

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), 2006

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

1.1 Youth parliaments

1.1.1 Local youth parliaments

Local children's and youth councils do exist in some local authorities and a large number of parties include such a council as an objective in their programme or in their policy when they come to power. However, local authorities are not obliged to set up a local children's or youth council. The composition, organisation and remit may differ from one municipality to another.

1.1.2 Regional youth parliaments

The provinces of Antwerp and Limburg had a provincial children's council until a few years ago. In the meantime they have been abolished and replaced by other structures and systems focusing on promoting children's participation in governance. In East Flanders, the Parti-tur project (Participation in turbo language) was launched in 2002 aiming to support local government initiatives which facilitate children's and youth participation. In this framework, a provincial youth council was set up in 2005.

1.1.3 National youth parliament

The Flemish Children's Parliament is an initiative of the European Children's Rights Foundation, abbreviated as Child!. Its mission is to be the voice of all Flemish children. This parliament comprises 40 members (children in the 5th and 6th forms) and 9 ministers.

1.2 Youth councils

1.2.1 Local youth councils

Each local authority (including Brussels Capital) has a local youth council (an obligation under the Flemish Parliament Act of 14 February 2003, as modified by the Flemish Parliament Act of 23 December 2005). Representatives of local or intermunicipal youth work initiatives sit on this council, but also young people who are not members of youth organisations may participate in the council's activities. The Board of Mayor and Aldermen is obliged to seek the youth council's advice on youth policy issues. Moreover, the local youth council may offer advice at its own initiative on issues affecting youth or youth work.

1.2.2 Regional youth councils

There are 5 provincial youth councils (West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg, Flemish Brabant). The Flemish Parliament Act of 14 February 2003, as modified by the Act of 23 December



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2005, also governs the recognition and establishment of provincial youth councils. They have the same advisory powers as local youth councils but exercise them at the provincial level.

1.2.3 National youth councils

Flanders also has a youth council at Flemish level: Vlaamse Jeugdraad, Arenbergstraat 1D, 1000 Brussel - 02/551.13.80 - info@vlaamsejeugdraad.be The key task of the Flemish Youth Council is to help ensure that the voice and views of children, young people, youth organisations and youth advisory bodies (youth councils and pupil councils) are effectively heard and integrated into policy-making. The Flemish Youth Council may, at its own discretion or at the request of the Flemish Government or of the Flemish Parliament, give advice on all youth related issues. In addition the Flemish Youth Council may counsel federal authorities and other bodies at its own initiative. The General Assembly of the Youth Council comprises 24 members: 10 young people, 12 individuals actively involved in recognised youth work organisations, 1 young person representing the Organisation of Flemish Pupils and 1 young person nominated by the Association of Flemish Students. In 2002, the Flemish Youth Council was established by a Flemish Parliament Act.

1.3 Others structures of participation

There are many other participation structures in which children and young people may be represented directly or indirectly, especially at local level. At Flemish level, the Pupil Parliament may be mentioned. Pupils of the third stage of secondary education (17- to 18-year-olds) may participate. In fact, it is a large role playing exercise tackling worldwide topics (e.g. democracy, employment, media#). "Culture and religion" is the key theme of the 2006-2007 school year. Over a one year time span, various sessions take place in all Flemish provinces, after which young people can discuss their positions with experts and politicians during a joint closing session. After the closing session, Globelink # the organisation monitoring the pupil parliament # ensures that the positions taken by young people are followed up at policy level.

2 Percentage of young people who are members of

2.1 Percentage of young people in global population n(100%)who are members of a political party

N/I %

2.1.1 Percentage of young people in global population who are members of a political party (by age groups)

13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27	28-30
N/I %					



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2.1.2 Percentage of young people in global population who are members of a political party (by gender)

female	male
N/I %	N/I %

2.1.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a political party in global population by rural-urban

rural	urban
N/I %	N/I %

2.2 Percentage of young people who are members of a trade union from the ages of 13 and 30 in global population

N/I %

2.2.1 Percentage of young people who are members of a trade union in global population by age groups

13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27	28-30
N/I %					

2.2.2 Percentage of young people in global population who are members of a trade union (by gender)

female	male
N/I %	N/I %

2.2.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a trade union in global population by rural-urban.

rural	urban
N/I %	N/I %

2.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation from the ages of 13 and 30 in global population

N/I %

2.3.1 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation in

global population by age group

13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27	28-30
N/I %					

2.3.2 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation in global population by gender

female	male
N/I %	N/I %

2.3.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation in global population (by rural-urban)

rural	urban
N/I %	N/I %

2.3.4 What type of youth organisations are people involved in

In Flanders, many youth organisations are active: youth movements and youth associations, political youth organisations, playwork services during school holidays, youth centres and clubs, youth groups focusing on amateur arts practice, youth workshops, youth music workshops. However, we do not have records of the number of members or participants in youth work. Indeed, it should be noted that only have limited information on certain age groups.

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 14 February 2003 Flemish Parliament Act on supporting and stimulating the municipal, intermunicipal and provincial youth policy and youth work policy as modified by the 23 December 2005 Flemish Parliament Act requires that each local authority recognise or establish one or more youth councils. One of the tasks of the youth council (possibly in co-operation with the local youth services, the youth counsellor, youth work, local government #) consists of designing a three-year youth (work) policy plan. Key topics are: youth work support programmes, volunteer training, greater access to youth work, participation, infrastructure, integrated youth policy, space for youth, communication and information. We can consider it as a form of support to youth participation. In



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addition, there are funding opportunities for specific participation projects and associations as defined in the Flemish Parliament Act on Flemish Youth Policy (29 March 2002).

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

In both Acts as described in question 3.1., funding conditions are set out. The budget for youth amounts to 50259000 # for 2006.

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 primary goal of (Youth) Policy is to promote an integrated approach and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, some specific target groups get particular attention: immigrants, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, disabled young people, low-skilled young people#. They are described as young people who are at risk of dropping out of education, becoming victims and/or losing touch with society as a result of their physical, mental, sensorial or social problems. Supplementary support is provided for them. In order to meet the needs of all these young people, policy makers try to adopt a policy that focuses attention on youth participation and the large diversity of this target group of 'young 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 be entitled to vote, citizens are required: 1° to have the Belgian nationality; 2° to have attained the full age of eighteen years; 3° to be registered in the population register of a Belgian municipality or in the population registers that are kept in diplomatic or consular service posts; 4° not to be permanently or temporarily denied the right to vote as provided by this Code For local elections, the nationality requirement is to be a Belgian citizen or national of a Member State of the European Union.



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5.4 Age of eligibility to be a candidate

From 18 years old

5.5 Eligibility to be a candidate

The requirements for being entitled to vote or to stand as a candidate are the same: 1° to have the Belgian nationality; 2° to have attained the full age of eighteen years; 3° to be registered in the population register of a Belgian municipality or in the population registers that are kept in diplomatic or consular service posts; 4° not to be permanently or temporarily denied the right to vote as provided by this Code

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

947542 *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

947542 *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
29.3 %	31.6 %	39.1 %

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
49.4 %	50.6 %

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

19.5 %

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
29.3 %	31.6 %	39.1 %

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
49.4 %	50.6 %

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

19.5 %

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
29.3 %	31.6 %	39.1 %

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
49.4 %	50.6 %

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

19.5 %

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
0 <i>persons</i>	5 <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.

29 *persons*

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

female	male
11 <i>persons</i>	18 <i>persons</i>

6.8 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the local level 824 *persons*

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

female	male
384 <i>persons</i>	440 <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

In general, every political party has a youth wing. These youth wings strongly resemble regular youth movements but they devote special attention to the participation of young people in the political landscape. Examples are: Animo (jongerenwerking van SP.A- youth wing of the socialist party) www.animoweb.be, Jong VLD www.jongvld.be, Jong Groen! www.jonggroen.be Jong CD&V www.jong-cdenv.be Vlaams Belang Jongeren www.vbj.org

7.1 Actions that have been undertaken this year

N/A

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?

~~yes~~ **no**

Specific target groups of young people aimed at by existing or planned actions

N/A

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 #Act on participation at school and the Flemish Education Council# (Belgian Official Gazette of 06/08/04) sets out two forms of participation: a pupil council and a school council. Schools are required to establish a pupil council unless school regulations already provide for some form of pupil participation or unless less than 10% of the pupils ask for such a council. The pupil council is elected and can give advice and ask for/give information on various topics. The school council is composed of parents, teachers, pupils and local representatives of social, economic and cultural environments. The school council offers advice, asks for/gives information and consults with the school board.

9.1.2 Learning of citizenship

Since 1997, #citizenship education# has been included in the attainments targets and developmental objectives of secondary education. Goals are set for the first (12- to 14-year-olds), second (14- to 16-year-olds) and third stages (16- to 18-year-olds). In the first stage, focus is on class and school level, family forms and personal living environment, media and democratic forms of governance. Goals for the second stage are directed towards human rights education, active citizenship and decision making. In the third stage, emphasis is placed 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

Apart from an #elected pupil council#, a wide range of different types of participation can be identified in schools: a pupil council with volunteers, working groups, sounding board groups, open forums, theme groups, suggestion boxes, school radios#. Here, the school#s own initiatives (launched by pupils, teachers, school management teams) are referred to as these initiatives are not legally defined. The Organisation of Flemish Pupils (VSK) supports pupil councils, among other things by giving 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

Involvement and participation of young people in policy making is a key theme of Flemish youth policy. Youth work is expected to contribute significantly to child and youth participation or to teaching them to participate. In addition, associations and projects aiming at the participation or the



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development of participatory practises of children and young people are recognised and funded. As a key condition of recognition, projects and associations must focus on involvement and participation of young people in the decision-making process.

9.2.1 Nature of this support

The 29 March 2002 Flemish Parliament Act on Flemish Youth Policy laid down the support of projects and associations encouraging the involvement and participation of young people in policy-making processes. Moreover, this Act also sets forth the conditions which must be complied with by projects and associations in order to be eligible for funding.

9.2.2 Concerned sector of activities: company, associations and NGOs, training bodies, municipalities, medias

Mainly, projects and associations within youth work are involved but also the community building sector is active in this field. Moreover, initiatives aiming at youth participation are also launched in other fields (education, welfare work, labour market,#)

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

Each year, various associations receive Flemish Government funding. An example of such an association is the #Kinderrechtenhuis# (Children's rights home), which IVRK wants to promote among young people in youth work and other settings. Participation, empowerment, resilience and creatively involving young people in society are the crucial points of action. Annually, a number of projects in the context of #participation and communication# are also eligible for funding. Examples of such projects are available on the following web site : www.jeugdbeleid.be This web site gives you information on the content and the amount of funding of the project.

9.2.4 Other initiatives planned in the short term

New applications for funding or continuation of funding can be annually submitted.

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

yes ~~no~~

The specific target groups

The primary goal of (Youth) Policy is to promote an integrated approach and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, some specific target groups get particular attention: immigrants, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, disabled young people, drop-outs, young people in care, low-skilled young people # . A specific example is the project #Erbij. Participatie van studenten met functiebepkingen# (A real sense of belonging. Participation of young people with special needs#). This project is aimed at disabled young people and tries to involve them in student life. This participation is promoted at the level of the board as well as in the field of social and cultural activities. www.jeugdbeleid.be