authority for the European Youth in Action programme)
- The Youth Council: [www.rdj.be](http://www.rdj.be)
- The Youth Office (Jugendbüro) which is also the National Agency for the European Youth in Action Programme:  
[www.jugendbuero.be](http://www.jugendbuero.be)
- Youth information in the German-Speaking Community: [www.jugendinfo.be](http://www.jugendinfo.be)
- Street work in the German-Speaking Community: [www.streetwork.be](http://www.streetwork.be)

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[www.youth-eutrio.be](http://www.youth-eutrio.be)