

# The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy

Key priorities for youth policies answers on  
**Participation**



Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work.

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## **BELGIUM (Flemish Community), 2005**

### **1 Structures of participation at the local, regional or national level**

#### **1.1 Youth parliaments**

##### **1.1.1 Local youth parliaments**

Some municipalities have local children councils generally comprising children up to the age of 12, but there is no obligation for the municipalities to create such councils. The composition, organisation and tasks may differ from one municipality to another.

##### **1.1.2 Regional youth parliaments**

The Antwerp and Limburg provinces had child provincial councils until a few years ago. These have been abolished and replaced by other structures and systems focusing on promoting children's involvement in governance.

##### **1.1.3 National youth parliament**

The Flemish Children's Parliament is an initiative of the European Foundation for the Rights of Children, Child! (for short) The idea is to have an entity to represent all Flemish children. The Parliament has 40 members (children from the fifth and sixth years of primary school) and 9 ministers.

#### **1.2 Youth councils**

##### **1.2.1 Local youth councils**

Each municipality (including Brussels-Capital) has a municipal youth council (required by decree, 14 February 2003). This comprises representatives of local or inter-municipal youth work initiatives, but non-organised young people may be included as well. The municipal executive has to seek opinions about youth policy matters. The municipal youth council may also issue own-initiative opinions about youth or youth work-related issues.

##### **1.2.2 Regional youth councils**

There are 5 provincial youth councils (West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg, Flemish Brabant). The approval and creation of provincial youth councils is also governed by the Decree of 14 February 2003. They have the same advisory opinion responsibility as the municipal youth councils, but at provincial level.

##### **1.2.3 National youth councils**



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Flanders has a youth council at Flemish level: Vlaamse Jeugdraad, Arenbergstraat 1D, 1000 Brussels - 02/551.13.80 - info@Vlaamsjeugdraad.be The key task of the Flemish Youth Council is to highlight the views and opinions of children and young people, youth organisations and youth advisory bodies (youth councils and student councils) so they can actively express themselves and take part in policy-making. The Flemish Youth Council acts at its own initiative or at the request of the Flemish Government or the Flemish Parliament to issue opinions about all youth-related issues. The Flemish Youth Council may deliver own-initiative opinions to the federal authorities and other authorities. The Youth Council's General Meeting comprises 24 members: 10 young people, 12 people involved in authorised youth work organisations, 1 young person from the Flemish umbrella organisation for high school student councils and 1 young person from the Association of Flemish Students. The Flemish Youth Council was granted decretal status in 2002.

### 1.3 Others structures of participation

There are several participation systems where children and young people may be directly or indirectly represented, particularly at local level. At Flemish level, there is the Scholars' Parliament. Students in the third level of secondary education (17-18 years old) may participate. This involves a major role-playing exercise focused on an international issue (such as democracy, employment, the media, #). During a 12-month period, various sessions are held in all Flemish provinces, after which young people may discuss their views with experts and politicians in a coordinating final session. In the wake of the final session, Globelink, the organisation responsible for supervising the Scholars' Parliament, ensures a follow-up to the young people's views at policy-making level.

## 2 Percentage of young people who are members of

No answers available

## 3 Existing actions/support, of national or regional scope, to promote the participation of young people in local life and follow-up mechanisms

N/A

### 3.1 Legal actions to support the structures for participation of young people in local life

The Decree of 14 February 2003 for lending support to and providing incentives for municipal, inter-municipal and provincial youth and youth work policy specifies that each municipality has to approve or set up one or more youth councils. One of the youth council's tasks (possibly in cooperation with the municipal youth service, youth consultant, youth work, the local authority, #) is the requirement to develop a three-year youth (work) policy plan. The key themes in this respect are support for youth work, managerial training, accessibility to youth work, participation, infrastructure, integrated youth work policy, an area for youth, communication & information. This may be regarded as a form of support for the participation of young people. There are also



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financial grants for specific participation projects and associations, as described in the Flemish Youth Policy Decree (29 March 2002).

### **3.2 Financial actions to support the various structures for youth political and NGO participation**

Financial grant eligibility conditions are specified in both decrees, as described in question 3.1. The total youth budget for 2005 is 49,302,000 euros. From this total budget, 1,652,000 euros are allocated to specific participation and communication projects. In 2005 the Flemish Youth Council receives 513,000 euros in financial support.

### **3.3 Other initiatives planned in the short term**

N/A

## **4 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at certain specific groups of young people?**

yes **no**

If yes, what groups?

The (youth) policy is focused on an integral and inclusive approach but extra attention is paid to a number of target groups: ethnic minorities, disadvantaged youngsters, homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals, disabled young people, young unskilled people, #

## **5 The vote**

### **5.1 Obligatory?**

yes **no**

### **5.2 Age of the right to vote**

*From 18 years old*

### **5.3 The right to vote**

In order to vote a person: 1° has to be a Belgian national; 2° has to be eighteen years of age; 3° has to be recorded in the population registers of a Belgian municipality or be recorded in the population registers available in diplomatic missions and consular posts; 4° should not be subject to exclusion or suspension circumstances determined by this code In the case of municipal elections, the nationality condition specifies the need to be a Belgian national or the citizen of another EU Member State.

### **5.4 Age of eligibility to be a candidate**

*From 18 years old*



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## 5.5 Eligibility to be a candidate

The conditions for being eligible to vote are also the conditions for being eligible for being a candidate.

## 6 The elections

### 6.1 Number of young people voting between the ages of 18 (or the age of the right to vote) and 30

886,137 *persons*

### 6.2 Number of young people between the ages of 18 (or the age of the right to vote) and 30 registered on the lists of voters

886,137 *persons*

### 6.3 Indicators of participation related to European polls

#### 6.3.1 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote who are registered from the ages of 13 to 30.

100 %

#### 6.3.2 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by age groups

18-21	22-25	26-30
30.2 %	31.8 %	38.0 %

#### 6.3.3 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by gender

female	male
49.0 %	51.0 %

#### 6.3.4 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by rural-urban

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

### 6.3.5 In European elections, the percentage of young people's participation in relation to the total population to vote

19.4 %

## 6.4 National indicators of participation in the polls

### 6.4.1 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered

100 %

### 6.4.2 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by age groups

18-21	22-25	26-30
30.2 %	31.8 %	38.0 %

### 6.4.3 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by gender

female	male
49.0 %	51.0 %

### 6.4.4 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by rural-urban

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

### 6.4.5 National elections, young people as a percentage of participation in the total population to vote

19.4 %

## 6.5 Regional and local indicators of participation in the polls

### 6.5.1 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered

100 %

### 6.5.2 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to

**the number of young people in age to vote registered, by age groups**

18-21	22-25	26-30
30.2 %	31.8 %	38.0 %

**6.5.3 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by gender**

female	male
49.0 %	51.0 %

**6.5.4 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by rural-urban**

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

**6.5.5 In regional and local elections the percentage of young people participation in relation to the total population to vote**

19.4 %

**6.6 Number of young people (under the age of 30) who are member of the national parliament.**

5 *persons*

**6.6.1 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the national level, by gender**

female	male
5 <i>persons</i>	0 <i>persons</i>

**6.7 Enter the number of young people (under the age of 30) who are member of regional parliaments or are hold the position of a regional minister.**

N/A *persons*

**6.7.1 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the regional, level by gender**

female	male
N/A <i>persons</i>	N/A <i>persons</i>

## 6.8 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the local level

N/A *persons*

### 6.8.1 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the local level, by gender

female	male
N/A <i>persons</i>	N/A <i>persons</i>

## 7 Existing actions/support, of national or regional scope, to promote the participation in the system of representative democracy and follow-up mechanisms

The authorities have to consult with the Flemish Youth Council and the provincial and local Youth Councils for matters regarding youth. The Youth Councils can also give their advice on their own initiative.

### 7.1 Actions that have been undertaken this year

From January until October 2005 the Flemish Youth Council has drawn up 27 advices.

### 7.2 Other initiatives planned in the short term

N/A

## 8 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at specific groups of young people?

No answers available

## 9 Learning to participate

### 9.1 Existing actions within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate

N/A

#### 9.1.1 Mechanisms of participation at school

The #Decree concerning participation in school and the Flemish education council# (Belgian Official Journal. 06/08/04) provides for two forms of participation: a student council and a schools



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council. A student council has to be set up unless the school regulations already guarantee a form of student participation or unless less than 10% of students seek this. The student council is elected and can issue opinions and seek/offer information about various topics. The school council comprises parents, teaching staff, students and local representatives of the social, economic and cultural sectors. The school council issues opinions, seeks/offers information and consults with the school board.

### 9.1.2 Learning of citizenship

Starting in 1997 "citizenship education" has been included in the final attainment levels and development goals of secondary education. Objectives have been formulated for the first (12-14 year olds), second (14-16 year olds) and third (16-18 year olds) levels. The focus in the first level is on the classroom and the school; types of family and the student's own environment, media; democratic forms of governance. The second-level objectives are focused on human rights, active citizenship and decision-making. In the third level, the emphasis is on democratic councils and parliaments, social services and world citizenship.

### 9.1.3 Other actions within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate

In addition to an "elected student council" other types of participation are available in schools: a student council with volunteers, working groups, feedback group, open forum, theme groups, suggestions box, school radio, # This involves own initiatives from the school (students, teaching staff, management), as this is not defined in law. The Flemish Scholierenkoepel (VSK - Flemish umbrella organisation for high school student councils) lends support to the student council by such things as training.

## 9.2 Fields of actions and/or support # (national or regional scope, outside the formal education context) which aim at promoting learning to participate amongst young people

Youth involvement and participation in the policy is a key theme of Flemish youth policy. Youth work has to make a major contribution to the participation of children and young people (or learning to participate). There is also the approval and financial support for associations and project focus on the participation of children and young people (or learning to participate). One of the preconditions for approval is for projects and associations to be focused on youth involvement and participation in the policy.

### 9.2.1 Nature of this support

Support for projects and associations promoting youth involvement and participation in the policy is laid down in the Decree of 29 March 2002 on Flemish Youth Policy, specifying conditions that projects and associations have to meet to qualify for financial grants.

### 9.2.2 Concerned sector of activities: company, associations and NGOs,



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### **training bodies, municipalities, medias**

The projects and associations are mainly concerned with youth work, but also community conscience building. Youth participation initiatives are also being taken in other areas (education, welfare, labour market, #)

### **9.2.3 Among these actions (question 9.2.1 and 9.2.2), actions that have been undertaken this year**

The various projects and associations receive financial grants from the authorities of Flanders every year. One such association is the Kinderrechtenhuis (Children's rights centre) that aspires to implement the International Convention on the Rights of the Child amongst young people inside and outside the youth work sector. Participation, empowerment, resilience development and connecting young people with society in a creative way are central components in this respect. One such project is #Kinderen in opspraak komen tot inspraak en participatie#. This project develops methodologies and structures on the basis of formal participation of children and teenagers from disadvantaged districts in Antwerp.

### **9.2.4 Other initiatives planned in the short term**

Fresh applications for financial grants or an extension of a financial grant may be submitted every year.

### **9.3 Are there specific target groups of young people aimed at by existing or planned actions?**

yes ~~no~~

The specific target groups

The (youth) policy is focused on an integral and inclusive approach but extra attention is paid to a number of target groups: ethnic minorities, disadvantaged youngsters, homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals, disabled young people, young unskilled people, #