The evolution of public policies for youth work in the French-speaking community of Belgium

Gauthier Simon

The objective of this account is to present the history of youth work policies in the French-speaking community of Belgium. In this context, and due to the excessively broad nature of this issue, I have chosen to place the accent on public policies. More specifically, I will address the development of the institutional framework that surrounds youth work in our community. This will allow me to limit the topic. But this analysis of the institutions also has the merit of highlighting certain characteristics of youth work in our regions.

I should immediately explain that my account runs the risk of overlapping with the presentation of my colleagues from the German-speaking and Flemish communities. In fact, for a long time Belgium remained a unitary state. During this period public policies were adopted without a real distinction. However, in the area of youth work the differences between our regions have always been noticeable in the field. To take one example, regionalist aspirations were strongly linked to the origins of youth movements in Flanders. In the French-speaking community this was never the case.

➔ 1850-1914: the origins

The Industrial Revolution: a different world

A long process was required for youth work, as it is currently conceived of in the French-speaking community, to emerge. The beginning was connected with the unprecedented upheavals that Belgium experienced, more specifically in its French-speaking part, at the turn of the 19th century. This was the time when the Industrial Revolution was spreading into our regions. Following the mastery of steam energy, little by little factories were established in the country, resulting in a radical transformation of society and the landscapes. Rapidly expanding urban centres such as Liege and Charleroi attracted populations from the surrounding countryside to work in the mines, textile factories, metallurgy and so forth.

Working conditions and family life changed rapidly. We witnessed the emergence of a bourgeois class enriched by industrialisation and trade. More and more, they developed education plans for their progeny. But there were also a great number of families in the working classes in which everyone worked hard for miserable pay, including children from a very early age and under very trying conditions. This transition from a rural, communal life towards more complex societies led to numerous social problems.

First approaches to youth work: the patronages

This was the context in which the first youth initiatives came into being: the patronages. Appearing first in Flanders in 1851, these youth clubs spread quickly over the whole territory of Belgium. They originated in an institution founded in Marseille by the abbot Lallemand. They were also inspired by different *œuvres de jeunesse* or youth works (*œuvre* being the French word to designate both work and a charitable action) such as the initiatives of Don Bosco and of the Salesians. These Catholic actions aimed at leading young people to pray, play and grow up together. They were the first real collective approaches initiated with the idea of improving young people's situation. They were a rousing success, with more than 850 groups in Belgium at the end of the 19th century. The patronages ensued from an ideology that seems a little paternalistic to us today. The middle classes supervised the most disadvantaged classes and in so doing preached their moral values. However, they had the considerable merit of being concerned with youth, and more specifically with working-class youth who, until then, had been given very little consideration.

The social movements and the first laws on behalf of youth

For the Church as well, youth clubs represented a bulwark against socialist movements that were beginning to develop. Among the elements that favoured the appearance of these movements in French-speaking Belgium were the workers' strikes of 1886. Starting in Liege, they violently shook the country and caused the death of 14 people. These events led to the emergence of the Belgian Workers Party (the ancestor of our Socialist Party). As a result, the Catholic majority party in Belgium paid more attention to social problems. This was the era when, for the first time, social legislation was passed that was aimed at the problems of young people. In fact, following an initial text prohibiting child labour in the travelling occupations, a general law prohibiting work in industry by children under 16 came into being. The status of children was therefore changing gradually from an institutional point of view. From miniature adults, they became beings that the state

considered it should protect. The last 15 years of the 19th century then marked an important turning point in the way policies came to grips with youth. There was of course the influence of the social movements. But the *œuvres de jeunesse* also had a central role within this framework. This happened in the wake of the publication of the *Rerum Novarum* encyclical and the social concerns expressed by Pope Leo XIII. Thus in 1894, different patronages grouped together as the Commission royale des Patronages (Royal Commission of Patronages). They supported a bill aimed at protecting children classified as morally abandoned that the state had the duty to protect. This draft text also assigned a preventive role to the public authorities. However, this law was adopted by the national parliament only in 1912 and there were numerous reservations. The conservatives grumbled about state interference in family matters where, until then, the father had been all-powerful. Similar reservations were expressed in relation to another determinant law on a subject we are still concerned with today: that of compulsory learning.

While in France and the Netherlands similar laws were adopted in 1882 and 1900 respectively, the compulsory education law was passed by vote in Belgium only in 1914. As a consequence, the child labour law was logically extended to all work activities. This delay was due to the defence of the role of the *pater familias* in conservative Catholic milieus. Moreover, it was for this reason that learning was made compulsory but not school learning; the father of the family could decide to complete his children's education differently. The longer time period is also explained by the fight between liberals, who were partisans of secular and state instruction, and Catholics, for whom the independence of religious education absolutely had to be preserved. Legislation on youth was therefore far from covering the field of youth work as it is currently understood. It was limited to setting up measures that we consider basic today. It first covered formal education and youth protection. The field of non-formal education was left entirely to private initiative.

Even though it came slightly later than in other European countries and was still in its infancy, a new interest in youth legislation emerged before the war began in 1914.

The beginnings of Scouting in Belgium

It was also during this era – in 1909-10 to be precise – that the first movements inspired by Baden Powell made their appearance. Other organisations were already bringing young people together, such as the patronages, and there were youth groups within the ideological families that made up the political landscape of the nation, such as young political party guards and student circles. However, Scouting left its imprint on the way youth work was later perceived in our community. The first troops of the Boy Scouts de Belgique were intended to be open to all, but instead were somewhat linked to the liberal political family. This at least was the point of view of the Catholics, who founded a Scout movement themselves in 1912. This showed that the potential of the movement was spotted very early on by the clergy. Besides the patronages, this new axis emerged just before the First World War.

The first hesitant steps of youth work gradually came into being in the mid-19th century, in particular in the Catholic sphere. The state still played no significant role. This can be explained in particular by two striking characteristics of our public policies in place at the end of the 19th century: subsidiarity and pillarisation.

The place of the state: the principle of subsidiarity and pillarisation

The principle of subsidiarity means that the state apparatus participates as little as possible as a direct operator but it recognises and encourages the action of operators that are essentially private, including associations. It takes care of the interests of different actors but intervenes only when necessary. This can largely be explained by the fact that in Belgium, two of the major dominant political families were opposed, for different reasons, to excessive state interventionism.

This can also be explained by the construction of our social system, starting from the major ideological and sociological families (Catholics and liberals, and then socialists), the bases of which ignored and opposed each other, but whose elites were engaged in dialogue with each other. This resulted in a relatively compartmentalised society, or what observers of political life in Belgium called pillarisation. In our national system, citizens evolved around politically marked pillars that determined the course of their whole life (their school establishment, where they spent their leisure time, their health care, their trade union association, etc.). This societal structure led to a culture of consensus and consultation. It also explains the importance of various associations connected with the ideological pillars, which constituted a network for political decision makers. As a result, the state tended to delegate a large part of its policies to them, especially concerning youth.

Other fracture lines have existed since the creation of the Belgian state, such as linguistic affiliation, differences in religion or income and so forth.

All these factors played an important role in the way in which public policies and therefore youth work and its institutional framework were structured. These two characteristic traits, subsidiarity and pillarisation, have been present since before the First World War.

➔ 1914-15: youth and movements

The First World War and its social consequences

When Belgium entered the turmoil of the war in 1914, the law on compulsory education had just been adopted and had not yet been put into practice. Moreover, our territories were the only ones to be almost fully occupied by Germany. This special situation created numerous problems, especially concerning supplies. It drove people from different ideological pillars to join together to set up a national relief and food committee. This became a place where people with different tendencies spoke together, and it led to numerous advances on the social and democratic level after the war.

Universal suffrage for men over 21 was adopted in 1919, the same year the Birth and Child Office was created to deal with the health of babies and small children. This made an official matter of something that until now had been reserved for the family.

The subjects of family, childhood and the birth rate were of great importance in policy making after the First World War, leading the state to establish the first child benefits in 1921 to encourage mothers to have children and stay home to raise them.

The great youth movements were expanding rapidly. The middle class, partly under the influence of refugees returning from the United Kingdom after the conflict, increasingly expressed a keen interest in Catholic Scouting. This movement was structured, in spite of internal quarrels between partisans of marked apostolic action and those for whom the religious dimension was less important. Finally, a federation was created in 1927 that was affiliated with the Catholic Association of Belgian Youth (Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Belge).

The Catholic Association of Belgian Youth

The Catholics were very much present in the field of youth, mainly through the Catholic Association of Belgian Youth, created in 1919. It was in this context that the abbot Cardijn founded the Young Christian Workers in 1925, with a goal of emancipating young workers using a method that he defined in three words: "see, judge, act". This movement met with very lively success in French-speaking Belgium, where there were numerous basins of workers. The crisis of 1929 and the unemployment that went with it gave an important echo to its actions with a social aim.

The creation of the Young Christian Workers also started a movement to reorganise the Catholic Association of Belgian Youth into a whole series of specialised youth movements (independent, student, agricultural worker, university, etc.).

The patronages also evolved. They came together in a national federation in the mid-1920s. Affiliated with the Catholic association, they took the name of "Patro" in 1931 to mark their distance from the first patronages, where the relatively rich supervised the poor.

In this way the Catholic association formed various organisations considered auxiliaries of Catholic action. One of their main objectives was to keep young people anchored in the bosom of the Church at a time when materialist and atheist ideologies were gaining ground. For some, these had a real effect and contributed to setting the stage for the youth movement with a pedagogical aim. Within this context, Scouting methods based on self-management by young people, assuming responsibility, life in nature, a positive vision of society and strong moral values also increased.

But the Catholic Association of Belgium Youth also had its shadowy area. It was within its sphere of influence that Léon Degrelle appeared. Pushing certain of its values to the extreme, he became the leader of the rightist populist party Rex. Rex met with a certain amount of success in Belgium in the 1930s before collaborating with the Nazis during the Second World War.

The socialist movements

Other youth movements attached to other ideologies, in particular in the socialist political family, existed alongside Catholic activity. A Belgian branch of the Red Falcons, a movement combining teachings inspired by Scouting with the ideals of the Left, was created in our regions in 1928. There was also the Jeunesses Syndicales (trade union youth) and the socialist Young Guards. The Young Guards were the first youth organisation with socialist political leanings, and were a spearhead of socialist militancy. At first oriented towards antimilitarism, their action was important above all during the post-1929 crisis and was marked by very radical speeches. In addition, in the field this movement was in direct competition with

the Young Christian Workers. However, it never had the influence of the latter. In fact, its radicalism frightened those at the very foundations of the workers' party, and its antimilitarism did not play in its favour at a time when the Nazi threat was becoming clear.

Tourism and youth

At the end of the period between the two wars, the first organisations concerned with tourism for young people appeared, including in our regions. The first youth hostels were established in Belgium in 1933. Here it is necessary to see the influence of the relationship with nature advocated by the youth movements, but also that of legislation measures which granted more and more free time to working people during that era. This was the beginning of social tourism. During this period as well and therefore very early in their development, numerous movements tended to separate into a Flemish wing and a French-speaking wing, in the image of the Scouts in 1927.

Growth without a legal framework

The initiatives aimed at youth therefore multiplied and took shape between the two major world conflicts. But although it was taking on true importance, youth work was not yet the object of specific legislation. However, the state was not completely inactive during this period. It adopted texts that affected the life of the movements and associations bringing together young people. There was the law on non-profit associations in 1921. In 1926, there was also one aiming at promoting popular education: "works complementary to school" as it was called at that time. But these were generalist texts that also affected the adult associations. They had an influence on the way in which the youth movements and organisations were structured, but during that era there was no specific policy for youth work.

However, newly stimulated by Baden Powell's methods, youth work carved out a place of choice for itself in our societies. Public authorities were still working in a framework of strict subsidiarity. They did not intervene in this area, in contrast to what was happening in other countries, such as Nazi Germany for example. Associations connected with the political pillars had complete autonomy in dealing with youth – a category of the population that was becoming increasingly distinct due to compulsory education. But the Second World War was soon to reshuffle the cards.

➔ The years 1940-68: recognition and expansion of youth work

Youth movements under the Occupation

The Second World War had many consequences for youth work and its institutional framework. Belgium was occupied from 1940 to 1944, and during this period, the activities of youth movements and organisations were turned upside down.

Socialist-inspired associations were immediately condemned to go underground. In contrast, the youth associations that had arisen in the sphere of influence of the Rex Party entered openly into "collaboration".

On the Catholic side, organisations continued to operate a little more normally. Scouts and Guides in particular assisted a population in need. At first the Catholic movements, to the extent that they supervised youth, were looked upon

somewhat favourably by the German authorities. But the situation deteriorated very quickly. Restrictions imposed by the occupying forces made organising activities increasingly difficult, especially for the Scouting movements. Trail signs, uniforms, meetings and then camps were gradually prohibited. In addition, these Catholic movements, often very patriotic, were considered candidates for resistance. It must be pointed out that the establishment of the compulsory work service in Germany drove many young people underground. Scouting gained numerous followers during this period. The Scout troops were indeed the only ones able to maintain activities for young people during the Occupation, even though with a great many difficulties.

The Young Christian Workers were very active in the resistance and took part in different networks. For example, they helped their members escape from compulsory work. Cardijn himself was arrested during this period. During his detention, he met another great figure of the youth movements of the time, Arthur Haulot. This future great politician was an eminent figure in the socialist youth movements, and was awaiting deportation to the camps. Together they discussed and developed plans for future youth work policies.

The post-war period and the first public policies

After the liberation, the Belgian state tried to bring together the nation's resources and invested in a number of major public works policies. Our social security system, based on mandatory insurance, was created in 1945, in consultation with trade unions and economic decision makers.

The immediate post-war period was also a turning point for public policies concerning youth work. In the spring of 1945, and further to conversations between Cardijn and Haulot, the public authorities created the Youth Service and a National Youth Council, whose goal was to raise awareness of society and the political classes of issues affecting young people. Consequently, there was real official recognition of youth work and its specific problems.

The Youth Service had a three-fold mission:

- to study the different questions relating to the general training of young people;
- to foster contact and co-operation between different youth groups;
- to assist these groups in their initiatives and supply them with the appropriate administrative resources.

These arrangements were made to avoid repeating errors that had allowed young people to be recruited into totalitarian structures. In addition, youth was perceived as a hope for renewal after the dark hours of the Occupation. Legislators wanted to give them a voice so that they could participate in the reconstruction of society within a democratic ideal. They felt that this could be done only by a youth population that was educated and open to others.

Organised youth

The state envisaged these actions only within the framework of associations. Therefore it took into account only organised youth and movements associated with an ideological tendency to bear the democratic ideal of youth. We are still working within the logic of subsidiarity and a pillarised vision of society.

Legislative measures were limited to giving support to already existing associations. These recognised and encouraged their work and diversity. At the end of the Second World War, the model of youth work was therefore that of a youth movement supported by an ideological network. This is what the public policies encouraged.

Within this context, it was above all the movements of the Scouting type that blossomed. Their membership continuously grew, and their approach, based on pedagogical principles inherited from Baden Powell, made a name for itself as the model for youth work. On the other hand, organisations such as the Young Christian Workers and the socialist Young Guards lost ground.

Internationalism

New associations connected with more internationalist tendencies also appeared in the post-war period. After the horrors of the war, it was time for friendship between peoples. Various associations pursuing this objective established themselves in our territory and organised work or meetings between young people. We can cite for example the Caravanes de la Jeunesse belge, the Compagnons bâtisseurs and the American Field Service.

Training courses and popular education

In May 1956, a second legal text (Decree of 1956) completed the 1945 text relating to the Youth Service. In particular, it set missions for it in terms of training. The service had to help voluntary associations to train their own managers and improve the technical framework for educators and monitors, in adapting new formulas for educational and active recreation.

Concern for training was also very much present in the sphere of youth work. Some organisations devoted themselves to it in a very specific way. Starting in 1946, the Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Actives or CEMEA (Centres for training in active education methods) organised their first training courses. They were inspired by their French counterparts, and took as their basis concepts which were innovative at the time: the collective approach, the importance of practice in learning, residential work places and so forth. All these training efforts and their recognition must be connected with the principles of popular education, which, in the post-war years, appeared as a means of avoiding the absurdities of conflict. Within this framework, the state did not intervene directly in the training courses. It did not dictate any programme. It was committed to a pluralist approach and supported the initiatives of associations.

The maisons de jeunes (youth centres): another type of youth work

The Decree of 1956 contained another provision that was extremely important, because it reflected an evolution in how youth work was carried out in the field. The Youth Service had for its mission to contribute to the development of active recreation for non-organised youth by promoting the creation of youth centres and musical, literary and artistic organisations for young people.

Legislators were therefore interested in non-organised youth. This was something very new. It corresponded, with a gap of a few years, to the appearance of the first youth centres in Brussels at the beginning of the 1950s. Created within the Catholic circle of influence these centres were intended first to host young people

informally. The goal was to keep them from hanging about in the streets. Gradually the number of these structures increased. They formed a federation, and under the influence of education professionals, new methods of pedagogy were applied there. They took on importance as the public authorities recognised and encouraged their actions. They corresponded to a new state of mind that was arising within youth.

The youth culture

A real youth culture developed in opposition to the world of adults became apparent in the 1950s. School attendance was increasing, and young people were staying in school longer. This promoted the consolidation of their own identity. Young people came together around strong cultural markers – pop-rock music, magazines, James Dean, but also the existentialist philosophers. The world of young people born doing the baby boom was slowly breaking away from that of adults. New values appeared, especially in terms of sexuality. This trend became more pronounced over the course of the 1960s and led to the protest events at the end of the decade. In 1968, the turbulence of the young people was at its height in French-speaking Belgium, even though it was less strong than in France or Flanders where, in Leuven, it took on autonomist accents.

➔ 1968-2008: between emancipation and integration

This change in youth had a direct impact on youth work in our territories. New structures gradually appeared that could respond to the increasingly diverse and specific expectations of young people. This was an era of specialisation. For example, information centres, which offered young people relevant answers to their specific problems, flourished. In addition, the events of 1968 led to a new consciousness among youth workers. It was time for a change and this was reflected in public policies.

Federalisation and redefinition of cultural policies

Society questioned itself and new ideas arose. Overall, there was a new definition of the institutional framework. This affected cultural policy, in particular youth policy. Indeed, following the regionalist rebellion of students in Leuven, a revision in the Belgian Constitution, recognising three regions and three cultural communities, was voted on. From this time on, the French-speakers of Belgium could define their cultural policies autonomously.

From popular education to permanent education

A new idea asserted itself. Following the events of 1968 and the findings of field workers, a more active participation of the public, especially of young people, was advocated. We went from the principle of democratisation of culture to a principle of cultural democracy. This was the transition from popular education to permanent education: from then on culture was envisaged as a social field of participation. Transposed to youth work, this meant using young people's periods of free time to give them the opportunity to develop their creativity and to exercise new responsibilities.

Objective: responsible, active and critical citizens

Following the division into communities, the objectives of youth workers were more clearly defined in legislation.

The law on the Maisons de jeunes (youth centres). These ideas were found in a law dedicated to the youth centres and similar associations voted in 1971. It indicated the importance that this sector had taken on in a few years. It was drawn up, and this is important, after consultation with field workers. It determined the conditions for official recognition and subsidies. It put forward participation, but also the expression and the citizenship of young people. The text assigned youth centres the mission of helping young people to become "critical, responsible and active citizens". Therefore, it fit directly into the idea of permanent education and took into account the critical role of young people in society as a condition for democracy.

Professionalisation and diversification. Moreover, youth workers were part of an approach that was more and more professional. In the mid-1960s, the public authorities established a system allowing teachers to strengthen the pedagogical supervision of young people within associations. Other arrangements followed in the 1970s, in particular through the adoption of a decree that made it possible to support the training of the managers. The public authorities therefore were paying more and more attention to youth work, which led to a stronger institutional structuring.

They also took the diversity of practices into better account. This was how the text of the law of 1971 relating to youth centres was modified in 1979. This modification made it possible to include two types of structures that were within the logic of participation by young people: accommodation centres for young people and information centres.

The law on youth organisations. This institutional structuring also affected the organised youth movements. In 1980, a text specifically organised their activities and subsidies. It defined an organisation as: "a voluntary association of natural persons or legal entities that … contribute to the development by young people of their responsibilities and personal abilities with a view to helping them become active, responsible and critical citizens within society." The themes of permanent education are found in the above quote: participation, citizenship and so forth.

The legislation also set up categories of youth organisations, for which membership, save exceptions, was limited to those under 30. There are four of them:

- movements, including the Scouts and Guides, the Red Falcons and the Patros, but also certain political organisations;
- specialised movements, in particular student associations;
- services, mainly those that provide information, but also covering lodging associations, training services, etc.
- co-ordinating organisations that group together other organisations. These umbrella organisations operated within the political pillars or, conversely, brought together diverse organisations on the basis of political neutrality. This need for neutrality was new and resulted from developments in youth work. New practices coming from the experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, and which were meant to be outside of the traditional and politicised circuits, acquired more visibility and legitimacy by grouping together.

Classifying organisations into categories was based on the number of members, geographic extent and the number of activities carried out. In fact, it corresponded to the situation of the associations in existence at the time. For the most part, this text acknowledged a pre-existing situation, and did no more than affirm major principles coming from permanent education. Moreover, it confirmed the major role that public authorities had assigned to the youth organisations, thus these remained the leaders in youth work. This is explained by the great autonomy and power that youth organisations had in the French-speaking community, in view of their connections with the political sphere.

Youth work and economic crisis: giving responsibility or social assistance to young people. In response to 1968, the principles of permanent education gave youth work a larger dimension of involvement, participation and creativity. However, the oil crisis of the early 1970s also led society to reconsider its perception of youth. The status of youth changed; it became a category to protect, but also to re-integrate.

This explains why youth assistance structures flourished, among them the *aides en milieu ouvert* or AMO (community-based assistance). Their role was to protect and they formed part of the social protection fabric between the family and the legal system. They aimed at preventing young people from failing to adapt and from falling into delinquency. The image of the young person was slowly changing, and it was the archetype of the young delinquent of immigrant origin that asserted itself in society. As a consequence, the legislative framework of social aid to youth reflected a slow slide towards a vision of society in which the young who commit criminal acts must be taken charge of by the legal system.

In response to the youth riots in the low-income districts of Brussels at the beginning of the 1990s, "security contracts" were established, where prevention among young people and coercive methods were mixed together.

Therefore, we have a complex institutional architecture as far as youth in the French-speaking community is concerned, with on the one hand an accent on permanent education with a goal of personal development, and on the other hand, a perspective of individual social remediation. This led to confusion among young people, all the more so since the methods used were often similar. The boundary was therefore blurred for the potential user, while the different professionals in youth work were keen to maintain their specific features in the cultural field while avoiding the security discourse.

The public authorities as youth work actors: *Été jeunes* and *Quartier libre*

In this context, starting in 1988, the French-speaking community decided to develop a programme for young people, in particular those from disadvantaged milieus. It was called *Été jeunes* (youth summer). The Youth Service, Youth Assistance and the Sport Service encouraged the setting up of partnerships to benefit young people from disadvantaged milieus. The idea was to provide activities for them during the summer holidays. This was also an attempt to open up transversally in order to get past the divisions between youth work and social assistance for young people. Even though only a very marginal part of its budget was dedicated to youth, the French-speaking community defined the type of activity that had to be carried out to benefit from subsidies. This was a *première*. Until then, the associations

themselves decided how to meet the objectives set by legislation, especially in the field of permanent education.

But now the public authorities financed them to carry out actions defined by the state. Numerous associations, feeling their autonomy threatened, criticised these measures. The same was true for the operation *Quartier Libre* (free neighbourhood) launched in 1996, and which aimed at promoting the cultural expression of young people, primarily the most disadvantaged. Young people could be supervised by diverse associations but, and this was even one of the objectives, they could also be involved directly at the base of these initiatives. Involving young people was therefore an essential objective, but social concern as well was very much present in this programme. So what is going on today?

➔ The current institutional framework of youth work

Youth work in the French-speaking community – A cultural approach

It is sometimes difficult to get one's bearings in all the different policies that are being carried out. I will linger here on what is grouped under the subject of youth work in the French-speaking community. In our community, youth work is clearly distinguished from social emergency work, at least from an institutional point of view. The Youth Aid Service oversees social measures and individual responses, while the Youth Service is responsible for policies connected to culture and permanent education. Therefore, it is within this field of non-formal education that what the legislature considers youth work is developing. Its objective is to develop responsible, active and critical citizenship. The institutional framework makes it possible to delimit the field of youth work and the major sectors that make it up. These are youth organisations and centres for young people:

Youth organisations

This sector is the most important historically. At the base of youth policies, its representatives are still currently considered privileged contacts by the public authorities. Since spring 2009, a completely new decree has framed their activities. It was negotiated directly with the representatives of the organisations in a youth organisation committee. The new decree subdivides youth organisations into five major categories:

- *youth movements*: they have the largest number of members, and include Scouts, Guides, Patros and Red Falcons, which professionals used to call *foulards* (for their neck scarves). Movements must be focused on community life and long-term action;
- *thematic movements*: these must relate to society through identifiable subjects. They include, among others, young people that belong to political parties, trade unions, student organisations, the young farmers;
- *youth services*: this category brings together organisations active in training young people, charitable activities, trips for young people, holiday activities, and activities to raise awareness of the challenges facing society, such as ecology or the Third World;
- *federations of youth organisations*;
- *federations of centres for young people*.

Youth organisations must be intended for a majority public between the ages of 3 and 30. In addition, the new text provides youth organisations with the means for establishing specific activities connected with: supporting local groups; combating

the extreme right; co-operation with schools; training of youth workers; the promotion of democracy, publics referred to as specific (handicapped people, disadvantaged youth, youth faced with discrimination, etc.), and partnerships across categories of youth organisations.

This text is an attempt to respond to all of the specific features of youth organisations. After consultation between the public authorities and the organisations, it was decided to stick to the reality in the field and go beyond purely quantitative criteria. There is also better financing, with a 30% increase in the amount of subsidies. More than ever, the 90 recognised youth organisations are one of the two principal bases of youth work in the French-speaking community.

Centres for young people

The other major aspect of youth work consists of centres for young people. Here as well there is a consultation committee and subcommittees formed of representatives of the associations in the field. They help and orient public authorities in the definition of policy. The latest modification of legislation dates from 2008. The objective of the 191 centres is to help young people develop a critical, active responsible citizenship and a sense of solidarity through participation in activities, often of a socio-cultural nature. The three types of centres are:

- *the* maisons de jeunes *or youth centres*. These are structures acting locally and whose premises must be accessible and open. There is no limit on the activities, as long as there is an overall participation of young people;
- *lodging centres*. These must be able to accommodate up to 50 young people and promote learning and encounters;
- *information centres*. The centres assist young people in an open, pluralist way and provide information free of charge.

The decree also recognises the federations of young people's centres. With regard to youth organisations, specific actions linked to certain themes, such as equal opportunities, decentralisation or developing creativity, benefit from specific financing. Here as well policies are defined in consultation with the sector through the intermediary of a consulting committee and sub-committees.

The two major focal points of the institutional framework of youth work in the French-speaking community are therefore youth organisations and centres for young people. But it also encompasses other initiatives and institutions.

Youth projects

Youth projects include the circular *Projets jeunes* (youth projects). Other operations include *Été jeunes* (youth summer) and *Quartier libre* (free neighbourhood). The decree allows for supporting projects that involve young people directly. These are organised around four principles or actions:

- communicate, become informed, live together;
- express oneself, develop one's creativity;
- carry out a collective work and disseminate the results;
- take action and commit oneself.

The Youth Service provides financing for national projects; international projects are financed by an autonomous body in turn co-financed by the French-speaking

community and the European authorities, the Bureau International de la Jeunesse (International youth office). The bureau was originally set up to manage European mobility programmes for young people.

Homework schools

Homework schools also fall under the supervision of the Youth Service and are therefore, from a legal standpoint, at least partially considered as youth work. This might seem strange because normally they should fall under the supervision of education, but the homework school founders, at the end of the1960s, did not want to be dependent upon the school authorities. And they believed that helping with homework had to be combined with socio-cultural activities to be fully effective. This sector is managed jointly with our National Birth and Child Office. The Youth Service deals with associations that organise the regional and community co-ordination of the homework schools. We therefore find ourselves somewhat in the confines of youth work, between education and aid to children.

Training courses

To complete the institutional panorama of youth work in the French-speaking community, I still have to mention the Youth Service supervision of training courses set up by youth organisations for their managers and youth leaders, and courses for youth managers working in holiday centres. This does indeed concern supervision and not organisation of these training courses, because the primary concern is to maintain the plurality of the associative life. Once again, we are operating within the principle of subsidiarity.

➔ Beyond the barriers: toward transversal youth policies

What conclusions can be drawn from this approach to the evolution of the institutional framework of youth work in the French-speaking community of Belgium?

Legislative measures have always tried to respond to the needs of the sector, at its base and from the network of associations. The primary principle that guides the public authorities is to give the associations as broad a freedom as possible. This is explained in particular by the strong connections that join these associations to the political class, all tendencies combined.

When the first youth legislation was voted in right after the war, it was to guarantee this freedom and to prevent totalitarian abuses. When legislators created a framework for youth centres or training initiatives, it was to officialise new practices that were already present in the fabric of associations. At the time of the Belgian division into communities, the idea of permanent education emerged out of the ideas of May 1968 on the transition from a uniform vision of culture to involving everyone in the production of cultural policies. With a few rare exceptions, public authorities adopted legislation that was more reactive than proactive. They adapted themselves to a kind of natural evolution of youth work in our community.

Connected with the sectors, the institutional framework has also been subject to its divisions. Youth work in our regions has always been associated with a non-formal education approach to the development of young people, and therefore fits completely into the cultural policy field.

Social assistance to young people has always experienced a separate destiny. The same is true for policies connected with education. But in numerous cases the objectives, or even the means used, are very similar. Going past these barriers to develop transversal policies that respect the specific features of each one, in order to encourage young people to develop and to assume responsibility in all the areas of their existence, will be the challenge of youth work in the French-speaking community for years to come.