**Structure of Decision-making**

The institutional structure of Belgium shapes decision-making. 3 levels of competences co-exist:

- Federal level (social security, foreign affairs, defense, finance)
- Regional level (territory-related competences like economy, environment) and
- Community level (person-related competences such as culture, education or sports).

Youth policies take place at the Community-wide level.

The competences managed by the **French-Speaking Community** are:

- Culture

Youth policy is administratively included in the cultural sector but has a distinct Minister. Therefore, there is a Minister of Culture and a Minister of Youth.

- Education

- Youth welfare

Youth Welfare is a distinct sector within the French-Speaking Community. It has its own Minister and its own decrees. It focuses on the protection of minors in need and the support to their families.

- Sports
Regional's competences include employment, health, social inclusion. Those policies affect the entire population including young people.

The Federal level establishes a legal frame of reference for voluntary activities in Belgium.

At the local level, municipalities are free to have a youth department and to implement their own youth policy. There is no legal framework to coordinate or organise the actions at the local level regarding youth. The Minister of Youth does not have any authority regarding youth policy lead at the local level.

However, the Minister of Youth has launched a call for projects in 2016 to articulate the youth policy at community level with the youth policy at the local level. It aims at offering a methodological support to municipalities in order to foster participative youth local policies.

Main actors

The main authority for youth policies-making is the Minister for Youth placed within the French-Speaking Community.

The Youth Department is the central public administration which is responsible for the implementation of the youth cultural policy by applying decrees. The Youth Department works closely with youth associations by providing them financial, institutional and training support.

According to the Council of Europe peer review, "one particularity in the field of youth policy is its strong ethos of subsidiarity. Non-profit associations are the main service providers at the local level. The autonomous status of associations is indicative of their potential flexibility. Municipalities may implement youth policy priorities in various ways. This autonomy allows responses to local specificities. In this context, the national youth policy doesn’t address specific target groups in the youth population. Associations are free to focus their action on specific target group".

There are two main types of youth structures approved by decree:

- **Youth Centres** are associations active on the local level and work with young people on temporary projects. The 205 associations are grouped into 3 categories:
  1. Youth Clubs: these associations host young people during out of school or non-work-related activities. They implement activities in a democratic way, co-decided by and for young people.
  2. Youth Hostels: they have the facilities to provide full accommodation for a minimum of 50 young people. They also organise short residential activities for individuals or groups;
  3. Youth Information Centres: they answer directly to questions raised by young people and they analyse and raise awareness about the issues and conditions of young people’s life.

Youth Centres are ruled by the decree of 20 July 2000, revised in 2004 and 2008, which defines the general missions and the specific procedures to recognise and fund associations that are active at the local level.
Youth Organisations are associations active at the Community-wide level working with young people invested for a long-term period. All the modes of actions are decided “by and for” young people. The 101 OJ are grouped into 5 categories:

1. Thematic Movements: volunteers analysing social issues and raising awareness on citizens’ questions such as branches of trade unions, political parties, etc.;
2. Youth Movement are composed of local groups of children and young people engaged in activities and animation projects such as camps, supervised by voluntary youth leaders (such as scouting movements);
3. Youth Services: contributing to the development of young people’s sense of responsibility, through several actions such as animation, socio-cultural expression awareness raising, training, information, meetings and residential activities or international mobility;
4. Federations of Youth Centres;
5. Federations of Youth Organisations which provide their members with technical and educational support such as training, coordination, networking, information and representation.

Youth Organisations are structured by the decree [5] of 26 March 2009 which defines the general tasks and specific procedures to recognise and fund associations active at the Community level.

Youth sector also includes the coordinating structures of the “Homework schools” (écoles de devoirs) which are homework support initiatives and “Holidays Centres” (Centres de vacances) which contribute to the supervision, the education and the full development of children during school holidays.

There is an important role given to Advisory Bodies. The Minister for Youth and the Youth Department conduct regular dialogue and consultation with official representative bodies:

- La Commission Consultative des Organisations de Jeunesse – CCOJ (Advisory Commission of the Youth Organisations);
- La Commission Consultative des Maisons et Centres de Jeunes - CCMCJ (Advisory Commission of the Youth Centres and Youth Clubs);
- Le Conseil de la Jeunesse de la Communauté Française - CJCF (The French-Speaking Community’s Youth Council).

The Minister is also assisted by two cross-disciplinary institutions:

- The Observatory for Children, Youth and Youth Welfare [6] (see section 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy [7]);
- The General Delegate of the Rights of Children [8]: his role is to ensure the protection of the Rights of Child mainly by referring to the International Convention of the rights of Children of 20 November 1989.

Main Themes

Youth policies are included in the cultural sector. Thus, youth policy focuses mainly on youth participation and expression. The main goal is “to promote individual and collective participation of young people by developing a responsible, active and critical citizenship, in a spirit of solidarity”.

Youth associations are dedicated to promoting the development of critical, active and responsible citizenship (CRAC). They do so by raising awareness about social realities and by promoting responsible attitudes through social, economic, cultural and political participation and socio-cultural practice.

Regular consultation between youth authorities and youth actor’s representatives is conducted.

The advisory Commission of the Youth Organisations meets at least 6 times a year. The advisory Commission of the Youth Centres and Youth Clubs meets at least 4 times a year. They issue notice out of own initiative or on the request of the authorities on policies affecting young people. Activity reports for the period of 2009-2013 are published on the website of the administration.

Youth policies address the following policy areas of the EU Youth Strategy:

1. Training;
2. Participation;
3. Voluntary activities;
4. Creativity and Culture;
5. Youth and the world.

The National Agency for Youth

There is no National Agency for Youth except for the “Bureau International de la Jeunesse – BIJ” (International Youth Office) which focuses on international matters for young people.

International Youth Office is a French-Speaking Community’s service created and co-managed since 1995 by the General Administration for Culture and Wallonia Brussels International (WBI). The office is a one-stop service for young people who would like to receive support to realise a project abroad. It is also a space for reflection and consultation on youth policy in the international arena.

Its main mission is to give all young people between 13 and 35 years old, living in Wallonia or Brussels, the possibility to gain some experience of mobility, especially those who have fewer opportunities regardless of cultural, economic or social factors. The BIJ develops a proximity strategy with its audience and particularly with disadvantaged young people through three activities:

- an individual support within its Espace Infos Mobilité (Information and Mobility Space) where young people can receive information and counselling;
- through regular meetings and contacts with various project leaders all along their projects elaboration;
- through the organisation of awareness/information action to promote the disadvantaged young’s participation to programme action, in collaboration with a range of specific associations (dynamo international, promo jeunes, solidarité...).

Wallonia Brussels International funds most part of the mobility programmes (1 081 000 euros in 2014) except for the “Bel’J programme” which is funded by the French-Speaking Community (15 000 euros in 2014).

The BIJ receives as well funds from the European Union for the implementation of the Youth section of the Erasmus + programme.

The balance sheet for 2015 is available on the Agency's website.
Policy monitoring and evaluation

Youth policies

The Observatory of Childhood, Youth and Youth Welfare is charged to coordinate the evaluation of the decrees related to youth organisations and to youth centres as demanded in the decree of 12 May 2004 creating the Observatory and in the decrees related to youth organisations and related to youth centres. The Observatory has published the 2 evaluations in October 2017:

- the evaluation [12] of the decree of 20 July 2000 related to youth centres;

The evaluation of the decree of 26 March 2009 related to the Youth Organisations is made every four years with the support of the Youth Organisations Advisory Body (CCOJ).

The evaluation of the decree of 20 July 2000 related to Youth Centres, the government is in charge of the evaluation every 5 years. However, the government assigns the Observatory to manage the evaluation with the help of the Youth Centres Advisory Commission (CCMCJ).

These evaluations aim at improving the relation between the legal framework and youth work realities and at avoiding the institutionalisation of some negative effects according to the Observatory. In order to realise a participative evaluation, the Observatory created a steering group composed of representatives of the Ministry, representatives of the Minister of Youth and 9 representatives of the Advisory Commissions (the Youth Organisation Advisory Commission for the decree related to youth organisations and the Youth Centres Advisory Commission for the decree related to Youth Centres).

The Observatory based the evaluation on several sources: literature, administrative data, quantitative survey and "focus groups".

The Observatory is also charged of the external evaluation of the “Decree of 14 November 2008 creating the Youth Council of the French-Speaking Community”. It collaborates with the Observatory of Cultural Policies. This work will be sent for information to the Government on the 31st of December 2017.

Voluntary activities policies

The Federal Ministry of social affairs and health charged the High Council of volunteers to evaluate the Law 2005 related to volunteer’s rights. (More detailed information in 2.9 Current debates and reforms).

Employment policies

“Le Conseil supérieur de l’emploi” (the Employment High Council) is the advisory body of the “Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue”. The Federal Minister of Employment chairs the Council. The body analyses the effects of employment policy, the situation of the labour market in Belgium and issue notices about employment.