



**Youth**Partnership

# ***QUESTIONNAIRE***

## ***“PARTICIPATION”***

### ***BELGIUM-FLANDERS***



**Youth**Partnership  
Council of Europe  
European Commission



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# **1 Context of youth participation in your country (legislation, structures)**

The 14 February 2003 Flemish Parliament Act on supporting and stimulating municipal, inter-municipal and provincial youth policy and youth work policy as modified by the 23 December 2005 Flemish Parliament Act requires that each local authority recognises or establishes 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 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). Participation has also been given a significant position in the Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2005-2009. In the 'Parliament Act containing broad and stimulating measures that encourage participation in culture, youth work and sports' (18-01-2008), the starting principle is an approach that is target-group focussed and which transgresses sectors. People facing poverty, people with ethnic or culturally diverse backgrounds, people who have been detained, disabled people and families with young children are invited more actively to take part in the wealth of cultural, sports and youth (work) that is available. The Parliament Act provides motivation at all levels.

In 2004, the Flemish Parliament Act on Pupil Participation came into effect. The Act formally provides for participation at school. The set-up, composition and workings of the school council and the pupil council are strictly regulated. The creation of a pupil council is obligatory in primary and secondary schools if it is demanded by at least ten percent of the pupils, as long as this is made up of at least three pupils. Primary schools must create a pupil council if 10% of the eleven to thirteen year old pupils ask for it. In secondary education, members of the pupil council are elected by and from other pupils. Every pupil can put himself/herself forward and is entitled to vote. Voting is done in secret and is mandatory. If necessary, school-regulations can determine how the pupil council in primary education is set up. (Source: Participation Act 02/04/2004, department 3) Pupils also participate via a school council.

Every school that is financed or subsidised by the Flemish Government must create a school council – with the exception of type 5 schools (hospital schools) and schools where two-thirds of the organising authority is made up of directly elected representatives of personnel and parents and where, for secondary education, pupils are involved, in an advisory capacity, for a number of decisions (see Participation Act 02/04/2004). School councils for schools from the subsidised free, urban, provincial and municipal education system are regulated via the Participation Act (2004). The school council in community schools are regulated according to the Special Act regarding community education (14-07-

1998). This stipulates that the pupils in secondary education are not obliged to sit on the school council but that the school council must involve them in what they do.

In order to embed pupil participation in school life, an effective promotion policy is necessary ([www.kinderrechtcoalitie.be](http://www.kinderrechtcoalitie.be)). The participation act includes the set up, tasking, financing, supervision, evaluation and operation definition of an expertise centre for the encouragement of participation at school. (Source: Participatiedecreet [Participation Act] 02/04/2004, heading III) The introduction of the expertise centre which, in accordance with the act, can be called upon by schools to expand the participation culture in schools, has been postponed to a date to be decided by the government. For schools with a pupil council training events are organised (by VSK, JEMP,...) In several cities and municipalities in Flanders, local discussion platforms (LOPs) have been set up. The members of an LOP, including pupils from pupil councils, can work together for more equal opportunities for pupils from their own city or municipality. The Organisation of Flemish School Pupils supervises the pupils in the Local Discussion Platform. There LOPs have been since 1-01-2003 as anticipated in the GOK-I act about equal educational opportunities for all pupils.

From 11 June 2004 onwards, KER (child impact assessment report, Act of 15 July 1997) is to be used as prescribed by Ministerial Order. The intention is to test draft Flemish Parliament Acts ('insofar as it is evident that the proposed decision directly affects the interest of the child') against their effects on the rights and living conditions of children and young people ('each person under the age of 18'). In the meantime, the KER has been extended to become a JOKER (impact assessment report on children and young people, including -25-year-olds).

The Flemish Government reports on the implementation of article 12 (concerning the right of freedom of speech and the right to be heard in procedures involving the child) from the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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

### **2.1 Youth councils**

#### **2.1.1 National youth councils**

Flanders has a youth council at Flemish level: Vlaamse Jeugdraad, Arenbergstraat 1D, 1000 Brussel - 02/551.13.80 - [info@vlaamsejeugdraad.be](mailto: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 on 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. In the past, the Flemish Youth Council comprised a Youth Policy Commission that tackled all the themes. Since 1 September 2006, this commission is no longer active, and all cases are treated as specific pathways. To this end, specific working groups are set up. (Web site [www.vlaamsejeugdraad.be](http://www.vlaamsejeugdraad.be))

The Organisation of Flemish School Pupils (VSK) is the association for pupil councils from secondary education. It is an association for and of pupils. VSK would like to support pupils and help them strengthen their effectiveness. That is why VSK organises regional meetings for pupil councils six times per school year. VSK also offers training tailored to pupils and organises starter days for pupil councils at the beginning of each school year. VSK also produces several publications and has a web site (<http://www.vsknet.be>) containing information for pupils. VSK is an officially recognised spokesperson for pupils. Pupils and teachers that supervise the pupil councils can join the VSK. The Organisation of Flemish School Pupils represents 600 pupil councils in Flanders from schools from all educational networks and all educational forms (aso, bso, buso, dbso, kso, tso) and which lie across all five provinces. VSK's General Assembly comprises about twenty pupils from all across Flanders, discussing current educational themes.

The Association of Flemish Students (VVS) is the umbrella organisation for students from higher education, student councils in Flanders and is the representative of and contact point for all students in Flanders.

### **2.1.2 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 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. The provincial youth council comprises the general assembly, the executive committee and various work groups. Members of the provincial youth council are primarily youth clubs but can also be local youth councils and even individuals.

### **2.1.3 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 inter-municipal youth work initiatives sit on this council

and young people who are not members of youth organisations may also 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 on its own initiative on issues affecting youth or youth work. In 2003-04, the number of activities carried out by municipal youth councils amounted to 1519. The majority of these activities (27%) involved partying and recreation. Youth councils, however, also organise many activities that fall under the headings of culture, information, training, ...

The 2 April 2004 Act on participation at school and the Flemish Education Council 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 every four years and can give advice and ask for/give information on various topics. In practice, almost all secondary schools and many primary schools have a pupil council. Some also have a children's parliament, a forum, work groups, sounding-board groups,... 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. The school council is reformed once every four years. Research into the existence and workings of pupil councils in secondary education has shown that 89% of the schools (which also organise a third stage) have a pupil council (VSK 2002). A survey of VSK shows that in community education 17% of pupil councils are represented in the school council, in privately run education 9% are represented in the participation council. There are some 900 pupil councils. The Flemish School Pupil Organisation defined a number of criteria which determine whether a pupil council has a "minimum set of tasks and responsibilities". A number of important issues on which pupil councils could give advice are meals, school regulations, homework, timetables, evaluation mode and pupil guidance. (VSK 2002)

In a number of cities and municipalities in Flanders, local discussion platforms (LOPs) have also been set up. The members of an LOP, including pupils from pupil councils, can work together for more equal opportunities for pupils from their own city or municipality. In Flanders there are 70 active LOPs. There are LOPs for primary education and LOPs for secondary education.

## **Youth parliaments**

National, regional and local youth parliaments

KRAS, the new version of the Pupil Parliament, is a project from the Globelink non-profit organisation and is supported by the Flemish Government, the Flemish Community and DGOS – Federal Development collaboration. KRAS operates in the 'twilight zone' between education and youth work. Meetings are held in leisure time, but recruitment is done by enthusiastic teachers at school. The head

of each school enrolls his/her participants and supervisors. Chairs and secretaries must also enroll. The supervisor is asked to indicate which task he/she will take on throughout the working year: chair, secretary or supervisor. Usually, pupils of different schools from one or more municipalities sit together in the same parliament. KRAS focuses on those aged 16 who like to use their free time for considering and discussing world issues (e.g. democracy, employment, media, food). Role-playing and the opportunity for expression are central to this. Each KRAS group (previously the local parliament) can, however, set its own emphases using work forms. A minimum of five sessions with youngsters must be planned. Two moments for expression are provided, allowing the voice of youngsters to be verbally strengthened. 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.

[\(http://kras.globelink.be/\)](http://kras.globelink.be/)

At a local level, in Flemish primary schools, we can find children's parliaments. Until a few years ago there was also a Flemish Children's parliament with 40 members and 9 ministers (from the fifth and sixth year of primary school).

The provinces of Antwerp and Limburg had a provincial children's council until a few years ago. These have now 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. A provincial youth council was set up within this context in 2005.

### **3 Participation in representative democracy**

#### **3.1 Number and percentage of young people who are members of a political party or political youth organisations, if possible by gender**

Research\* conducted among 1769 youngsters between the ages of 14 and 18 in the Flemish Region showed that just 0.6% of youngsters are organising, active or passive members of political youth organisation. (p.100)

\* Smits, W. & Elchardus, M. (2004). *Maatschappelijke participatie van jongeren. Beweging in de sociale, vrijetijds- en culturele ruimte. [Social participation by youngsters. Movement within the social, free-time and cultural space.]*. Final report for the Programme of Policy focused Research 'Social Participation of youngsters' 9(PBO99A/14/85) on behalf of the Administration Culture, Department of Youth and Sport of the Flemish Community. Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Sociology group, TOR Research group.

### 3.2 Number and percentage of young people who are members of a trade union

N/A

### 3.3 Percentage of young people (in total and by gender) who are members of a youth [non-governmental organisation](#), which is not a trade union, political party or political youth organisation. If possible, provide information about the type of organisations.

In Flanders, there are many active youth organisations: youth movements and youth associations, political youth organisations, play/work services during school holidays, youth centres and clubs, youth groups focusing on amateur arts, 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 we only have limited information on certain age groups.

Young people between 14 and 25 join sports' associations, youth associations, local youth work initiatives, cultural associations, youth centres, hobby clubs, social associations and participate in the organisation of parties for young people, neighbourhood parties and festivals. 63% is an active member of the above mentioned organisations (JOP, 2007). Of all of the youngsters questioned (N=2503, 14 to 25 year olds), 35.5% is a member of a sports' club, 20.8% helps to organise parties, neighbourhood parties, festivals; 16.4% of the youngsters is a member of a youth club (e.g. chiro, scouts, KAJ); 11.8% is a member of a cultural association (e.g. music school, youth studio); 11% is a member of a youth centre; 6.1% takes part in community youth work initiatives (e.g. organising holiday activities for children); 5% is a member of a social association (human rights, third world and environmental organisations) and 4.7% is a member of a hobby club (e.g. computer club, chess club). Youth movements, community youth work, sports, hobby and cultural associations are the most popular with children between the age of 10 and 12. From the age of 16, associations where personal input plays a central role are more popular, such as organising parties and festivals or being involved in youth centres. In terms of participation in advisory councils and taking up responsible roles within youth work, 15.5% of the youngsters from the same sample has a responsible role in youth work; 3.9% is a member of a pupil or student council and 1.6% is a member of a youth council. (Source: Vettenburg, N., Elchardus, M. & Walgrave, L. (Red.) (2007). *Jongeren in cijfers en letters. Bevindingen uit de JOP-monitor 1 [Youngsters in figures and letters. Findings from the JOP Monitor 1]*. Leuven: Lannoocampus. (p. 176, 183, 185)

Other Flemish research, with 1769 youngsters between the ages of 14 and 18 (Smits & Elchardus, 2004), has shown that boys and girls participate in associations and youth work in equal numbers. (p.86, p.102)



## **4 Explain the existing support measures, of national, regional or local scope, to promote the participation of young people in local life and follow-up mechanisms**

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

In 2006, the Globelink non-profit organisation received a subsidy of 227,386.74 EUR. In 2006, Jemp non-profit organisation (Jeugdendienst voor Maatschappelijke Participatie-Youth service for Social Participation) received a grant of 114,321.84 EUR. In 2006, Jong CD&V non-profit organisation (young members of the political party) received a grant of 186,272.23 EUR and, also in 2006, Jong-VLD non-profit organisation (young members of the political party) received a grant of 52,650.08 EUR. The 'Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel' (VSK - Organisation of Flemish Pupils) receives grants from the Flemish Community. In 2005 those grants amounted to 302,000 euro. The financial support of youth councils in Flanders totalled 513,000 EUR in 2005. Grants for participation projects in youth work amounted to 1,807,000 EUR in 2006. The Act on Flemish youth policy provides, on the one hand, grants for projects, on the other hand grants for associations that aim to encourage the participation of, communication about and information to youth.

The non-profit organisation; Ondersteuning Lokale JeugdParticipatie (OLJP = Support for Local Youth Participation) has been provided with a grant of 180,000 EUR for the period 2009-2011. The OLJP non-profit organisation was founded in 2007 and aims to strengthen the participation of youth councils, children and youngsters in municipal and provincial government. The Kinderrechtenhuis (Centre for Children's Rights) in Alken has received a grant of 234,000 EUR for the period 2008-2010. (<http://users.pandora.be/kinderrechtenhuis>)

The Parliament Act of 18-01-2008 also provides for project subsidisation. For the period 2008-2012, a few trial themes have been set. Within the context of the project 'Brede school' (Broad school), there are grants intended for increasing the active involvement of youth work, sports and cultural associations in a broad network for the benefit of the maximum personal development of children and youngsters.

### **4.2 Which national financial resources are aimed at certain specific groups of young people?**

A grant of 40,000 EUR has been provided for the project 'Minderhedenforum.net' for the period 01.10.2008-01.10.2009. This project is a continuation of the approved project from 2007; 'Netwerk – 30'. Netwerk –30 gives foreign youngsters a voice in youth policy and ensures that there is a contact point for the 'interculturalisation' process of the Flemish Youth Council. The project

minderhedenforum.net aims to consolidate the flow through of youngsters, the minority forum and the Flemish Youth Council. (<http://www.minderhedenforum.be>)

The participation act of 18-01-2008 which aims to encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups, provides the following grants (among others): 300,000 EUR for associations with expertise concerning disadvantaged groups, 1,800,000 EUR project grants for leading disadvantaged groups towards youth work, sports or culture; 900,000 EUR contribution to the buy out sum for a cultural range via recognised social/cultural, youth and sports' associations; 700,000 EUR for large scale culture, youth and sports' events that focus on disadvantaged groups; 4,000,000 EUR for trials focussing on participation in culture, youth work or sports from the perspective of a specific theme or target group (including: broad school, stimulating disadvantaged groups at youth associations,..).

Groep Intro non-profit organisation, which received a subsidy of 1,070,234.14 EUR in 2006, is a training organisation that concentrates on socially vulnerable youngsters, with particular focus on poorly qualified people. They wish to use a training-based approach to provide resources to the youngsters in order to stimulate personal growth and increase participation in and integration into society.

The "Steunpunt Allochtone Meisjes en Vrouwen" (SAMV -Support Structure for Immigrant Girls and Women) and the "Platform Allochtoon Jeugdwerk" (PAJ - Immigrant Youth Work Platform) both received structural support from 2005 onwards.

## **5 The vote**

### **5.1 Is voting obligatory?**

Yes

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

From 18 years old

### **5.3 Please describe who is entitled to vote in national, regional and local elections.**

In order to be entitled to vote, citizens are required:

1. to have Belgian nationality;
2. to have attained the 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.

Conditions are less strict for referenda: 16 years old and living for at least 5 years in Belgium.

#### **5.4 Requirements for being entitled to stand as a candidate in national, regional or local elections (age, nationality , etc.)**

The requirements for being entitled to vote or to stand as a candidate are the same:

1. to have Belgian nationality;
2. to have attained the 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.

On a Flemish level, the criteria are the same but the age limit is set at 21 years old.

## **6 The elections**

### **6.1 Indicators of participation related to the election of the [European Parliament](#)**

#### **6.1.1 In the election of the European Parliament, the number and percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote (in total and by gender)**

In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people of voting age who are registered from the ages of 13 to 30, is 100 %.

In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people of voting age registered, by gender: female: 49.4%, male: 50.6%.

#### **6.1.2 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population voting**

**19.5 %**

### **6.2 National indicators of participation in the polls**

#### **6.2.1 In national elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote**

- In total: 100 %

- By gender:

Female: 49.4%

Male: 50.6%

- By age groups:

Age 18-21: 29.3%

Age 22-25: 31.6%

Age 26-30: 39.1%

### **6.2.2 In national elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population who has voted.**

19.5 %

## **6.3 Regional and local indicators of participation in the polls**

### **6.3.1 In regional and local elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people who have the right to vote**

100 %

### **6.3.2 In regional and local elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the total population voting**

19.5 %

## **6.4 Number of young people elected at the national, regional and local level: overall and by gender**

- 5 persons (under the age of 30) are members of the national parliament. (5 males, 0 females)
- 29 persons (under the age of 30) are members of regional parliaments or hold the position of a regional minister. (18 males, 11 females)
- 824 persons (under the age of 30) at the local level. (440 males, 384 females)

## **7 List actions, programmes, and financial or social support that promote participation in the system of representative democracy, in particular of young people under the age of 30?**

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.animo-jonglinks.be](http://www.animo-jonglinks.be),

Jong VLD [www.jongvld.be](http://www.jongvld.be),

L<sup>2</sup>-JongProgressieven (young progressives) [www.jongspirit.be](http://www.jongspirit.be): offers political training ('politics school') that is recognised as framework training within youth work.

Jong Groen! [www.jonggroen.be](http://www.jonggroen.be) GRAS ('Groene Alternatieve Studenten' English: Green Alternative Students): these are student departments at universities and colleges.

Jong CD&V [www.jong-cdenv.be](http://www.jong-cdenv.be)

Vlaams Belang Jongeren [www.vbj.org](http://www.vbj.org)

Jong N-VA [www.jongnva.be](http://www.jongnva.be) ('Ronduit' magazine)

Jong Gezond Verstand [www.jgv.be](http://www.jgv.be) (youth department of Lijst Dedecker)

## 8 Learning to participate

### **8.1 Please list existing actions and mechanisms within the formal education systems that focus on development and in depth learning about participation (citizens' education). Please also list related guidelines and teacher training programmes aimed at integrating citizen's education into the curriculum.**

In terms of acts, there are a few participation bodies on which pupils can sit. Grants are also provided for projects for encouraging the participation of pupils.

In the participation act (2004) the creation of an 'elected' pupil council and school council is defined but pupils can also get involved with school policy in another way, for example via 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 providing training. "Learning by doing" (learning to participate = participating) is at the centre of these initiatives.

Pupils also take part in the Vlaamse Onderwijsraad (Flemish Educational Council) (VLOR). This organisation provides advice to the Minister of Education and the Flemish Parliament.

The participation act includes the set up, tasking, financing, supervision, evaluation and operation definition of an expertise centre for the encouragement of participation at school. (Source: Participation act 02/04/2004, heading III) This centre of expertise aims to support all actors within the school community with the execution of the Act. The introduction of the expertise centre which, in accordance with the act, can be called upon by schools to expand the participation culture in schools,

has been postponed to a date to be decided by the government. The former 'Steunpunt Leerlingenparticipatie' (Support Point Pupil Participation) has been shut down (in 2004).

The network-crossing project 'Forum Leerlingenparticipatie' (Forum Pupil Participation) is a cooperative partnership between the four educational groups aimed at encouraging and supporting pupil participation in schools. De Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel (The Organisation of Flemish School Pupils) provides training for schools on the subject of participation: themed training, team days, multiple day project supervision, activity days,...

De Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel (The Organisation of Flemish School Pupils) organises several initiatives: every year they organise a participation day at the Flemish Parliament. Students and politicians talk to each other directly about current educational issues. In 2008 150 students took part, from 20 different schools.

Through the 'ToeTerToe' project, the Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel (VSK - Organisation of Flemish Pupils) sets up discussion panels and offers pupils the opportunity to give their opinion on current education topics. These are translated into concrete proposals and points of interest that take the pupils' views into consideration and are then sent to policy makers. VSK regularly organises a discussion group on the subject of current educational themes such as pupils' counselling, school costs, the ideal teacher, truancy, etc. VSK also supports the participation of school pupils in local discussion platforms for secondary education.

Kras is a large simulation game by which pupils gain a better insight into the North/South problem. Over the course of a year, pupils imagine themselves taking on a role in the country or interest group and they discover for themselves, the tensions that exist between those involved. In the 2008-2009 school year, the theme of 'nutrition' is central. (<http://kras.globelink.be/>)

Since 1997, citizenship education has been included in secondary school attainments targets and developmental objectives. 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 focus on 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.

StressFactor is a body involved with open air festivals at secondary schools which allows pupils to gain practical experience organising a large event. Together with partners such as Maks!, VSK, JeF vzw, Skratsj, CJP and TMF... StressFactor has grown, over a short period, into a significant project that fits in very well with the discipline-crossing final attainment levels. Having started in 2003 with 8 festivals, StressFactor had reached its 100<sup>th</sup> festival by 2007.

From 1 September 2004 onwards, all Flemish pupils in secondary education may obtain a special 'student card'. Over-16's join CJP (Cultural Youth Card) free of charge. In 2004, ¾ of schools participated.

Klasse publishes two journals that focus on children and youngsters which stimulate and support pupil participation. Maks! is a magazine for all pupils at second, third and fourth year of secondary school (14-19 years old), Yeti is a magazine concentrating on pupils from third grade of primary school (11-12 years old).

'De Kracht van je stem' (The power of your voice) combines educational material for pupils and teachers from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of primary education up to and including 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of secondary school education and basic education. The project that forms the core of the educational workings of the Flemish Parliament focuses on four themes: human rights and children's rights, democracy and constitutional state, elections and parties, governments and institutions. The lesson material helps to educate pupils, during school hours, about democracy and public responsibility and also offers support to teachers. (<http://www.dekrachtvanjestem.be>) It fits in well with the final attainment levels and development goals of education. The range is extremely diverse: brochures, a cd-rom, loose-leaf themed files and games' material. There are handbooks for teachers and there is also a general information file with background information. An annual learning day is organised, an is iternship for teachers from teacher training and educational day programmes in the Flemish Parliament.

Het Knooppunt Democratie (The Democratic Interchange) organises free day activities, pedagogic tools and training on the subject of democracy and social responsibility for children and youngsters from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of primary school to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of secondary school (all types of education). The organisation also offers ready-made lesson material for teachers working on this theme. 'De Wereld op je Bord' (The World on your plate) is a project from the Koning Boudewijnstichting (King Baudouin Association) and comprises a free training programme and supportive material for teachers in secondary education. 'Democracy' is a project for pupils (<http://www.knooppuntdemocratie.be/>)

Also, on the VORMEN (forms) web site, the Flemish organisation for Human Rights Education, teachers can find lesson plans and educational material on the subject of children's rights. (<http://www.vormen.org/educatie/index.htm>)

'Oprechte Deelneming' (Fair participation) is a pupil participation work file for primary schools. ([http://wvg.vlaanderen.be/rechtspositie/04-good\\_practices/inspraak/bijlagen/werkmap\\_oprechte\\_deelneming.pdf](http://wvg.vlaanderen.be/rechtspositie/04-good_practices/inspraak/bijlagen/werkmap_oprechte_deelneming.pdf))

## **8.2 In which fields, other than formal education, are there actions and/or support - of national or regional scope- aimed at promoting learning to participate amongst young**

**people? What is the nature of these actions/this support? Give examples of good practise.**

Involvement and the 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 focussing on the participation or the development of participatory practices for children and young people are recognised and funded. As a key condition of recognition, projects and associations must concentrate on the involvement and participation of young people in the decision-making process.

Mainly, projects and associations within youth work are involved but the community building sector is also active in this field. Moreover, initiatives aimed at youth participation have also been launched in other fields (education, welfare work, labour market,...) The education and sports sector work together. However, only 32.7% of sports' clubs co-operate with schools. Nevertheless, cooperation in these fields could provide an excellent opportunity to promote further participation (VRIND 2003). Awareness-raising campaigns are set up at local level (e.g. by local sports councils). 'Schoolsport geeft kleur' (School sports give colour) is the new school sports' promotion activity, where SVS and BLOSO aim to get children partaking in more sports and doing more exercises at school.

We refer to partnerships with Canon and Unizo and programmes such as Kleur Bekennen (Follow Suit) and Mos. 'Kleur Bekennen' is an educational programme focussing on the promotion and support of global education and active global citizenship in schools. 'Mos' is an initiative from the Environment, Nature and Energy Department, is short for "environmental performance at school" and focuses on all schools from nursery to higher education. Vlajo (vzw Vlaamse Jonge Ondernemingen, in English: Flemish Young Enterprises) promotes 'mini-enterprises' and Canon (Cultural Unit of the Education Department of the Ministry of the Flemish Community) reinforces interaction between education and culture. Canon supports creative cultural projects in schools.

In 2006 and 2007, Steunpunt Jeugd (Youth Support Centre) is coordinating the Flemish part of the European Youth Campaign for diversity, human rights and participation 'Allemaal Anders Allemaal Gelijk' (All Different All The Same) with Mie and Mo Bizar as mascots. In collaboration with numerous organisations, an experiment with the Levende Bibliotheek (Living Library) will be taking place for the first time in Flanders under the name 'Bizarre Bib'. The books in this library are people, real flesh and blood, and the 'books' and 'readers' have personal conversations. The 'books' in the Living Library are representatives of groups that are often the victim of discrimination, social exclusion or stereotyping and pre-judgement. This method, from the Living Library is part of the youth programme for human rights from the European Council.



The Youth Support Centre has developed a publication with guidelines and tips for organising a Living Library and, in this way, wants to encourage youth associations and other organisations, schools, organisers,... to create a Living Library themselves.

'Kompas' (Compass) comprises a handbook for human rights education with youngsters, written in the context of the Youth Programme for Human Rights Education from the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the European Council. This programme was started with the aim of placing human rights at the centre of youth work and, in this way, contributing to the promotion of human rights education in general. (<http://www.vormen.org/Kompas/index.html> )

The 'What do you think' project is a method of giving children and youngsters under the age of 18 a voice in children's rights' reporting. (<http://www.whatdoyouthink.be/>)

Globelink non-profit organisation coordinates a number of projects including 'Globateliers' and 'Remix'. The aim of Globateliers is to make global issues accessible to everyone. Youngsters work on a short film, an animation film or radio programme in a creative workshop. (<http://www.globatelier.be/joomla/>)

'Remix' is a youth forum about living together in the city in which youngsters provide advice within an interactive process. (<http://www.globelink.be/remix/index.htm>)

CJP is a non-profit organisation and aims to bring young people and culture closer together and thus promote the participation of young people in culture. CJP was commissioned by the Youth and Sports Division of the Ministry of the Flemish Community to disseminate information, launch projects and lower financial thresholds by issuing a discount voucher ([www.cjp.be](http://www.cjp.be)).

In Petto (National Youth Service, recognised by The Youth Work Department of the Ministry of Flemish Community) encourages the participation of youngsters on the basis of specific methods including 'peer questioning', 'improvement groups' and the 'youth advisers' project. The method of peer questioning is a participative research method where the target group (under supervision) is involved in all stages of the investigation and even carries out the questioning. The improvement group is a group of youngsters and adults that creatively seek out the best solution to a problem. In the 'young advisers' projects youngsters between 15 and 19 are offered short training enabling them to inform, support and help their friends with problems and, if necessary, refer them to professional support services.

### **8.3 Do some of the existing or planned actions focus on certain specific groups of young people?**

Yes. The primary goal of (Youth) Policy is to promote an integrated approach and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, some specific target groups get particular attention. This includes immigrants, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, disabled young people, 'drop-outs', young people in care and low-skilled young people. Via the Act of 18-01-2008 'containing broad and stimulating measures for encouraging

participation in culture, youth work and sport', people in poverty, people from ethnically/cultural diverse backgrounds, those in detention, disabled people and families with young children are more actively invited to take part in the rich range of culture, sports and youth work.

The project 'Minderhedenforum.net' (Minority forum.net) is the continuation of the approved 2007 project 'Netwerk -30'. Netwerk -30 gives foreign youngsters a voice in youth policy and ensures that there is a contact point for the 'interculturalisation' process of the Flemish Youth Council. The project minderhedenforum.net aims to consolidate the flow through of youngsters, the minority forum and the Flemish Youth Council. (<http://www.minderhedenforum.be>)

The non-profit organisation Habbekrats is a training service for youngsters on the edge of society. (<http://www.habbekrats.be>)

SAMV (Steunpunt Allochtone Meisjes en Vrouwen, English: Supporting Point for Foreign Women and Girls) supports the emancipation and participation process of foreign girls. (<http://www.samv.be/>)

Villa Basta is a cultural workplace for youngsters, a creative workplace where children, teenagers and young people can experiment with theatre, music, dance, imagery and new media. Villa Basta organises in-house workshops, courses, projects, productions and festivals for and by young people (mine building Houthalen) and on location (Villa Basta Mobile). (<http://www.villabasta.be>) Villa Basta works with the Centre for Social Equality and Youth Well-being (CMGJ) which provides input for projects that deliver particular efforts for socially vulnerable children and youngsters.

## **9 Describe other, informal ways young people choose to participate in your country.**

In Flemish research\* we can see references to informal participation. Informal participation at school points to the climate of pupil involvement that is prevalent in a school: Can pupils express their opinions freely, can they approach teachers and principals informally with proposals, complaints or problems and so on. The findings show that that the principals and, to a lesser extent, the teachers are more positive about the extent to which efforts are made to involve pupils in school life and policy than the pupils. This research also discusses semi-formal participation in Flemish schools. The following confidential channels are involved: the pupil counsellors, the confidential teachers and pupils (confidential pupils are pupils who can be approached as trusted people), the father/motherhood (older pupils who supervise young or new pupils) and the occasional classroom discussions (when problems occur). These channels try to build up relationships based on trust within the school so that problems can be recognised and solved. Commitment channels are also involved in semi-formal participation including school trips and class days, the school and class projects, school and class days out, class-hour (fixed, weekly hour when the class can talk about all sorts of issues). These are

channels which try to strengthen the link between pupils (and teachers) and try to make life in the classroom and in school more pleasant. Finally, there are also extra-curricular activities. This includes activities that are organised outside lesson hours (during the lunch break, after classes, at the weekend, ...). The channels that are, according to the research\*, most well distributed within Flemish schools are pupil counselling, occasional class discussions and school and class outings. The least prevalent channels are the class-hour, mother/fatherhood and confidential pupils. Taking part in extra curricular activities is also an important form of participation in school. The most frequently organised extra curricular activities are sport and cultural activities. Then there are recreational activities (e.g. parties) and social activities (e.g. supporting activities for charity or creating activities yourself [e.g. homework classes for migrant youngsters]), which are offered in (more than) three quarters of schools. The least prevalent activities are economic (e.g. mini-enterprises) and technical activities (e.g. computer lessons outside lesson times). These are often only organised for the economic and business based classes.

\*De Groof, S. & Elchardus, M. (2003). *Leerlingenparticipatie nader bekeken. Een kwalitatief en kwantitatief onderzoek naar de betekenis en het belang van participatie op school [Pupil participation in depth. A qualitative and quantitative investigation into the meaning and importance of participation in school.]* Brochure based on the results of an educational research project on behalf of the Flemish minister of education and training (OBPWO 00.01). Brussel: Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Afdeling Beleidscoördinatie Onderwijs (Department of Educational Policy Coordination.)

In Flemish youth work there are numerous examples of informal participation involving youngsters.