

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



EUROPEAN UNION

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

INFORMATION TEMPLATE

ON

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM)



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The socio-economic situation of young people

1.1 Please inform which groups of the young people are perceived as being socially excluded. What are the main factors for being socially excluded as a young person in your country?

If one talks about socially excluded young people in Flanders, this is often with a reference to the home situation. As in other European countries, the societal position of the parents influences to great extent the opportunities of their children in society. Research in Flanders identifies the SES of the parents (profession, work status, financial resources, educational level as interlinked factors) and the ethnic-cultural background of young people (often in combination with religion) as the main predictors of social exclusion in various domains of social life, including leisure, health, law, labour and education. Additionally, living in a single-parent family is found to augment the risk. Another important factor for being excluded is young people's own educational attainment. Low educational attainment put serious constraints on life opportunities of school leavers. A majority of the low skilled school leavers indeed come from low SES families who cannot provide a safety net, therefore adding to the precarious situation of such school leavers.¹ Since a couple of years, it has become very clear that poverty amongst (these) young people in Flanders is impermissibly high. Youth poverty and its various consequences is consequently a topic in the current Flemish youth policy plan and in the Flemish Action Plan on Children's right. Furthermore homeless minors and minors in psychiatric care are also a focus of the Flemish Action Plan on Children's rights.² Two other youth groups that are acknowledged as socially vulnerable groups and as such receive special attention in Flemish youth policy, practice and/or research are LGB-youth and young people with disabilities. The Flemish ministry on equal chances focusses with her supplementary policy on these minority groups and on equal rights for men and women (including addressing prejudices towards men taking care of children). Adults as well as young people are subject of this policy on equal chances.³ Another socially excluded youth group that has become increasingly visible in Flanders and might be viewed as being the most 'excluded' because they/their parents do not even have citizen rights, are the group of young asylum seekers (especially unaccompanied

¹ PISA. 2009. www.pisa.ugent.be/nl/resultaten – Baert, S. (2013). Pure ethnic gaps in educational attainment and school to work transitions: when do they arise? *Economics of Education Review*, doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2013.07.006 (in press) – Diverse research reports on young people from the youth research platform/JOP (on <http://www.jeugdonderzoekplatform.be/publicaties/index.htm>) (mainly in Dutch) and JOP research inventory containing among others references to English articles from Flemish youth researchers (on <http://www.jeugdonderzoekplatform.be/databank/index.htm>)

² Flemish youth policy plan – synthesis – priorities for the governing period 2010-2014. Available on http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/vlaamsjeugdplan_jeugdbeleidsplan2010.aspx and Flemish Action Plan on Children's Rights available on http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/kinderrechten/VAK_2011-2014-corr.pdf (only in Dutch)

³ Flemish policy on equal opportunities on [gelijkekansen.be](http://www.gelijkekansen.be) (in Dutch)

minors).⁴ Last, the Flemish youth policy plan makes mention of the young people who are/have been interned in youth care facilities. Among others, the realisation of their right to receive formal education and their ability to rent an apartment or house when leaving youth care is often an issue.⁵

1.2 Please provide the percentage representing the share of young people (18-24) who are at risk of poverty (and/or severely materially deprived and/or living in a household with very low work intensity).

Please compare it to the general population risk of poverty rate. What is the trend in your country – is the rate growing etc.?

In Belgium in 2011 21% of the entire population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (=and/or severely materially deprived and/or living in a household with low work intensity), the French-speaking region showing the highest percentage with 25,4 while the percentage for Dutch-speaking region was a lower 15%.⁶ Eurostat only provides further data on age groups for Belgium as a whole. We learn that in 2011, 20,4% of the Belgian people between 18 and 24 is at risk of poverty or social exclusion.⁷

The Directorate General Statistics and Economic Information (DGSEI), in charge of the national (official) statistics in Belgium⁸, provides risk of poverty rates for young people from 16 to 24 according to region (not taking into account severely material deprivation and/or living in a household with low work intensity). The tables provided on their (Dutch and French) website give separate percentages for the Flemish Region which enables us to put these percentages more in perspective. 6,4% of the age group 16 to 24 was at risk of poverty as opposed to 9,8% in the entire population of the Flemish Region. An interesting observation is that this pattern is different from that in the Walloon Region, in which the percentage at risk within this youth group is higher than the overall percentage in this Region and three times the Flemish percentage. We see a declining trend in Flanders as regard to (young) people living under the poverty threshold. As for the young people between 16 and 24 years of age, the percentage has gradually decreased from 9% in 2008 to 6,4% in 2011. Nonetheless, a different trend is described in the Flemish poverty monitor as

⁴ Ruiz-Casares, M., Rousseau, C., Derluyn, I., Watters, C. & Crépeau, F. (2010). Right and access to healthcare for undocumented children: addressing the gap between international conventions and disparate implementations in North America and Europe. *Social Science and Medicine*, 70, 329-336.

⁵ Flemish youth policy plan – synthesis – priorities for the governing period 2010-2014. Available on http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/vlaamsjeugdplan_jeugdbeleidsplan2010.aspx

⁶ Eurostat: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by NUTS 2 regions

⁷ Eurostat: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex

⁸ statbel.fgov.be

regard to child/newborn poverty. The number of children born in poor families has been increasing since 2000. This predicts a dark future for young people in Flanders.⁹

1.3 Has an impact of the current financial crisis on young people been observed in your country?

The impact of the financial crisis is most evident in the unemployment rates provided by VDAB (Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training). Whereas the number of unemployed people (seeking for a job) below age 25 was decreasing since 2004 (at this point the numbers were very high, even in comparison with the actual situation), it started increasing again in 2008 (in January 2008 the unemployment rate in this age category – number of the unemployed to number in the total labour force – was 10,49, in January 2009 it had already climbed to 13,39). In 2010 the upward trend smoothed down for a moment, but since 2012 and unemployment among young people is rising again. To illustrate: in January 2012 the unemployment rate of people under the age of 25 was 14,85%, in the same month in 2013 it was 16,75%. Also, the current (September 2013) unemployment rate of young people under the age of 25 is substantially higher than last year in January (the number of young people registered for employment increased with 6,8%, the unemployment rate in this age category increased from 19,53% to 21,49%).¹⁰

So, from January 2008 to January 2013 the unemployment rate for people under the age of 25 increased from 10,49% to 16,75%, the number of young job-seekers increased from 32.279 to 46.729 (+ 44%). Considering the yearly VDAB-figures according to age until 2012, it becomes clear that the crisis-related unemployment has increased most among the young.

1. Policy measures for young people at risk of social exclusion

Note: To formulate answers to these questions, an appeal was made to the contact persons for Children's Rights and Youth Policy within the different departments and agencies of the relevant policy areas. The Youth Division of the Flemish Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Young People and Adults has a complete list with the names and contact information of the contact persons (responsible: Joost Van Haelst – joost.vanhaelst@cjsm.vlaanderen.be). Their answers were brought together and complemented by Tineke Van de Walle and Rebecca Van Craeymeersch.

⁹ Research Centre of the Flemish Government/SVR (2013). Vlaamse Armoedemonitor 2013 (Flemish poverty monitor 2013).

¹⁰ arvastat.vdab.be – statistics from the VDAB (Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training).

1.1 Social subsistence/ protection and health cover for young people living in poverty

First, young people living in poverty in Flanders are entitled to several social protection provisions:

- The **Federal Law of 26 May 2002 on the right to Social Integration** states that every person has a right to social integration. This right can be given in the form of employment and/or social security allowance, possibly accompanied by an individualised project for social integration.¹¹ Only people who do not have sufficient resources to draw financial rights from, can ask for a social security allowance. The law differentiates between people between age 18 and 25 and people above age 25. These two groups are supported in different ways. In addition, this law specifically recognises students as target group among the people below age 25.¹²
- People also have the **right to social services** as stated in the **Federal Law of 8 July 1976 on the Public Centres of Social Welfare (OCMW wet)**.¹³ Social services can be provided in the form of financial help (e.g. contribution in moving expenses) or in material form (e.g. food packages). It also includes social counselling and advice. The Public Centres of Social Welfare provide the most suitable care.¹⁴
- Furthermore, (young) people who receive a social security allowance have the right to a higher compensation in their health care costs (e.g. for primary care they only have to pay 10% of the co-payment). Additionally, when the costs of medical care are still too high, some people can appeal to the system of the maximum invoice. This means that the costs, above a certain limit, are paid back in full.¹⁵

Second, the **Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan** contains several objectives aimed at socially vulnerable children and young people living in poverty.¹⁶ The results of the interim report 2012-2013 are also included here.¹⁷

The Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan stated that there should be an integral preventive approach of indebtedness (Objective 77). Being indebted can push people into poverty or can

¹¹ Federal Law of 26 May 2002 on the right to Social Integration (Article 2). Available on: <http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/wet/wet.htm> (Dutch, French, German)

¹² The right of students to social security allowance (in Dutch). Available on: http://jeugdrecht.be/?action=artikel_detail&artikel=270

¹³ The Federal Law of 8 July 1976 on the Public Centres for Social Welfare. Available on: <http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/wet/wet.htm> (Dutch, French, German)

¹⁴ Social services (in Dutch). Available on:

https://www.socialsecurity.be/CMS/nl/citizen/displayThema/private_life/PRITH_5/PRITH_5_1.xml

¹⁵ Question 9 in the brochure 'Youth and Social Security' (in Dutch) Available on:

http://socialsecurity.fgov.be/docs/nl/news/brochure_masecu_nl.pdf

¹⁶ Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Only in Dutch)

(<http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Paginas/inhoud.aspx?vap>)

¹⁷ Interim report 2012-2013 of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Only in Dutch)

http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/VoortgangsrapportVAPA_2012-2013.pdf

aggravate their situation even further. The defensibility of young people and adults towards lenders was increased via In Balans and Project Budget Survivalkids.¹⁸ In Balans is a prevention project of the 'Flemish Institute for Debt Mediation' (Vlaams Centrum Schuldenlast). In 2010, 'financial education' was included in the cross-curricular goals. In Balans offers schools the tools to give financial education to students older than twelve.¹⁹ Budget Survivalkids was a preventional campaign which wanted to raise awareness of the dangers of credits and loans.²⁰

Several other objectives and measures are interesting for this target group, but they will be discussed further on.

1.2 Measures to meeting the medical Care needs of Young people at risk of social exclusion

Information received from Sofie De Smet, contact person Department Welfare, Public Health & Family

In Flanders, several measures have been taken to meet the medical care needs of young people at risk of social exclusion.

First, the Flemish Agency for Health and Care cooperates with the **Network of Associations Where The Poor Speak** (Netwerk van verenigingen waar armen het woord nemen). The network consists of 58 associations in Flanders and Brussels and has a coordinating function for the interchange between the associations.²¹ Normally, their actions are aimed at all people in poverty, but, if necessary, they can be focused on young people as well. Also, in the context of poverty, the **role of community health centres** in disadvantaged neighbourhoods will be strengthened and expanded, in order to close the health gap between high and low incomes. One of the ways in which the Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family improves the efficiency of the community health centres, is by recognising them as centres with special expertise. The Department also acknowledges them as organisations with fieldwork in the neighbourhood-oriented health promotion for socially vulnerable groups in the context of the Flemish Parliament Act 21 November 2003 on Preventative Health Policy. Finally, the community health centres will be locally recognised on the basis of existing parliament acts concerning primary care.²²

¹⁸ Interim report 2012-2013 of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Only in Dutch) – Objective 77 p. 405-06
http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/VoortgangsrapportVAPA_2012-2013.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.in-ba-lans.be>

²⁰ http://www.vlaamscentrumschuldenoverlast.be/preventie/budget_survival_kids

²¹ <http://www.netwerktegenarmoede.be/over-ons>

²² Interim report 2012-2013 of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan - p. 65-66 (only in Dutch)
http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/VoortgangsrapportVAPA_2012-2013.pdf

Next, in the context of mental health care, Minister of Welfare, Public Health & Family Jo Vandeurzen cooperates with the Federal Government and the other authorised communities on writing a guide for the **reform of the mental health care for children and young people**. Article 11 of the Federal Law of 10 July 2008 on Hospitals and other Health Care Institutions ('Ziekenhuiswet') provides more information on this matter.²³ This follows the reform of the mental health care for adults, which is already implemented.²⁴ Additionally, the Flemish Agency for Care and Health and the Flemish Agency for Disabled Persons cooperates with the sector on designing **a project for children and young people with a mental disability, autism and severe behavioural disorders**. This project will be presented at the RIZIV at the end of 2013.

Furthermore, for some years now, there have been two projects in which the **psychiatric facilities** PZ Gent-Sleidinge and OPZ Geel provide out-reaching support for the community institutions in their regions and offer time-out there. By means of this shared care, it is possible to customize the care for young people who confront the health care system with great challenges (aggression, multiple problems). Also, in the fall of 2013, the Agency for Youth Welfare (Agentschap Jongerenwelzijn) launched a call for 5 projects, scattered all over Flanders. By means of a once-only subsidy of € 100.000 per project, the cooperation between special youth care and child psychiatry in complex care records, should improve.

Concerning the **prevention policy in Flanders**, six health objectives and matching action plans were developed. The objectives and the action plan are broad and provide a framework for the stakeholders and organisations.²⁵ The six health objectives are listed here:

- Health Objective Nutrition and Movement and Flemish Action Plan Nutrition and Movement 2009-2015
- Health Objective Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs and Flemish Action Plan Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs 2009-2015
- Health Objective Breast Cancer Detection. Since 14/12, this is followed by an objective which includes the detection of cervical and colon cancer.
- Health Objective Suicide (and Depression) and Flemish Action Plan Suicide Prevention
- Health Objective Private Accidents
- Health Objective Vaccinations and Flemish Action Plan for Vaccinations

However, none of these objectives are specifically for/about young people or any other particular target group. Every organisation which helps to realise these objectives, takes another target group

²³ Federal Law of 10 July 2008 on Hospitals and Other Health Care Institutions. Available on: http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&cn=2008071090&table_name=wet (Dutch, French, German)

²⁴ Projects Article 107, www.psy107.be

²⁵ List of health objectives and links to the action plans (in Dutch). Available on: <http://www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be/beleid/gezondheidsdoelstellingen/>

into account, which usually also includes young people.²⁶ E.g. Sensoa works on the prevention policy for specific target groups with a higher incidence of HIV (so called 'key population').

Finally, two other measures have been taken in the context of prevention. First, concerning alcohol and drug issues there is '**Trusty**', a label developed by the Ambrassade to help children in their search for accurate and reliable information. If children and young people see the Trusty-label on folders and websites, they know that the creators are providing them with quality information.²⁷ Second, the Flemish Government provides **free vaccines** (and doctors) for basic vaccination to Child and Family (Kind en Gezin) and the Centres for Student Guidance (CLB).

1.3 Measures to re-engage the young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Information received from Ruth Lamotte, contact point Department of Education and Training

First, the **interim report 2012-2013 of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan** includes an objective which states that early school leaving should be reduced.²⁸ One of the most important problems children and young people encounter in schools is bullying. Consultation with and between all 66 concerned parties of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan should be stimulated to help solve this problem. Also, measures should be taken in the process of the study choice, since it is largely influenced by the SES of students. The Government of Flanders supports Centres for Student Guidance (CLB) that assist students in making choices for their educational and professional paths. In addition to this, the possibilities to obtain a degree of secondary education via second chance education or the exam commission of the Flemish community are improved.

Another important objective is that special attention should be paid to young jobseekers.²⁹ Specific campaigns for young people who are hard to reach are developed and strengthened further. In areas where there is a large concentration of unemployment (of young people) the policy should be customized. This means that there should be direct consultation between the cities and the local social partners.

²⁶List of organisations which realise these objective. Available on:
<http://www.zorg-en-gezondheid.be/Zorgaanbod/Preventieve-gezondheidszorg/>

²⁷ Information on Trusty (in Dutch). Available on: <http://juistejeugdinfo.be/>

²⁸ Interim report 2012-2013 of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Plan - Objective 124 p. 326 (Only in Dutch). Available on:
http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/VoortgangsrapportVAPA_2012-2013.pdf

²⁹ Interim report 2012-2013 of the Flemish Poverty Reduction Plan - Objective 136 p. 469-70 (Only in Dutch). Available on:
http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/armoede/vlaamsactieplan/Documents/VoortgangsrapportVAPA_2012-2013.pdf

Second, the **Flemish Action Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving** involves some remediating actions which are important to bring back the NEETs to education or training.³⁰ These actions can either be aimed at guiding towards job opportunities or at informing them about their opportunities in second chance education (projects like JOJO-VEVE or Word Wijs).

Third, the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) has a **Youth Work Plan** since 2008. It is an initiative to attempt to lower the youth unemployment in Flanders. Every job seeker younger than 25 receives suitable job offers via email or text messages. If the young person does not have a job after one month, they are invited for a meeting with a counsellor. This guidance continues until the young person has a job or, if not, they can obtain even more intensive guidance. If the young job seekers do not participate in this plan, they will lose their unemployment benefits.³¹ This is also the action plan of the VDAB in the context of the European Youth Guarantee (see Introduction).

Finally, the Department of Education and Training organises some **actions for part-time vocational secondary education** (in the context of Learning and Working) which can also be applicable in a broad sense. Preparatory courses are situated outside the hours of compulsory schooling and are aimed at young people who are not willing and not able to work. The offer is based on the areas of interest of the young person and should target the individual needs of the young person.³² There are also a 'Bridge Projects' (brugprojecten), aimed at young people who are willing but unable to work. Besides a technical education, young people can also gain practical experiences.³³ These projects are both strategies to reintegrate those NEETs in society. Although strictly speaking, young people who are enrolled in such projects, do not fall under the category of NEET.

1.4 Measures to ensure access to decent housing for young people at risk of social exclusion

Information received from Guido De Munter, contact point Youth and Children's Rights Policy within the Agency for Housing in Flanders (Agentschap Wonen Vlaanderen).

In Flanders, several measures have been taken since 2009 for the benefit of young people in the context of the housing problem.

³⁰Flemish Action Plan to Reduce Early School Leaving (Only in Dutch). Available on: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/secundair/Actieplan_Vroegtijdig_Schoolverlaten_def.pdf

³¹On the way to a job (in Dutch). Available on: <http://www.vdab.be/magezine/juli08/jeugdwerkplan.shtml>

³² Preparatory courses (in Dutch). Available on: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dbo/projecten/projecten_alternerend%20leren_voortrajecten.htm

³³ Bridge Projects (in Dutch). Available on: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/dbo/projecten/projecten_alternerend%20leren_brug.htm

First, **Framework Decision of 12 October 2007 on Social Rent** lays down that young people can get priority in the process of the allocation of a social rented home.³⁴ The social housing companies give priority to applicant renters who are emancipated minors or people who (are going to) start supervised independent living. This measure is an application of the Parliament Act of 7 March 2008 concerning special youth assistance.³⁵ This priority rule was introduced by decision of the Flemish Government on 30 September 2011.

Housing supervision offers young people the possibility to learn to live independently. Naturally, this is only possible if there are any affordable houses available at that particular time. The target group as such is not particularly large (according to figures of the sector 600 to 700 places), but it is highly concentrated in certain areas. This means that certain social renters are able to receive a larger influx of these young people, possibly to the detriment of other single applicant-renters.

In order to have a better control over this influx coming from the special youth assistance, a maximum percentage of allocations per year is enforced in the new regulations (like it is already the case for homeless people).³⁶ In addition to this, the priority for young people from special youth assistance is withdrawn from the absolute priority rules of article 19, and is introduced in article 24 (accelerated allocation) of the Framework Decision on Social Rent.

The group of young people for whom an accelerated allocation may be requested, will also expand. For example, from now on, non-supervised minors who are recognised as refugees, will also be considered for accelerated allocation. Additionally, article 24, §2, 3° of the Framework Decision on Social Rent stipulates that a Centre for General Welfare Work (CAW) can ask for an accelerated location for young people who live independently or are about to start supervised independent living. The young person cannot be older than 21 and must not fall under the application of the Flemish Parliament Act of 7 March 2008 on Special Youth Assistance.³⁷ The CAW has to guarantee support during the entire period necessary. The support agreement is minimally targeted at teaching and/or supporting the housing skills, which enable the person to live independently within a clearly defined term. The possibility to give priority to the target groups of socially vulnerable people via an local allocated regulation, remains.

³⁴ Framework Decision on Social Rent of 12 October 2007) : Decision of the Flemish Government on regulation of the social renting system to execute title VII of the Flemish Housing Code. Available on:

<http://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1016403¶m=inhoud> (Only in Dutch)

³⁵ Article 9, 8° of Framework Decision on Social Rent.

³⁶ Approved by Flemish Government on 4 October 2013

³⁷ Flemish Parliament Act of 7 March 2008 on Special Youth Assistance. Available on:

http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=nl&la=N&table_name=wet&cn=2008030738 (Dutch, French)

Second, **SG 20 of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2009-2014** states that more children and young people should grow up in good housing and have a sustainable living environment.³⁸ Therefore, 11 projects were selected in 2011 in the context of a call for experiments 'Housing-Welfare'. In these experimental projects cooperation between social housing and the welfare sector is key. Some of these experimental projects are related to young people. One of these projects offers housing training to special target groups – such as young adults from supervised independent living in special youth care – as a preparatory phase to living within a social housing company. Another experimental project tries to increase the influx of vulnerable young adults to social housing, by letting these young people practise with responsibility, by letting them grow towards more self-reliance and self-confidence and by supporting them in the building of a social network and the realisation of attainable future prospects.³⁹

Third, the Flemish Government took some measures, which are specifically aimed at the problems that families with children/minors encounter.

- **The Flemish Parliament Act of 27 March 2009 on the Ground and Property Policy of 2009** provided an expansion of the existing social housing offer with 65.000 units in the period 2009-2020 (namely 43.000 extra social rented properties, 21.000 extra social owner-occupied houses and 1000 social parcels).⁴⁰ This way, the Flemish Government wanted to deal with the problem of the availability of affordable housing. In 2011 this Parliament Act was altered in order to make the achievement of the objectives more realistic. Municipalities are also encouraged to take the specific needs into account when they compose their programme (for example, if there is a manifest lack in family homes).⁴¹
- Another problem families with young people encounter, is the (in)equality of children. Because of a **change in the Framework Decision on Social Rent** in 2011, a child who is not domiciled with a social renter, but frequently stays there, is considered equal to a child who is domiciled there.⁴² The child will be considered dependent with both of the parents for the assessment of the suitable income boundary. This is a concession to the question to treat the families with a child in a co-parenting arrangement the same way as the families where the child is domiciled.⁴³

³⁸ Flemish youth policy plan – synthesis – priorities for the governing period 2010-2014. Available on http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/vlaamsjeugdplan_jeugdbeleidsplan2010.aspx and Flemish Action Plan on Children's Rights available on http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/kinderrechten/VAK_2011-2014-corr.pdf (only in Dutch)

³⁹ Interim report 2011-2012 Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2009-2014, SG 20, OS 20.1. Available on:

http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf (Only in Dutch)

⁴⁰ Flemish Parliament Act of 27 March 2009 on the Ground and Property Policy (in Dutch). Available on: <http://codex.vlaanderen.be/Portals/Codex/documenten/1017900.html>

⁴¹ Parliamentary question 697, 9 September 2013, Marijke Dillen.

⁴² Interim report 2011-2012 Flemish Youth Policy Plan, SG 20, OS 20.2.

http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf (Only in Dutch)

⁴³ Policy letter Housing 2013-2014 (in Dutch). Available on:

http://www.vlaamsparlement.be/Proteus5/resultaat.action?pContext=DW_STUKKEN&pTypeId=21&selectId=1&groupingIds=1&groupValues=2013-2014

- To improve the quality of housing, the **Flemish Parliament Act of 15 July 1997 on the Flemish Housing Code** and the **Flemish Parliament Act of 4 February 1997 on the quality and safety standards for rooms and student rooms** were altered in 2011.^{44,45} As a result of this, the instrument of recovery claim of the housing inspector is strengthened and optimized. Now, houses should satisfy the minimal quality demand or should be reallocated or demolished.⁴⁶
- Finally, to help families with low income, the **Flemish Renting Bonus** came into force in 2012. This is a contribution for renters on the private renting market with a low income, who have been waiting for at least five years for a social rented home. This financial assistance will benefit both singles and families living with children in precarious conditions.⁴⁷

Fourth, in 2012 fieldwork for the **Housing Survey** was started up. This way, the Flemish Government is able to assess the needs of young adults. In early 2014, the Housing Support Centre will start analysing the data on the housing situation and housing needs of 10.000 Flemish households. The composition of these households will be included in the analyses. This will enable a separate visualisation of the living situation of young adults and of families with young children.⁴⁸ This can also be seen as one of the measures taken in the context of SG 20 of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2009-2014.⁴⁹

Finally, the **Flemish Poverty Reduction Action Plan 2010-2014** (and its interim reports) describes various initiatives and measures of the policy area Housing, aimed at poverty reduction. The interim report 2012-2013 specifies that the presence of children in the family is explicitly taken into account in the context of the right on (social) housing.⁵⁰ Among other things, this is the case for the programming of social housing, the rent calculation for social rent, the rent premium, the renovation premium, the improvement and the adjustment premium. By taking their presence into account, families with children have a better guarantee on decent housing. This way, there is a direct intervention in the living comfort of all families with low income, and more in particular, of families with children.⁵¹

⁴⁴ The Flemish Parliament Act of 15 July 1997 on the Flemish Housing Code (only in Dutch). Available on: <http://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1005498¶m=inhoud>

⁴⁵ The Flemish Parliament Act of 4 February 1997 on the quality and safety standards for rooms and student rooms (only in Dutch). Available on: <http://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1005321¶m=inhoud>

⁴⁶ Interim report 2011-2012 Flemish Youth Policy Plan, SG 20, OS 20.2. (Only in Dutch). Available on: http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf

⁴⁷ Parliamentary question 57, 8 November 2012, Katrien Schryvers.

⁴⁸ Parliamentary question 697, 9 September 2013, Marijke Dillen.

⁴⁹ Interim report 2011-2012 Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2009-2014, SG 20, OS 20.1. (Only in Dutch) Available on: http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf

⁵⁰ Interim report 2011-2012 Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2009-2014, SG 20, OS 20.1. (Only in Dutch). Available on http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf

⁵¹ Parliamentary question 352, 8 March 2013, Marijke Dillen.

1.5 Measures addressing the social integration of young people with disabilities

Information received by Sofie De Smet, contact person Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family

In the **Policy Plan 2009-2014** of the Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family, a development scheme for people with disabilities is explained.⁵² Two of the four target groups are relevant here, namely the group children and young people with severe behavioural and emotional problems and the group children and adults with disabilities who can live a quality life at home as long as possible thanks to the strengthening of their home situation.

- Since 2010, the Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family provides additional residential places with a special staff for children and young people with severe behavioural and emotional problems.
- Strengthening of the home situation for children and young people with disabilities will be achieved through the expansion of the capacity of several mobile/detached services.

The Policy Plan 2009-2014 also states that the number of 'supervised living residencies' has increased and that some projects on integrated housing for people with disabilities have been started up. In this context, there is a cooperation with the social housing companies.

The interim report 2012-2013 of the **Flemish Youth Policy Plan 2011-2012** also includes some measures aimed at disabled young people.⁵³

- Regulation concerning the subsidising of 20 leisure organisations by the Flemish Agency for Disabled People (VAPH) is now accentuated on more inclusive working.
- Disabled people in the province of Limburg can now use the Eurecard, which provides discounts for touristic, cultural and sportive events in several other regions.
- Since 1 January 2012 'Project Multifunctional Centres' is in action. All available means are brought into action in a flexible way. The focus shifts from assistance inside the facilities towards assistance in the family of the children and young people with disabilities. Because of this transformation, the services can invest more in context-oriented support, with the objective to reduce the duration and intensity of residential care when possible. From 2014 onwards, a significant part of the capacity will be transformed; by 2016 the transformation of these facilities should be complete.

⁵² Policy Plan 2009-2014 of the Department of Welfare, Public Health & Family. Available on: http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/beleid/Paginas/Algemeen_beleid.aspx (Only in Dutch)

⁵³ Interim report 2011-2012 Flemish Youth Policy Plan (in order of appearance) SG 7.0, OS 7.1; SG 22.0, OS 22.1, OS 7.3. Available on: http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf (Only in Dutch)

- Since the end of 2012, the direct accessible care and support is made much wider via the new regulations for children and young people with disabilities. Financial help was reserved for mobile help, outreach and day- and night care.
- ‘Information Point Accessible Travelling’ (www.toegankelijkreizen.be) offers customized support for children and young people with mental disabilities. This organisation submitted the project ‘First European Holiday Experience’ to the European Fund Calypso and because of this 2x5 children (with 2 supervisors) could go on holiday to Finland and Sweden.

The Flemish Agency for Disabled Persons (VAPH) has been investing heavily for the last fifteen years in the development of assisted and supervised living.⁵⁴

- Disabled people can obtain a **Personal Assistance Budget (PAB)** which improves their social integration. They can use it to organise and finance their assistance at home, school or work.
- The VAPH is working on a total shift towards **Individual Financing**. This will enable a more customized support.
- To make a smooth transition to adult care possible, the services for minors can further assist young adults until they are 25 years old. For some young people with severe disabilities, this is in anticipation of adult care. For other young adults, this mobile assistance should help them on their way to more inclusive care, which also includes leading them to the right services for supervised independent living.
- Finally, € 500.000 of the 2013 budget of the Flemish Agency for Disabled Persons was transferred to the Department of Welfare, Public Health & Family to strengthen the offer of supervised independent living of the Centres for General Welfare Work (CAW) for the target group of 17 to 25 year-olds with minor to moderate intellectual disabilities and/or behavioural and emotional disorders. In practice, this means that 7.72 additional full-time equivalent staff members will have to be split between the CAWs which are committed to make additional efforts.

Last, in 2008 the **Inclusive Higher Education Support Centre (SIHO)** was founded. It wants to create equal opportunities for and full participation of people with disabilities (students and staff). SIHO performs much research and organises study days, workshops ‘disability awareness’, training and coaching.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Information on the Flemish Agency for Disabled Persons. Available on: <http://www.vaph.be/vlafo/view/nl/204713-en.html> (in English)

⁵⁵ Information on SIHO. Available on: <http://www.siho.be/english/> (in English)

1.6 The contribution of youth work (and youth centres) to social inclusion of young people

Most Flemish youth work organisations work to improve their accessibility, while a lot of them also focus explicitly on socially excluded target groups. The Flemish government supports this by funding these organisations and by taking additional measures together with these organisations...

The Flemish Minister of Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels Pascal Smet listed some strategic goals (SG) for the social inclusion of young people in youth work in the **Youth Policy 2009-2014**. In his **policy letter of 2014** the Minister describes the improvements made since the beginning of his term and the measures that should be taken in the future.⁵⁶

First, SG 1 stated that as much children and young people as possible should have the space to unite themselves to committed. In order to achieve this, Pascal Smet proposed some OS. OS 1.1. is that the government should continue to **expand their knowledge** on youth work and **monitor youth work** through quantitative and qualitative research.

OG 1.2. states among other goals that active projects concerning **leadership training within underprivileged groups** should be stimulated and that good practices should be spread to guarantee a better influx of these groups towards leadership positions.

- In the Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed youth and children's rights policy a criterion was included which allows the policy plans of the different associations to be assessed and subsidised according to their interculturality and propositions to improve leadership training in underprivileged groups.⁵⁷
- In the spring of 2014 the Minister will communicate on the possibilities of young people from underprivileged groups to become leaders in youth work, but also on the chances youth work can offer those young people on the basis of good practices. These good practices will be designed by associations 'Uit De Marge' and 'JeS' among others.
- The Minister will also develop a methodology concerning commitment in the youth movements in schools with a multicultural student body. This should introduce the concept of youth movement in several target groups.

OS 1.3. stipulates that the **experimental function of youth work** should be strengthened.

- In 2013 project calls were launched for the subsidizing of innovative projects. It concerns a project call for the battle against homophobia and a project call concerning tolerance. The

⁵⁶http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/beleidsdocumenten_doc/beleidsbrief-jeugd2014.pdf

⁵⁷ The Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a renewed youth and children's rights policy. Available on: http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/regelgeving_VJKB/decreet_vernieuwdJKRB_tekstPLEN.pdf (in Dutch)

projects react to the possibilities and threats of cultural diversity with young people via educative games and by being socially committed.

OG 1.4. states that **as many children as possible from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds should be able to participate in youth work.**

- From 2014, additional means will be reserved for the execution of the second Flemish policy priority at the level of the municipalities: the increase of the participation in youth work of children and young people who grow up in socially vulnerable situations. In the context of this priority, local governments who are able to lay claim to these subsidies, must show how they support these particular associations which reach out to children and young people in socially vulnerable situations.
- The municipalities should create possibilities and meeting places for young people who grow up in vulnerable situations. Also, the municipalities should provide a holiday offer for these children and young people, at least during the summer holidays, and they should pay attention to Dutch language stimulation. Additionally, municipalities who are not eligible for these subsidies should pay attention to this specific target group in the execution of the other priority (the general supporting of youth work).⁵⁸
- Furthermore, Demos vzw works together with The Association for Local Youth Services and Youth Coordinators (VVJ) on a project outsourced by the Government of Flanders. This should improve the accessibility of youth movements for children in poverty. The results of this commission will be presented in 2014 and will be accompanied by a publication, which will help the local governments to make their youth work offer more accessible for children in poverty.
- Experimental leisure projects on socially excluded youth are considered local projects, so from 2014 on it will be up to the cities and municipalities to choose if they want to further subsidise these projects or not. They can do this within the second priority of the local youth policy. The Minister wants to increase the participation of underprivileged groups in youth work and strengthen the professionalisation of the sector with this priority. For this means, the budget for this priority will be doubled to more than € 7 million. The platform immigrant youth work (PAJ) was subsidized optionally in 2012 and 2013. This way PAJ got the chance to gain nationwide recognition as an organized youth association and to prepare themselves for the new Parliament Act.
- The Minister subsidizes via the national organized youth work several organizations which work on the awareness and training of counsellors with regard to children in poverty and other socially excluded young people. Some of these organisations, such as 'Uit de Marge',

⁵⁸ Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on the Support and Stimulation of Local Youth Policy and the determinations of the Regional Youth Policy, article 4 & 6.

BIZON, Groep Intro, LEJO, ADM, Arktos and JeS, offers education on working with socially vulnerable young people.

A second important strategic goal for the social inclusion of young people (SG 3) is that **children and young people should have the opportunity to help shape society starting from their own environment**. Therefore, investments should be made into the **better knowledge of the environment of children and young people** (OS 3.1.). Also, the youth information policy should become more effective. In 2012 the **Ambrassade** ('desk for youth affairs') was founded and it set up a commission for youth information. In their policy plan 2014-2017, the Ambrassade made the reaching of special target groups their priority with regard to their task of informing children and young people (OS 3.2). OG 3.3. stated that **a platform for young unemployed people** should be created, in order to maintain a direct participation policy.

- Magik vzw (NGO) is subsidized as a youth association for information and participation, because they provide information concerning the school to work transition. Youth organisation 'KAJ' was also subsidized for their interim-campaign.

OG 3.4. stipulated that the environment of children and young people should be broadened and enriched by stimulated contact with peers abroad via **exchange programmes**. A portion of the funds should be saved for exchange programmes for the improvement of underprivileged groups.

Last, strategic goal 7 (SG 7) states that **children and young people should be given space for well-being**. The Minister wants to integrate activities in youth work which promote **openness towards homosexuality and transgenders**.

- In 2013 he launched a project call towards youth work organisations for the battle against homophobia with young people. This project call should improve the tolerance with regard to LGBT in Flanders, in particular with Muslim youth (see further).
- The Minister also supports the LTGB-youth organisation 'Wel Jong Niet Hetero'.
- Inclusion should also be stimulated via the exchange of practical experiences of training of youth counsellors and youth workers. Therefore, Chiro gained project subsidies to develop a curriculum for children and young people in schools so that they can get to know youth movements.
- Also, in 2013 the regions received subsidies for the supporting of youth work for disabled children and young people.

Finally, the interim report 2011-2012 of the **Flemish Youth Policy Plan (2010-2014)** also includes some SG and OG aimed at the social inclusion of socially vulnerable children and young people.⁵⁹

SG 7 says that the leisure time, education and welfare offer should be better adapted to the needs of the socially vulnerable children and young people. This asks for an integral approach: efforts should be made in all areas of the lives of children and young people.

- In this context, an experimental project has started in the district of Aalst, in which a 'Leisure Pass' was introduced. This pass stimulates children and young people to participate in the broad leisure offer of the city and pays specific attention to the lowering of thresholds for socially vulnerable (young) people. The local and regional youth associations are partners of this project (OS 7.1).
- Furthermore, more socially vulnerable children and young people should (be able to) participate in the programmes for international mobility (OS 7.3). In 2011-2012, 30% of all participants of the different projects (Youth in Action, PEJA and Bel'J) of the coordinating body for international youth work (JINT) should come from the target group of socially vulnerable children and young people. JINT realised this through initiatives like GoStrange and Traject Mondial. Also, D'Broej and DMOS-COMIDE, two global projects aimed at socially vulnerable children and young people, were subsidised.

2 Research on social inclusion

The answers on the following questions are composed by Rebecca Van Craeymeersch and Tineke Van de Walle.

2.1 Is there any national report/ national survey investigating the social exclusion of young people in your country, including issues of discrimination?

In Flanders, some recurrent surveys and reports exist that help us understand the nature of social exclusion towards young people in Flanders.

- The Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) has a report on school leavers.⁶⁰ This report provides data on young people's job attainments one year after the completion of their studies. It distinguishes between different education levels and disciplines.

⁵⁹ Interim report 2011-2012 of the Flemish Youth Policy Plan. Available on: www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/jeugd_kinderrechtenbeleid_doc/tussentijdsverslag_2011-2012_VJP_VAK.pdf (in Dutch)

⁶⁰ Report on school leavers. Available on: <http://www.vdab.be/trends/schoolverlaters.shtml> (in Dutch)

- The Flemish Office of the Children’s Rights Commissioner (Kinderrechtencommissariaat) writes an annual report.⁶¹ In her report, the Flemish Office of the Children’s Rights Commissioner always indicates some marked violations of the rights of minors in Flanders.
- Both the Flemish Poverty Monitor (see 1.2), produced by the Government of Flanders, and the Yearbook Poverty and Social Exclusion, produced by the Research Centre on Inequality, Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City (OASeS), collect statistics on research data on poverty and social exclusion.^{62,63} The situation of young people is often highlighted in these reports.

Furthermore, the youth research platform (JOP) – a policy funded support centre for policy-relevant research – has been doing research since 2003.⁶⁴ In recent years the platform became more and more occupied with the impact of diversity and social inclusion upon different aspects of young people’s lives (leisure, school wellbeing, general wellbeing...).

Last, there are some other policy funded support centres which study the nature of social exclusion: the Policy Research Centre on Equality Policies (Steunpunt Gelijke kansenbeleid)⁶⁵, the Flemish Poverty Support Centre (Vlaams Armoedesteunpunt)⁶⁶ and the Policy Research Centre: Educational and School Careers (Steunpunt Studie- en Schoolloopbanen)⁶⁷.

2.2 Is there any longitudinal research focused on the cumulative nature of disadvantage (taking place across generations of the same family).

In Flanders, some longitudinal research has been done on the cumulative nature of disadvantage.

First, C. De Wilde and K. Levecque did research on mobility in poverty and asked the question ‘Who is poor and for how long?’.⁶⁸ For this, they used the data of the Panel Study of Belgian Households, collected between 1992 and 2002.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Annual report 2012-2013. Available on: ‘

http://www.kinderrechtencommissariaat.be/sites/default/files/bestanden/20_11_2013_jv_krc_linkjes.pdf (in Dutch)

⁶² Flemish Poverty Monitor 2013. Available on: <http://www4.vlaanderen.be/dar/svr/afbeeldingennieuwtjes/welzijn/bijlagen/2013-04-16-armoedemonitor2013.pdf> (in Dutch)

⁶³ Yearbook Poverty and Social Exclusion (in Dutch) available on: <https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/onderzoeksgroep/oases/> (some generation information available in English)

⁶⁴ Youth Research Platform. Available on: <http://www.jeugdonderzoekplatform.be/eng/index.htm> (English)

⁶⁵ Policy Research Centre on Equality Policies. Available on: <http://www.steunpuntgelijkekansen.be/?lang=eng> (in English)

⁶⁶ Flemish Poverty Support Centre. Available on: <http://www.vlaamsarmoedesteunpunt.be/> (in Dutch)

⁶⁷ Policy Research Centre: Educational and School Careers. Available on: <http://steunpuntssl.be/English> (in English)

⁶⁸ DeWilde C. & Levecque K., *De mobiliteit in en uit armoede: “Wie is arm en voor hoe lang?”*, in: Vranken, J., De Boyser, K., Geldof, D. & Van Menxel, G. (red.), *Armoede en sociale uitsluiting. Jaarboek 2002*. Leuven: Acco, 85-104, 2002.

⁶⁹ www.psbh.be

Second, R. Thys, W. De Raedemaeker & J. Vranken (2004) published 'Bruggen over troebel water' (free translation 'Bridges over troubled water. Is it possible to overcome generational poverty').⁷⁰ This research was done in the context of OASeS and it provides an analysis of the social factors which can help poor people overcome poverty. Research shows that education, work or better housing does not suffice as lever; social networks and expressive mobility are just as necessary.⁷¹

2.3 Apart from national reports and surveys, are you aware of other research that is valuable for understanding the situation of young people (esp. those with fewer opportunities) in the current crisis?

Besides national reports and surveys, some other research is done on the situation of young people in the current crisis. The Youth Research Platform keeps an inventory of youth research in Flanders; following research was found in this database.

Firstly, some research is done on underprivileged young people in the **educational system and their school to work transition.**

- M. Van Houtte & P.A.J. Stevens (2009) did research on the **school ethnic composition and students' integration outside and inside schools in Belgium.** This article examines the relationship between ethnic composition of schools and the inter-ethnic friendships, their social participation and the feeling of well-being in schools. Multi-level analysis of data from a 2004-2005 survey (11872 students of which 1324 immigrant students in 85 Flemish secondary schools) shows that the ethnic composition of the school is connected with the inter-ethnic friendships and social participation for native students, but not for immigrant students. At the same time, SES is decisive for the inter-ethnic friendships of immigrant students. Neither immigrant or native students show a connection between the sense of well-being in schools and ethnic composition. Although the results do not provide support for school (de)segregation to improve social integration of immigrant students, mixed schools seem to have a positive influence on the social integration of Flemish young people.⁷²

⁷⁰ Thys, R., De Raedemaeker, W. & Vranken, J. (2004). *Bruggen over troebel water. Is het mogelijk om uit de generatie-armoede te geraken?* Leuven/Voorburg: Acco.

⁷¹ Book review 'Bruggen over troebel water'. Available on: <http://www.stichtinggerritkreveld.be/samenleving-en-politiek/zoeken-in-sampol/137-2004/december-2004/1086-bruggen-over-woelig-water-is-het-mogelijk-om-uit-de-generatie-armoede-te-geraken> (in Dutch)

⁷² Van Houtte, M. & Stevens, P. A. J. (2009). School ethnic composition and students' integration outside and inside schools in Belgium. *Sociology of Education*, 82, 217-239.

- S. Baert and B. Cockx (in press) have published **‘Pure Ethnic Gaps in Educational Attainment and School to Work Transitions. When do They Arise?’**.⁷³ On the one hand, results show that pure ethnic differences in educational attainment are small, if the school delay with which this is realized is not taken into account. On the other hand, pure ethnic differences are substantial once the focus lies on school delays and first labour market outcomes. The role of the use of Dutch in the parental home is only significant in the school to work transition for un/low skilled young people.
- S. Baert, B. Cockx and D. Verhaest (In press) have published **“Overeducation at the Start of the Career: Stepping Stone or Trap?”**.⁷⁴ Results show that overeducation is more a trap in which young people get stuck, than a stepping stone towards an adequate job. Specifically, young people who accept a job for which they are overeducated, lower the speed of their transition towards adequate jobs by 51-98%. The sooner young people accept overeducation, the more negative the effect.

Secondly, research has been done on the position of (underprivileged) **young people on the labour market**.

- I. Glorieux, I. Laurijssen & Y. Van Dorsselaer have done research on **the influx of immigrant students into the labour market**. They posed two important questions: To which extent lead the educational retardation and differences in SES to a more problematic influx into the labour market? Does this also excludes them from better jobs and working conditions and to which extent is this to be attributed on educational retardation and/or underprivileged social situations of immigrant students?⁷⁵
- D. Valsamis & K. Van den Broeck (2010) tried to map out the **situation of young people on the labour market in Belgium** on the basis of available data and literature. Besides the analysis of objective results (the situation of young people on the labour market), this report also analyses subjective elements like the perception and expectations of young people.⁷⁶
- S. Baert, B. Cockx et. al. (2013) published their findings on the following question: **“Do Employers Discriminate Less if Vacancies are Difficult to Fill? Evidence from A Field Experiment”**.⁷⁷ In this experiment, the employment discrimination in the school to work transition for Turkish young people in Flanders was investigated. Results show that, Turkish

⁷³ Baert S. and B. Cockx (In press), *“Pure Ethnic Gaps in Educational Attainment and School to Work Transitions. When Do They Arise?”*, Economics of Education Review.

⁷⁴ Baert S., B. Cockx and D. Verhaest (In press), *“Overeducation at the Start of the Career: Stepping Stone or Trap?”*, Labour Economics.

⁷⁵ Glorieux, I., I. Laurijssen & Y. Van Dorsselaer, *Zwart op wit. De intrede van allochtonen op de arbeidsmarkt*. Garant, Antwerpen, 2009.

⁷⁶ Valsamis, D. & Van den Broeck, K. (2010). *De perceptie van jongeren op de arbeidsmarkt en de rol van uitzendarbeid*. Brussel: IDEA Consult.

⁷⁷ Baert S., B. Cockx, N. Gheyle and C. Vandamme (2013), *“Do Employers Discriminate Less if Vacancies are Difficult to Fill? Evidence from a Field Experiment”*, IZA Discussion Papers 7145.

applicants are equally often invited to job interviews when they apply for jobs for which vacancies are difficult to fill as their native counterparts. However, Turkish applicants have to write twice as many applications as native applicants to be invited to as many job interviews for jobs with a low labor shortage.

- L. Van Hemel & R. Darquenne (2009) wrote a report with **recommendations and success factors employment of un/low skilled young people**.⁷⁸

Further research is available in Flanders on all of the 'social exclusion' issues that were identified in the first answer in this questionnaire. Details on most of these studies are available on the database of the Youth Research Platform (in Dutch).

3 Examples of policy responses and practices

To formulate answers to these questions, an appeal was made to The Ambrassade. The answers were brought together and completed by Rebecca Van Craeymeersch and Tineke Van de Walle.

3.1 What are the relevant initiatives/projects at regional/ national level promoting the social inclusion of young people?

First, the Youth Division is the contact point youth and children's rights policy of the Flemish Government. This division is among other things responsible for the preparation and follow up of youth policy, including the funding of youth organisations and the drawing of the youth policy plan. The Youth division supports in turn youth work organisations that work to improve their accessibility, youth work associations that aim at socially excluded target groups and organisations that help local Governments to do (participatory) work with socially excluded young people.

The Flemish Youth Council is another relevant initiative. The Flemish Youth Council is financially supported by the Flemish Government. The government subsidises them for their participation projects (see 3.2.). The Flemish Youth Council has received a mandate to advise and evaluate policy instruments as regard to – among other things – social inclusion of young people. Professional support of the Flemish Youth Council is organised by the Ambrassade ('desk for youth affaires', subsidised NGO).

⁷⁸ Van Hemel, L. & Darquenne, R. (2009). Een andere kijk op hardnekkige jeugdwerkloosheid: Aanbevelingen en succesfactoren bij de inschakeling van laaggeschoolde jongeren. Brussel: KBS.

The **Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on the support and stimulation of Local Youth Policy and the determination of the regional youth policy** is also important.⁷⁹ This Act describes the conditions on which the local governments are awarded subsidies for the execution of the Flemish policy priorities on youth policy – policy measures towards socially excluded young people is part of this (see Q 1.6) – and determines the authorities of the regional governments in the youth policy. The Parliament Act also determines the conditions for the granting of the award for the ‘Youth Municipality of Flanders’.

In the previous questions, several other policies, regulations and projects which have the social inclusion of young people as a major focus, were described. Besides these, there are some future and current policies and projects presented in the policy letters of several policy areas.⁸⁰

Firstly, the **Policy Letter Poverty Reduction 2013-2014**, describes how in 2012 the Flemish Poverty Support Centre (VLAS) was founded. They investigate poverty and social exclusion in Flanders and Europe. OASeS, one of the partners of this support centre, takes charge of the Yearbook Poverty and Social Exclusion. This offers an overview of evolutions, research results, practical developments and policy on poverty and social exclusion. In 2013, the third edition of the Flemish Poverty Monitor was published. This offers an overview of the poverty situation and evolution in Flanders. Where possible, the Flemish poverty situation is going to be compared to the situation in the 27 member states of the European Union.

Second, the **Policy Letter Housing 2013-2014** mentions the existence of **Vivas**, the association of residents of social homes (Netwerk sociale huurders).⁸¹ This is an important deliberation forum, which looks after the interests of the residents of social rented homes in Flanders. One of the focus points of Vivas is the inclusion of certain groups of renters, such as young people, immigrants and people living in poverty.

Third, some important measures and projects for socially vulnerable children and young people are included in the **Policy Letter Education 2013-2014**. First of all, the Policy Letter states that gender diversity should be integrated in the policy of schools, colleges and universities (OS 1.9). On 23

⁷⁹ Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on the Support and Stimulation of Local Youth Policy and the determinations of the Regional Youth Policy. Available on: http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/regelgeving_lokaal/2012_decreet-lokaal-jeugd beleid_tekstPLEN.pdf (in Dutch)

⁸⁰ Overview of all policy letters of the Flemish Government. Available on: http://www.vlaamsparlement.be/Proteus5/resultaat.actio=n?pContext=DW_STUKKEN&pTypeId=21&selectId=1&groupingIds=1&groupValues=2013-2014

⁸¹ Vivas. Available on: <http://www.vivas.be> (in Dutch)

October 2013 the representatives of all stakeholders in the field of formal education signed a declaration of commitment for a policy concerning gender and sexual diversity in education.

Next, the policy letter describes that participation in higher education should be increased, especially in the group of underprivileged young people (OS 2.8). In this context, the Flemish Government approved the concept letter on the new approach of the 'Encouragement Fund' on 6 September 2013. Also, in the context of the implementation of the UN-treaty concerning the rights of people with disabilities, the right on reasonable adjustments for students with functional limitations was inscribed explicitly in the regulations for higher education. In addition to this, a proposition will be made in 2014 for a renewed Inclusive Higher Education Support Centre (SIHO).

Furthermore, in the draft for a new parliament act, maternity leave for teenage mothers is coupled with a system of temporary home schooling (OS 1.7). This should help to reduce the early school leaving of these young people. In this same draft, possibilities for alternative solutions were created for excessive behaviour, which would mean that a definitive exclusion from schools stays a last resort.

Fourth, one of the important goals of the **Policy Letter Equal Opportunities 2013-2014** is the achievement of a Flemish society in which gender no longer causes inequality. In 2012-2013 the 'Gender Knowledge Action Plan' (Genderklikactieplan) was introduced, which consists of three parts. The first part contains a broad range of projects realised by civil society (e.g. 'Who's afraid of the F-Word', a series of debates on feminism and gender). Also, an educational project was introduced: 'Genderatwork'. This brings the opinions of young people on masculinity to the surface, which is important because stereotypical masculinity is rarely questioned. The second part consists of the development of a website (www.genderklik.be), which offers a clear and nuanced insight into the concept of gender and its impact. Finally, the third part is an awareness campaign for which the preparations were made in 2013.

Another important goal in this policy letter is to improve the well-being of immigrant LGB youth. LGB sexuality is still an absolute taboo in certain segments of the immigrant community, which makes it difficult for immigrant LGB youth to admit to and experience their sexuality. This taboo status may lead to a lack of understanding and opposition subsequently followed by verbal or physical aggression. It is important to give progressive voices in this immigrant community the opportunity to express their opinion.

Finally, to conclude this question, there are some other organisations in Flanders worth mentioning here.

- Some 100 initiatives for socially vulnerable youth (WMKJ) exist. These initiatives adjust their leisure offer to the situation of socially vulnerable youth.
- Foundation P&V focuses on young people and on the fight against any form of exclusion. They stimulate new ways of solidarity in young people in Belgium via activities and participation projects.⁸²

3.2 Have young people and civil society organizations been given political and financial support to be involved in the policy making process on social inclusion?

First, there are several opportunities for young people to participate in policy-making on a **local level**.

In the Flemish Parliament Act of 6 July 2012 on supporting and promoting local youth policy and youth work policy it is stated that a local youth council should be established and recognised in order to be eligible for subsidisation and in view of the organisation of the consultation and the participation of children and young people in the preparation and implementation of youth policy.

In practice, the local governments often appeals on advisory councils from several target groups (including youth). Often these channels do not suffice to guarantee participation of socially excluded groups. The Flemish Parliament Act of 19 March 2004 on the Local Social Policy wants to guarantee the economic, social and cultural rights of all citizens.⁸³ In this context, participation is a useful tool for groups of citizens, the government and the society. By the end of 2007, every local government had to approve a local social policy plan in accordance with Article 4 of the Parliament Act. The plan had to include a long-range plan, the allocation of duties between the public centres of social welfare and the municipalities and a participation plan.⁸⁴ The Government of Flanders also launched a project 'Participation of underrepresented groups in local policy'. The goal of this project was to provide the local governments with participation instruments. The project provides a participation plan guideline, a participation toolkit, a supporting website and an educational day.⁸⁵

⁸² Foundation P&V. Available on: <http://www.fondationpv.be/index.php?id=5&L=4> (in Dutch)

⁸³ The Flemish Parliament Act of 19 March 2004 on the Local Social Policy. Available on: http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/HRBB/dossiers/lokaalsociaalbeleid/decreet_lokaalsociaalbeleid.pdf (in Dutch)

⁸⁴ Participation in the local social policy of underrepresented groups – Participation plan. Available on: http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/lokaalsociaalbeleid/documentatie/PA_Participatieplan.pdf (in Dutch)

⁸⁵ Participation in the local social policy of underrepresented groups – Participation guide. Available on: http://www4wvg.vlaanderen.be/wvg/lokaalsociaalbeleid/documentatie/PA_participatiewijzer.pdf (in Dutch)

Second, young people can also participate in policy-making on a national and international level, the initiatives listed beneath are politically and financially supported by the Government of Flanders.

The **Flemish Youth Council** (Vlaamse Jeugdraad) is the official advisory council for the Flemish Government concerning all important domains for children, young people and their Flemish organisations.⁸⁶ It may give advice at its own discretion or upon request of the Flemish Government or the Flemish Parliament. The Youth Council has 24 member of which twelve were selected from candidates proposed by nationally organised youth associations, accredited under the Flemish Parliament Act on Flemish Youth Policy. Nine additional members who nominated themselves are chosen and three other members are co-opted.⁸⁷ As already mentioned, the Flemish youth Council – and its participatory projects – are subsidised by the Government of Flanders as the NGO that supports this advisory council.

About 25 young people between 16 and 26 years old have worked in 2013 on the theme social inclusion in their function as **Youth Ambassador** (in the frame of the Structured Dialogue, supported by the Flemish Youth Council). They contemplate the thresholds young people experience and they make recommendations to prevent social exclusion. The first phase of their project was the collection of input of 300 Flemish young people via focus interviews. On the basis of this, the youth ambassadors formulated their recommendations supported by experts. In a second phase, these recommendations were couched in the form of an online survey, which reached out to as many young people as possible. This way they tested if there is a social basis for these recommendations with the Flemish youth. This project ended in recommendations on social inclusion on a local, Flemish, national and European level. In September 2013, two Flemish youth ambassadors (together with other young people of the French and German community) expressed their recommendations on the European Youth Conference in Lithuania.⁸⁸

In November 2013, the youth ambassadors entered into a discussion with the policy makers and explained their recommendations on the KLETSKE social inclusion. The discussion was focused on three themes: work, education and leisure time.⁸⁹

Furthermore, policy makers, civil society and social partners made agreements with the Flemish youth via the **Youth Pact 2020**. The youth pact is focused on ten domains which were perceived

⁸⁶ Flemish Parliament Act of 29 March 2002 on Flemish Youth Policy. Available on:

<http://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1009205¶m=inhoud> (in Dutch)

⁸⁷ Youth Ambassadors Flemish Youth Council. Available on: http://www.jongerenambassadeurs.be/inclusie/?page_id=16 (in Dutch)

⁸⁸ Youth Ambassadors Flemish Youth Council – the trajectory. Available on: http://www.jongerenambassadeurs.be/inclusie/?page_id=2 (in Dutch)

⁸⁹ <http://www.vlaamsejeugdraad.be/evenement/kletske-sociale-inclusie/>

important in preceding youth survey: durability, education, poverty, safety, tolerance, health, mobility, citizenship and work. The youth pact does not result in an additional plan or a list of actions, but in ten commitments. Each of these commitments formulates a goal and operational strategies. Some of these commitments will have an impact on socially vulnerable children and young people. The youth 2020 pact was signed on 26 June 2012 by Minister-President Kris Peeters, Minister Pascal Smet, 14 young people of 'Living Library' and the presidents of the Flemish Youth Council and the Flemish Student Council.⁹⁰

Another important medium for young people to participate in policy-making is the **Flemish Student Council** (Vlaamse Scholierenkoepel). This is the coordinating council of all students councils in Flanders (more than 700). The Flemish Student Council organises events and informs and represents students. The council has regular meetings with the Minister of Education and his co-workers. Before the Flemish elections, they create a memorandum, a list of possible improvements, for the Minister and the Flemish Parliament. The Flemish Student Council also has regular meetings with the Flemish Education Council in order to give their opinion on advises on the plans of the Minister.⁹¹

3.3 Have youth organisations and other civil society organisations been involved in the development of the policies related to social inclusion of young people

In Flanders, some organisations work on (the support of) (local) participative processes concerning social inclusion, representatives of local youth organisations can participate in local youth councils, and many Flemish youth organisations (with or without an exclusive focus on socially excluded young people) contribute actively to the development of youth policy in Flanders, including policies towards socially excluded youth. For instance, on 20 September 2013, the Youth Division organised an important information and participation moment – the great priorities debate - concerning the next youth and children's rights policy plan, which will be in action from 2015 to 2019. Some hundred people cooperated on making a list of ten priorities. Among them there were young people, representatives of youth NGO's, researchers, policy makers and social stakeholders.⁹² Nevertheless, as policies related to social inclusion of young people surpass a single policy domain (part of it is also on the federal level instead of the community level), it is however not always self-evident for youth (work) organisations to be closely involved in the development of concrete measures.

⁹⁰ Youth Pact 2020. Available on: <http://www.jongerenpact2020.be/> (in Dutch)

⁹¹ Flemish Student Council. Available on: <http://www.scholierenkoepel.be/> (in Dutch)

⁹² Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019. Available on: http://www.sociaalcultureel.be/jeugd/vlaamsjeugdplan_jkp2015_2019.aspx (in Dutch)