

Appendix No. 1

Additional information on federated entities

1. Context

1.1. Federal

1.2. Flanders

From the outset of this report, we have emphasised that the measures included in Flanders' action plan do not provide a comprehensive overview of policies to combat child poverty. On the contrary, it is a selection of mainly new measures, leaving aside a large number of structural, regular and particularly relevant policies in this field. This is also the case in this report, although we do highlight certain measures that are not (yet) included in the action plan.

1.3. Wallonia

Under the 2019-2024 legislature, Wallonia adopted a Walloon Poverty Reduction Plan led by the Minister-President's cabinet and the Public Service of Wallonia's Cellule des Stratégies Transversales. At a cross-functional level, the plan proposes tools and best practices to help people get out of poverty, aimed at local authorities.

As part of this plan, a new website dedicated specifically to single-parent families has just been launched to help these families, who are often financially and socially vulnerable. A scheme to help and support single-parent families has also been set up: 19 social workers, known as "single-parent family contact points" have been hired in various social service centres, health insurance funds and associations.

The Poverty Reduction Plan also includes a prospective analysis of policies to combat child poverty up to 2050.

A scenario-building workshop was held in November 2023 at the AVIQ to analyse possible transformations in the Walloon socio-economic context in order to develop different scenarios for public action in the fight against child poverty. The study will be completed by June 2024.

Finally, Wallonia has adopted an action plan on children's rights (2020-2024). It comprises 54 measures, of which around ten projects involved children's participation, and one specific project involved children's participation as part of the evaluation of the action plan itself. The children were able to make recommendations to political representatives. These recommendations will be used to design the next Walloon action plan for the years 2025 to 2029.

1.4. Brussels: Flemish Community Commission (COCON)

1.5. Wallonia-Brussels Federation

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation has adopted a Plan to Combat Poverty and Reduce Social Inequality 2020-2025 (scheduled to end on 31 December 2025), coordinated by the WBF's team for the fight against poverty and for the reduction of social inequalities, with the administrations carrying out its operational implementation. Several of the Plan's measures are aimed at curbing the inequality mechanisms that directly affect children, and stopping the intergenerational transmission

of poverty from the earliest age. One of the plan's projects concerns the creation of a barometer to measure poverty and social inequality in the WBF's areas of competence (the aim is to obtain indicators to better adapt the WBF's services and policies). This project is currently underway.

The fight against poverty and accessibility of services is also a priority of the Children's Rights Action Plan 2020-2024, monitored by the Observatory of Childhood, Youth and Youth Care. This plan comes to an end in June 2024, and an assessment report is currently being drawn up, which will enable us to identify prospects for the next 2025-2029 plan.

With regard to the objective of improving accessibility to childcare, the measures are set out in the ONE management contract. Since the publication of the NAP (Belgian National Action Plan European Child Guarantee 2022-2030), there have been some legislative developments in the area of childcare reform, with amendments made to two decrees:

- Decree of the Government of the French Community which established the authorisation and subsidy process for crèches, childcare services and independent childminders.
- Decree of the Government of the French Community establishing the transitional regime for childcare environments

With regard to education, the Teaching Excellence Pact, an ambitious project for the reform of education in the WBF, running over 10 years starting in 2019, includes a series of measures for gradually making education free, reducing school dropout, and better integrating vulnerable children. Measures are monitored using the Pact's monitoring tools and direction structures.

1.6. German-speaking Community

All for projects: The government supports projects that combat poverty and social exclusion and/or promote the integration of all population groups. Associations and public institutions can benefit from annual funding for special, local, participatory, cross-organisational and innovative projects.

2. Target groups

2.1. Federal

2.2. Flanders

2.3. Wallonia

2.4. Brussels: Flemish Community Commission (COCON)

2.5. Wallonia-Brussels Federation

2.6. German-speaking Community

3. Roll-out of services

3.1. Federal

Action (not mentioned in the National Action Plan): As part of its coordinating role, the PPS Social Integration has organised seminars on the four themes of the European Child Guarantee, with the aim of bringing together the different levels of authority within the same working group to enable better collaboration. These seminars brought together representatives from every level of authority, political representatives, experts and civil organisations. Four thematic seminars and a closing seminar were organised. Recommendations were made at this final seminar. The aim now is to maintain a regular working group on the issue of combating child poverty.

Action (see page 16 of the National Action Plan): A call for projects to combat child poverty has been launched as part of the European Child Guarantee. A total of 18 projects have been supported by the subsidies awarded since December 2021, and a total of 972 children have been reached in the first year of projects. Figures for the second year are not yet available.

Budget: €2,174,933.76 for two years

Action (not mentioned in the National Action Plan): A call for projects "Combating child poverty" has been launched in partnership with the National Lottery to support organisations proposing projects to combat child poverty in Belgium. This call for projects aims to provide financial support to organisations whose projects are specifically linked to combating child poverty, and a reference to the European Child Guarantee has been included in the call for projects' regulations.

Budget: €3,000,000

Education and school activities

Action (see page 16 of the National Action Plan): [The Participation and Social Activation Fund \(Le Fonds participation et activation sociale\)](#) is an ongoing annual subsidy available to PCSWs to support initiatives aimed at increasing the autonomy, resilience and social participation of PCSW users and breaking their social isolation by teaching them certain skills and encouraging them to take part in socially useful activities. Part of the subsidy can also be used to combat child poverty by providing psychological support, educational support, paramedical support and financing their participation in social programmes. Part of this fund is dedicated to children.

Budget: €18,551,129 in 2021

Action (see page 17 of the National Action Plan): The subsidy for the target public of the PCSWs had been granted in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and on the basis of the Royal Decree of 13 May 2020 between 1 April 2020 and 31 December 2021. This subsidy was extended until 31 March 2022. This measure was subsequently discontinued.

Budget: €125,000,000. (€113,000,000 p + €10,000,000 for PCSW organisation).

Action (see page 41 of the National Action Plan): An assessment of the status in 2020 and 2021 with regard to internet access and IT support for young people accommodated in Fedasil centres and the measures taken were carried out as part of the COVID-19 crisis. This measure was linked to the COVID-19 context and is no longer relevant.

High-quality health care

Action (see page 54 of the National Action Plan): The memorandum of understanding of 2 December 2020 providing for more easily accessible psychological care in the context of the COVID-19 crisis aimed to offer low-threshold psychological care, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, including young people. This involves lower financial costs, and improved accessibility (under the agreement, psychologists are encouraged to be mobile and travel to the most vulnerable patients).

From 1 September 2023, an addendum to the agreement also enabled young people to attend psychological care sessions in collaboration with schools, psycho-medical-social centres (CPMSs) and CLBs without having to make patient contributions.

The 2021 agreement ended on 31 December 2023. A new agreement was approved on 20 December and has entered into force. This new agreement follows on from the previous one, but makes a number of changes, notably with the aim of improving access to care. One measure of particular relevance to children and adolescents is that, from February onwards, they will no longer have to pay patient contributions for all sessions attended under the agreement.

Action (see page 57 of the National Action Plan): Regarding dental care, there are two distinct measures:

1. As of 1 September 2023, patients are reimbursed for children's dental care up to their 19th birthday: [Reimbursement of dental care for children under 19 | INAMI \(fgov.be\)](#)
Planned budget: €2,240,000 (from 01/09/2023). Actual impact is not yet known.
2. Since 1 July 2022, both preventive oral examinations have been charged at the same rate and under the same conditions: [Oral examination | NIHDI \(fgov.be\)](#)
Planned budget: €5,019,000 (from 01/07/2022). Effective impact estimated at €8,899,000

Action (see page 59 of the National Action Plan): A vaccination protocol for protection applicants in Fedasil reception centres had been set up. Catch-up vaccinations could also be administered. However, this initiative was linked to the COVID-19 context and is therefore no longer relevant. Children can still be vaccinated at the reception centre, but these vaccinations are mainly administered by the ONE and Kind en Gezin for children up to 6 years of age, and by health promotion services (PSE) or psycho-medical-social services (PMS) for children between 6 and 18 years of age. The first vaccination for children aged 6 and over is always given at the dispatching centre (or reception centre).

Action (see page 61 of the National Action Plan): Health materials adapted to the context of the pandemic for young people and children living at Fedasil were provided, and 50 community health workers were deployed to link vulnerable groups with health care. This measure was linked to the COVID-19 context and is no longer relevant.

Action (not mentioned in the National Action Plan): A subsidy to promote the psychological well-being of young people (aged 0-25) has been awarded to the PCSWs of five major Belgian cities. This subsidy was awarded at the end of the health crisis linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, to respond to the psychological discontent that this crisis caused among young people. The PCSWs benefiting from this bonus propose pilot projects designed to promote the psychological well-being of young people and break social isolation.

Budget: €3,000,000 for three years

Action (not mentioned in the National Action Plan): As a preventive measure, the TUMULT project aims to strengthen the online resilience of unaccompanied foreign children in Fedasil reception centres. Workshops are organised to raise young people's awareness of how to use social media correctly, and of the risks associated with their use.

Reactive training for frontline workers is also offered, to raise awareness of the dynamics behind (cyber) harassment and provide them with concrete tools for working with young people on this issue.

Action (not mentioned in the National Action Plan): The mental health reference centre (CRéSaM) project offers activities for young people in Fedasil centres to raise awareness of problematic uses of social media.

Training courses for professionals in the field on problematic uses of social media and adolescence are also provided. During these training sessions, participants are offered existing support tools, such as those on (cyber) harassment.

Sufficient and healthy food

Action (see page 64 of the National Action Plan): Regarding food aid budgets under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, in addition to the nappies already mentioned in the 2021 National Action Plan, these have enabled the funding of shampoo, toothpaste and toothbrushes specifically for children.

Budget: Total budgets have risen from €23,000,000 in 2021 to €33,414,000 in 2024.

Adequate housing

Action (see page 69 of the National Action Plan): In 2021, thanks to a partnership with the National Lottery, a budget of €1,970,946 supported 19 Housing First schemes and enabled over 180 additional homeless people to be monitored by these teams. This call was renewed in 2023 for a total of €2,991,000, enabling support for 25 Housing First teams and the increase of over 250 trajectories.

In addition, the "Housing First for Youth – Housing solutions for young people in large cities" project currently underway will provide 16 PCSWs with new housing units to make available to homeless young people, with a budget of €10 million granted as part of the policy on large cities and the fight against poverty. To date, 5 new housing units have already been purchased and a further 36 are in the pipeline.

Finally, of the 45 Housing First teams working in Belgium, there are around ten programmes that cater for families with children. At present, we know that 43 families, with a total of 67 children (minors), have been cared for under a Housing First scheme. The Housing First model lends itself well to the adaptation of certain particularly vulnerable groups, such as women (the group most often involving children) or young people. The PPS Social Integration therefore pays particular attention to supporting and developing Housing First schemes that take into account the specific vulnerabilities linked to homelessness.

Action (see page 69 of the National Action Plan): As part of the Winter Shelter programme, a capacity of 100 places has been planned (instead of 190), 60% of which are for children. Monitoring is provided for children who are residents here.

Budget: public contract of €4,050,000 for three years (2021-2024). This year, €1,350,000 have been granted for the period from 1/11/2023 to 31/03/2024.

Action (see page 70 of the National Action Plan): An expertise agreement with Fedasil has enabled the long-term sustainability of the Xtra MENA project. The Xtra MENA team is present in several locations where this target group is present. Between January and July 2023, over 200 young people were already seen as part of the Xtra MENA project. More than half of them were directed to an information and support route, according to their needs. Around 28% of the young people met had entered the system, either following a referral or by applying for international protection (it is possible

that other young people had done so individually, without informing the Xtra MENA team). The Xtra MENA team also provides training and support for those in contact with the target group.

Action (not mentioned in the National Action Plan): The low-threshold centre (Inloophuis) in Brussels for unaccompanied foreign children with a street profile aims to provide shelter in a house open to unaccompanied foreign children who are not seeking asylum and who have addiction problems. At this stage, there is agreement in principle on this project.

3.2. Flanders

Ensuring that children in need have free and effective access to high-quality early childhood education and care, educational and school activities, and a healthy meal every school day.

In response to the obstacles identified in crèches for infants and young children in Flanders, and given the importance of these crèches for children's development, an additional budget of €270 million has recently been allocated to better subsidise and improve the quality of existing childcare initiatives and to create 5,000 additional crèche places. Numerous measures have been taken between 2019 and 2024 to increase the number of crèche places and strengthen the financial viability of existing places. All T2B places have been converted to T2A places, 9,000 T1 places have been converted to T2 places (= income-rate subsidy), new income-rate places (T2) have been created, the re-use of T2 subsidies has become possible after closure, and 350 childminders will receive worker status. The number of approved childcare places has risen from 92,632 to 93,892 since 2014 (+1.3%). The proportion of income-related places has risen from 72.7% to 77.3% (+4.6%).

In terms of improving access for vulnerable families, several additional measures have been taken since 2019. There are 18 KOALA centres in Flanders and the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region. These are partnerships between the organisers of crèches that have more subsidies, Huis van het Kind, group offers for parents and children, and local players such as the social centre, Ligo, anti-poverty associations, education, etc. Subsidies are also granted to local crèche offices, responsible for implementing local childcare policies. Additional subsidies will be granted for flexible and urgent care in 2024.

Research and figures show that there are still inequalities in the use of crèche services. The COVID-19 crisis has only widened this gap. There remains a group of non-users who would like to make use of the care, but face obstacles such as price, availability and flexibility. In 2022, 78.8% of "Belgian and non-disadvantaged" parents used childcare, compared with 35% of "non-Belgian and disadvantaged" parents.

The competent minister of the Flemish government has commissioned a wide-ranging stakeholder consultation (the Toekomstwerf) to draw up proposals for the sustainable development of Flemish childcare facilities in the future, as high-quality, accessible and liveable basic facilities for and close to every child and family. These proposals will be presented to the relevant minister, but above all they could serve as inspiration for the new Flemish government that will take office after the elections in June 2024.

In 2019, the decree on the organisation of extracurricular care and the coordination of extracurricular activities was approved. The aim is to provide an integrated range of after-school care and activities (BOA) for all children and families, in collaboration with all the local players (education, social welfare, culture, youth and sports, etc.) working together as effectively as possible. Local government takes charge and sets out local after-school policies with the various partners. Currently,

a transition period is underway, and local governments are already developing a vision and policies, and setting up a partnership. From 2026, all subsidies will be allocated to the local government, who will then have full control over the funding, local policy and local cooperation. From 2030 onwards, an additional "accessibility" subsidy is planned, based on care for vulnerable children and children with specific care needs.

Links were established between leisure and children and young people in youth care services as part of the "Over Dremfels" call, which ran from June 2022 to July 2023. The link between leisure and children and young people in vulnerable situations was also explored with children and young people, through a political participation methodology, the "circle of participation", during the European Year of Youth. This process forms part of the preparations for the "General assembly on leisure and poverty" to be held in April 2024.

Twelve pioneers received a project subsidy to implement a new model of practice in which there is a "direct line" between childcare, pre-school care and after-school care for young children. In so doing, the intention is to arrange pedagogical, professional and structural continuity between these three basic early childhood services. By the end of 2024, these projects will be completed and recommendations for future policy will be reviewed.

In the field of education, we have mainly invested in cost control in schools. We are seeing a (growing) demand from schools wishing to implement or reinforce a policy for taking account of costs and poverty at school, and who are looking for expertise and advice to carry out their mission successfully. As a result, investments have been made to provide these schools with support and advice.

One measure not yet included in the action plan concerns the call for projects for local alliance networks, for which a budget of €7 million has been allocated. Thanks to these funds, 45 projects spread across the Flemish Region and bilingual Brussels-Capital Region are being financed to build or strengthen networks of organisations, players and citizens who are working in and around schools in the fight against child poverty, but who do not yet come together enough to join forces around specific children and their families, with a view to offering and seizing as many development opportunities as possible for these children in need.

We leave the provision of meals to the autonomy of schools. Nevertheless, the Flemish government supports establishments wishing to offer this service. We therefore encourage more comprehensive health policies in schools, of which nutritional policy is a part (Schools for Health, Schoolmelk, Oog voor Lekkers, projects such as Snack and Chill which encourage healthy, sustainable snacks in schools). Schools are informed and made aware of the importance of a healthy, balanced and sustainable diet, they are provided with relevant tools, and decree frameworks enable schools to set up initiatives with their local government and/or other partners according to their own needs and those of the groups they work with. Local governments have also taken initiatives to ensure that children and young people have access to food in schools. The Ministers of Education, Home Affairs and Poverty Reduction have also asked the non-profit organisation Rikolto to develop a webinar and inspiration guide on healthy and affordable food in schools.

Two projects have been set up as an extension of the Flemish food strategy. Involvement in the field of education includes a food project aiming to encourage healthy, sustainable and affordable diets in a variety of catering establishments, and a food project aiming to ensure that children and young people have access to sufficient, healthy and sustainable food.

Guaranteeing children in need effective, free access to high-quality healthcare

In Flanders, there is already an extensive and structural supply of quality family support in this area, regardless of the socio-economic status of the families in which children grow up. **Preventive family support** aims to promote the well-being of future parents and families with children and young people by providing well-being and health support to ensure that every child and young person enjoys maximum health and well-being benefits. As a minimum, preventive support for families makes it possible to achieve this objective by:

1° Providing appropriate support to future parents, families and their children and young people in the health, development and education of their growing children and young people;

2° Promoting and supporting social and informal networks for families and their children and young people;

3° Early detection, monitoring and/or redirection of risks and health, development, education and teaching problems in children;

4° Preventing infectious diseases in children, in particular by administering vaccinations;

5° Working to strengthen vulnerable future parents and families with children and young people as part of the fight against child poverty;

6° Contributing to the creation of a family-friendly environment throughout society by raising awareness and promoting support measures for future parents and families with children and young people.

Throughout their school years, children and their parents can visit student guidance centres (CLB) free of charge, where the focus is on the educational attainment and mental development of children and adolescents.

In addition to the efforts made by schools to support their students, CLBs are explicitly tasked with contributing to students' well-being, so that they can develop their knowledge and skills in the best possible conditions. They also use very explicit tools to survey student well-being, see for example <https://www.vwvj.be/nl/wat-gezond-leven-check-het-even>.

CLBs do not provide therapy or specialised supervision. When needs go beyond what the school and CLB can manage themselves, CLBs can refer to partners in the fields of social welfare, health or work from their pivotal function. The pivotal function is defined as the CLB's coordination between the centre, the school and external partners within the assistance and services, when more specialised help is needed and the CLB's supply is exhausted or unsuitable. It is the responsibility of the CLB to continue to monitor the student's progress after discharge. The CLB translates the information obtained from the social worker into usable information for the school.

For students with specific educational needs, a CLB provides action-oriented advice on educational support measures. The process follows systematic procedures, in collaboration with the school, parents and students, emphasising positive characteristics and the interaction and mutual influence of the individual and the environment.

Based on signals of the growing scale of the problem of mental discontent among young people, this measure is being systematically reinforced in Flanders. The action plan has already announced that OverKophuizen will be developed and strengthened, alongside the existing commitment to healthcare for young people. An OverKophuis is a place for young people (aged 12 and over) offering accessible leisure and support activities in an environment of trust and safety. Here, young people can find a listening ear and support in well-being matters, without being labelled. An OverKophuis is

managed by an OverKop network. This network is the fruit of collaboration between local government, youth work, youth welfare (Eén Gezin, Eén Plan), social welfare (CAW/JAC), education, mental health and voluntary work. In 2023, a framework agreement was drawn up regarding additional investment and the combination of federal and Flemish actions relating to frontline psychological care for children and young people (in particular, the roll-out of psychological care in OverKophuizen). In addition, in 2024, we will introduce a policy aiming to extend one OverKophuis in each frontline area.

The digital world and social media entail many challenges and risks. Commissioned by the Minister for Youth, the SAFEHAVEN platform has been launched. Developed in collaboration with young people, it focuses on consent and teaches young people (as witnesses) to deal appropriately with gender identity and respond to transgressive behaviour. Similarly, social media is having a considerable impact on the self-image and body perception of children and young people. This impact is correlated with an increase in the number of requests for help in a crisis, with the increase being greatest among girls aged 12 to 18. In this context, the Minister for Youth has awarded a voluntary subsidy to "Eetexpert" to develop the content and style of an innovative offering for young people and their social environment (parents, teachers and confidants such as youth workers, and influencers), as well as for children and young people in vulnerable situations.

In the context of the first 1,000 days, pregnancy follow-up should cover the monitoring of health and well-being, focusing on specific vulnerabilities. Born in Belgium Professionals is a digital tool for identifying psychosocial vulnerabilities in pregnant women and their families. Tailor-made treatment plans can be offered using this tool. In this way, psychosocial information is made available to the professional care network, in compliance with privacy legislation and the GDPR. This tool is a federal initiative deployed in Flanders since 2022. In collaboration with local partners, the Opgroeien agency supports the roll-out of universal screening in hospitals using the Born in Belgium tool.

Research shows that 12% of children have at least four negative experiences. The accumulation of dramatic events can seriously disrupt a child's stress system. Without prevention and appropriate outside help, trusting relationships become a potential source of anxiety, stress and insecurity, and children's healthy development is compromised. Developmental trauma affects quality of life and health, even in old age, and can be passed on from generation to generation. At Opgroeien Agency, we actively follow the King Baudouin Foundation's Overhoop project, which aims to support frontline areas in raising awareness, preventing and treating adverse childhood experiences and the potential developmental trauma that can result.

In order to properly address the impact of COVID-19 (or its measures) on children and young people, the Minister for Youth has commissioned a survey to identify the impact of these measures, and a study to establish a link between COVID-19, well-being and the public space.

To meet the increased demand for help after COVID-19, the Minister of Education has assigned additional funds to CLBs (€14 million in additional recovery funds until 30 June 2022). An investment was also made in CLBch@t (€122,000) and an additional budget was allocated to the construction of a digital platform (€500,000). From the 2023-2024 school year, an additional structural operating budget of €7,562,000 is designated to focusing on the psychological and social functioning of pupils and school dropouts, and an additional structural operating budget of €1,000,000 is designated to the digitisation of CLBs. These funds can also be used for staff recruitment. There is therefore additional room for manoeuvre to pursue the projects set up with the recovery funds and to continue to focus on mental well-being. In particular, schools have been supported by the provision of an additional tool enabling them to monitor and adjust their pupils' school well-being (€475,200).

Many CLBs have also joined the NIHDI agreement "Frontline psychological care via mental health networks and local multi-disciplinary partnerships", an initiative of Minister Vandenbroucke. This allows them to organise support sessions at school – in collaboration with their regional mental health network – to work on the overall resilience of children and young people. These in-class sessions are free of charge. The offer can be made on the advice of the CLB or at the school's request.

If they are facing harassment problems, young people, parents, teachers, etc. can visit the allesoverpesten.be platform, subsidised by the Minister of Youth.

For families facing complex issues, pilot projects have been set up in Flanders to work with local family coaches. These family coaches provide more comprehensive advice and support to these very vulnerable families. On the basis of the scientific research completed by the end of 2023, the Flemish government will draw up and distribute a framework to local governments and other relevant stakeholders.

Guaranteeing children in need effective access to sufficient, healthy food

In addition to school-based initiatives (see above), we are focusing our attention on the availability of healthy food for children and young people as part of the Flemish food strategy. In this context, sustainable development objective n° 1 (Healthy and sustainable diets as a shared mission), but especially sustainable development objective n° 3 (Combating food inequality) address this issue. Several leverage actions (agreements) were announced at the launch of the food strategy. Among them, the theme of agreement 6 is "Guaranteeing children and young people access to sufficient healthy and sustainable food". For the moment, no major stakeholder group has come together around this issue, and there is no trigger, but the intention is to set up initiatives to this effect. Dans la boîte, an initiative of the non-profit organisation Enchanté, was one of the instruments of dietary change selected in a call for projects in 2021, and they received a start-up subsidy. A few weeks ago, a ministerial decree was also approved: the Ministers for Agriculture, Social Economy and Poverty Reduction granted Dans la boîte a subsidy of €245,000. In this way, we are indirectly supporting children's and young people's access to sufficient, healthy food.

Under the heading of "disputed emergency aid", the 12 social distribution platforms, covering almost the entire Flemish Region, are being closely monitored.

Ensuring that children in need have access to adequate housing

For several years now, we have been carrying out local censuses of the homeless according to the ETHOS-light typology, which generally generate a constructive momentum around the issue among local governments and stakeholders. In 2023, the results from the local census were extrapolated to the whole of Flanders, and these showed that one third of the estimated 20,000 homeless people in the Flemish Region are minors. In addition to implementing the actions from the action plan to prevent and combat homelessness (2020-2024), Flanders is currently developing a "Housing First for Youth" programme aimed at young people at risk of long-term homelessness.

To help families cope with high energy costs, several existing support measures have amended their conditions for granting assistance, changing from status to income, and taking the number of dependent children into account. This applies to subsidies and loans for renovations granted as part of public assistance. Free energy analyses, a discount on energy-saving household appliances and multiple forms of renovation advice will be implemented in 2024.

In recent years, the social housing sector in Flanders has been reorganised with a view to improving efficiency and service. The social housing companies and social rent offices have been merged to form the housing association. There are 41 housing associations in operation, each with an exclusive area of operation. As part of this reorganisation, a new, unified model for allocating social housing has been adopted. As well as providing an overarching framework, the new allocation model offers space for local customisation tailored to the needs and requirements of vulnerable families and individuals. In addition, the housing association can accelerate the allocation of social housing specifically to young people who live or will live independently.

To ease the pressure on the housing market as a whole, Flanders wants to increase the supply of social housing and affordable private rental housing. Private developers and housing companies will receive financial incentives, in the form of a subsidy, to carry out residential projects, made up of social housing as well as traditional rental housing. Traditional rental housing is built by a private developer or housing company and then rented out to a defined target group of families and individuals looking for a home.

To encourage municipalities to build emergency housing on their territory, we launch an annual call for projects in Flanders to which local governments can submit tenders. In principle, the Flemish government will cover 50% of the costs. In total, there have been four calls for projects of this kind since 2020, together representing €36.3 million in Flemish subsidies for 187 projects, enabling 586 emergency housing units to be built. Our aim is to create a region-wide supply of emergency housing to respond rapidly to emergency situations, particularly when children are involved. A fifth call was launched in October 2023, for a total of €11 million. Local governments can submit a tender for this call until the end of April 2024. These will include housing for the homeless, in addition to emergency accommodation.

3.3. Wallonia

Childcare – crèches:

New legislation will enter into force on 1 June 2024. The decree governing this legislation was adopted by Parliament at its plenary session on 16 November 2023.

This legislation will make it possible to support, on the one hand, so-called type 1 care environments (crèches subsidised by the O.N.E. at level 2, childcare services specialised in early childhood and shelters with a specific approval to care for children aged 0 to 3) via a five-year programme and, on the other hand, the so-called type 2, other early childhood care environments (non-subsidised crèches, childminders, etc.) for the purchase of equipment specific to the activity, small-scale development and safety work or energy renovation.

In parallel with the review of the legislation, a cooperation agreement between the Walloon Region and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation has been adopted to enable the creation of new crèche places. The resulting Plan Equilibre 2021-2026 call for projects will enable over 3,000 places to open in Wallonia by 2026, more than half of which will be located in municipalities with a low female employment rate, a high rate of single-parent households, low per-capita income and a low coverage rate (below 33% of subsidised places).

Food – healthy school meals

On 19 November 2020, the government approved a subsidy of €420,450 to the Sustainable Development Canteen Collective (Collectif Développement Cantines Durables), to implement a pilot project aiming to distribute balanced, sustainable and free snacks in schools with a differentiated educational structure. Despite the health situation, this project enabled 320,000 snack portions of soup to be distributed to 5,000 pupils over the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The same collective was selected by the Walloon government on 15 September 2022, as part of the call for projects for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. The annual budget of €1,000,000 dedicated to each of the two school years under measure 3.4 of the Walloon Poverty Reduction Plan should enable between 1,200,000 and 1,600,000 free snack portions of soup to be served in nurseries and primary schools with a differentiated educational structure. This initiative covers the five Walloon provinces, with the widest geographical coverage, as well as all educational networks (communal – free – WBF).

Food – healthy meals outside of school

Food aid has been stepped up, in the form of calls for projects aimed at social supermarkets and social restaurants, among others, amounting to a total of €17,245,564. These calls for projects benefit children in particular.

More specifically, in 2022, two calls for food aid projects were launched, firstly in the wake of the war in Ukraine and its impact on growing needs, and secondly, following rising energy prices. Each of these two calls was combined with a budget of €2,000,000. As demand continues to grow and donations are falling, a new call for projects was launched in 2023, thanks to an €8 million budget that has been made available by the Walloon government.

Wallonia also approves and subsidises social supermarkets and social restaurant projects, and ensures that the various services, institutions and operators, both approved and subsidised, carry out their public service missions on behalf of beneficiaries in compliance with legal provisions. To date, 66 operators from the private and public sectors have been approved and receive an annual flat-rate regulated subsidy.

Finally, some local authorities have also been able to benefit from additional subsidies to boost support for food aid through the implementation of their social cohesion plans.

Health – High-quality health care:

The Integrated Health Associations (Associations de Santé Intégrée – ASI) have been strengthened by the integration of new care providers. For the first component, a budget of €1,600,000 has been planned to enable 53 integrated health associations (ASIs) to hire a social worker, up to a maximum of half-time. At the end of the first year, an analysis of the activity reports shows that, on the whole, this social worker has been able to identify and act on significant obstacles to accessing social rights for ASI beneficiaries. In total, across all ASIs, there were 16,913 patient interactions.

Health – care for children with disabilities

The "young above all" (jeune avant tout) project is an experimental project tested on the basis of a multi-year agreement since August 2019. This agreement has been extended for a second period of three years, until August 2024. Nine services throughout Wallonia are taking part in this scheme funded by the AVIQ. A support committee brings together representatives from the mental health, disability and youth care sectors. Stakeholders are monitoring the development of the initiative, which will be subject to an overall assessment at the end of this legislature. In the meantime, we intend to emphasise these cross-disciplinary collaborations to ensure optimal development for young

people in general. The collaboration agreements signed with the ONE and the health and youth care authorities, should give priority to future actions aimed at preventing the phenomena that lead to behavioural problems.

Health – health promotion

In terms of accessibility to services for vulnerable groups, Wallonia has had a health promotion programme, including prevention, since 2022. 74 operators have been approved for five years, and are drawing up their coordinated action plans in line with one or more of the programme's themes.

Theme 1, for example, has the general aim of ensuring a healthy diet and physical exercise. Another example comes from medical centres, which develop activities for their patients to promote healthy, sustainable eating.

The study of operators' coordinated action programs, and in particular actions aimed at children, will be analysed by the plan's steering committee, and recommendations will be forwarded to me.

With regard to improving professionals' awareness and understanding of the realities of living in vulnerable situations, working groups are currently being organised with operators in the field to consider a training programme for professionals.

Housing – access to housing:

There is an updated Permanent Housing Plan (Plan Habitat Permanent) 2022-2025 for campsite and caravan park residents (rehousing assistance with priority given to families, search for sustainable solutions) in progress in 25 Walloon municipalities.

In addition, from 2023, Wallonia has introduced an allowance of €125 per month for households waiting for public utility housing. This amount is increased by €20 for each dependent child, although this assistance may not exceed €185/month. Nearly 3,000 cases have already been processed, half of them involving families with children.

Housing – homelessness:

Wallonia has set up a Walloon Observatory on Homelessness (Observatoire Wallon du Sans-Abrisme – OWSA), which has been fully operational since the start of 2023. A €34,150,000 call for projects entitled "Zero Homelessness Territories Pilot Experiments" will allow various operators to develop housing for these target groups. When these projects are implemented, they will include support for particularly vulnerable groups (women, families, young people, etc.).

The Housing first scheme has also been stepped up and rolled out in rural and semi-rural areas. In 2023, €2,557,895.85 was allocated through this scheme, and an additional €2,000,000 of support via a call for projects supported the acquisition of real estate.

Also as part of the Housing First scheme, to allow for the acquisition of housing, €500,000 has been set aside to finance the hiring of a housing officer within nine social action centres and four housing promotion associations.

Reform of the social cohesion plan:

The preliminary draft decree on the social cohesion plan involves ensuring that actions are refocused on vulnerable groups, meaning that local authorities can redirect some of their actions towards groups who are the least likely to have access to basic rights and/or whose primary needs are no longer being met, i.e. single-parent families, children and jobseekers. Some local authorities were

already operating in this way, but there are now plans to explicitly include this possibility in the legislation. Four areas have been prioritised in this reform, two of which are those developed in the Child Guarantee: the areas of housing, and health and nutrition.

Target group: single-parent families:

A new website dedicated specifically to single-parent families has just been launched by the Social Action Directorate (Direction de l'action sociale) to help single-parent families in particular, who are often financially and socially vulnerable.

As part of its recovery plan, Wallonia has released a budget of €1,500,000 to develop a scheme to help and support single-parent families (family contact points). This scheme has enabled the recruitment of 19 social workers, known as "single-parent family contact points", based in various social service centres, health insurance funds and associations. At the same time, a support centre has been set up to help these contact point workers carry out their duties. The "Relais Familles Mono" encourages the development of partnerships and the networking of professionals and initiatives. The aim is to encourage actions that are adapted to the needs and realities of local residents, particularly in the context of reducing social inequalities among single-parent families. It operates throughout the entire Walloon region.

Policy to combat child poverty:

Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, through the implementation of the poverty reduction plan, are continuing their work on the prospective project dedicated to policies to combat child poverty.

A scenario-building workshop was held in November 2023 at the AVIQ to analyse possible transformations in the Walloon socio-economic context in order to develop different scenarios for public action in the fight against child poverty. The study will be completed by June 2024.

Children's rights action plan:

The children's rights action plan covers the years 2020 to 2024. More than 54 measures are included in the plan, which aims to bring together Walloon ministers to make children's rights effective in Wallonia. Furthermore, some of the projects required a cross-sectional approach and consultation with other levels of government. It should also be highlighted that around ten projects involved children's participation, and one specific project involved children's participation as part of the evaluation of the action plan itself. The children were able to make recommendations to political representatives. These recommendations will be used to design the next Walloon action plan for the years 2025 to 2029. As with the current plan, the next one will give priority to targeting the most vulnerable children and ensuring access to high-quality information and services for both children and their families.

3.4. Brussels: Flemish Community Commission (COCON)

Care and education

- Improving accessibility to childcare facilities

The agreement with the Lokaal Loket Kinderopvang (2021-2025) commits to providing accessible support to parents in their search for childcare, with a focus on vulnerable families. In particular, this involves developing a central registration system for childcare applications and answering parents' questions about Dutch-speaking crèches in Brussels (see appendix for 2021-2022 figures). In addition, the Lokaal Loket Kinderopvang organises several educational activities for

childcare professionals (organisation of regional partnerships, training on the social role of childcare, ideas for reflection on childcare policy, development of brochures on financial access, a pathway on poverty in childcare, renewal of the PCSW tool for granting price reductions, technical training on working with the central registration system, etc.).

Operationalisation Lokaal Locket	2021	2022
# affiliated crèches	127	126
# childcare requests	5,441 (including 33.4% from vulnerable families)	5,733 (including 27.5% from vulnerable families)
# telephone calls per month answering childcare questions	183	183
# physical centres to answer childcare questions	29	27

- Increasing the capacity to care for babies and young children from low-income families
 - VGC step 2 places allocated since 2021: 322
 - Urgent care places (DOP) allocated by the VGC since 2021: 4
- Strengthening pedagogical quality with Opgroeien in Brussel
Opgroeien in Brussel organised training sessions (in collaboration with partners) and tailor-made support for childcare and preventive family support professionals. In 2022, the theme of the year was "Play", in 2023 "Multilingualism", and in 2024 the theme will be "Diversity".
- Opération Centre d'Enseignement Bruxelles (OCB) around themes in major cities (including poverty) + cooperation with the non-profit organisation Krijt.
Thanks to the "train-the-trainer" training provided by the non-profit organisation Krijt to 12 education support staff members, the OCB will be able to offer a course on cost policy to a larger number of schools (2022-2023 school year: 10 schools; 2023-2024 school year: 15 schools). In addition, there are pathways to combat poverty and training courses open to all schools, not forgetting the issue of poverty, which is also addressed in the inter-school range of training courses with a different focus (for example, training courses on parental involvement, diversity and moments of transition).
- The VGC's subsidy policy for schools focuses on reducing financial barriers to participation in educational and leisure activities: a subsidy for school fees for vulnerable families
- The table below shows the budget and number of schools reached every year by the "subsidy for school fees".

Year	Budget spent	Number of schools
2020-2021	€750,000	124
2022-2023	€680,000	147
2023-2024	€725,000	158

- Social pricing plan for VGC playgrounds for vulnerable pupils
On average, 30% of the total number of children enrolled in VGC playgrounds use the

opportunity rate.

- OPPORTUNITY Centraal Meldpunt Schooluitval Brussel (central signpost for school dropouts in Brussels): customised individual and group support

The table below shows the number of primary and secondary school pupils who participated in an individual or group dropout prevention programme, by school year.

School year	Students on the programme			
	Primary education		Secondary education	
	Individual	Group	Individual	Group
2020-2021	28	736	274	1,477
2021-2022	45	564	299	2,656
2022-2023	52	1,674	349	1,637

- Initiatives linked to choice of studies and links with the job market

The VGC provides information to parents, teachers and students about the educational offer in primary and secondary education through:

- The [annual school guide](#)
- The onderwijsinbrussel.be/en website
- The [school search tool](#)
- The OCB supports schools during "transitions", those moments of transition in the school career that have a major impact on students' development.
- Launch of "Génération BXL" in September 2023.
- Génération BXL brings together the full range of services offered by Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels, based on 7 career skills.
- The offering is aimed at pupils in the 5th and 6th years of primary school, up to and including secondary education.
- More specifically, there's a [website](#), a [database](#) of offerings and a SELFIX [web application](#) for students.
- Tracé Brussel organises the "[Jump naar werk](#)" project with subsidies from the VGC and other organisations. Jump naar werk aims to ease the transition between education and the job market. To achieve this, the project organises workshops in Dutch-speaking secondary schools in Brussels, offers individual support in finding a student job, provides training for teachers, etc. Visits to companies are also organised with major employers in and around Brussels (e.g. the airport). There's also the "Graduation Day", a half-day event for students, during which they can take part in various workshops and listen to inspiring speakers on the subject. The complete offering is listed on the website.
- Tracé Brussel also organises the Leerwinkel in Brussels. This is an information office which anyone over the age of 15 can contact to ask questions about "learning" or "study guidance".

- Taalkot

The table below shows the number of young people who have taken part in the "Language Shed" (Taalkot) group programme offered by the non-profit organisation Abrusco, where they can learn Dutch in an innovative learning environment outside school.

School year	Number of young participants
2020-2021	36

2021-2022	32
2022-2023	35

○ 5 Time-in proving grounds

The table below shows the number of pupils reached per school year in the 5 secondary schools of vocational education where remedial and preventive measures have been introduced.

Schools	School year	
	2021-2022	2022-2023
Anneessens Funck	8	14
Don Bosco	17	66
Emanuel Hiel and Victor Horta	The whole student population	The whole student population
Institut Saint Guidon	10	42
Zavelenberg	The whole student population	The whole student population

○ Student guidance for second-chance education CVO Brussels (this often involves young people who have dropped out of regular education)

In the 2021-2022 school year, a total of 549 students received additional support for one or more issues (such as fear of failure, motivation and self-confidence)

The 2022-2023 figures have yet to be processed.

For the 2023-2024 school year, CVO Brussels can employ an additional VTE student assistant thanks to an additional subsidy from the VGC.

○ Kasterlinden Support Team

The Leersteuncentrum Kasterlinden supports around 1,400 students a year with roughly 140 employees.

The support aims to have a lasting impact on the development of students and teachers. In addition to the students, teachers and school teams therefore also benefit from support. Parents are also involved in the process. Thanks to learning support staff, students with specific educational needs can continue to attend mainstream schools.

○ Expansion of Kasterlinden type 3 special primary education

In Brussels, there are relatively few places in type 3 primary education, although there are many needs in the field. The VGC currently offers 19 places. Another class will be added next year, bringing the total to 26 students. On 1 September 2025, the VGC will open a new school specifically for this target group. The range of support services providing the right kind of support for this target group is also available in the same building: 10 boarding places, school substitute day care facilities, therapy and counselling rooms during and outside school hours, etc. The aim is to significantly improve the future position in society of students with severe behavioural and emotional disorders.

○ Establishment of school substitute day care for children and young people with specific care needs

The Kasterlinden multi-purpose centre (CFM) was opened on 1 September 2023. For students who are not learning or who have learning difficulties, the Kasterlinden CFM offers a day care service in place of school that focuses on regulating students' emotions. This accessible offer started on a small scale, with the aim of reaching 30 places for pupils in Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels by 1 September 2025.

- Talen-t-boost

The table below shows the number of children enrolled in language support activities for children aged 6 to 12 each summer.

Period	Number of children enrolled
Summer 2021	112
Summer 2022	111
Summer 2023	123

- De Poolster

The table below shows the healthcare users in the De Poolster centre for ambulatory rehabilitation in 2022 by category.

Category	Number of healthcare users
Group 10 (acquired hearing impairment)	2
Group 11 (CI)	10
Group 2 (intellectual disability)	22
Group 4 (intellectual disability)	25
Group 5 (mental disability)	2
Group 8 (hearing-impaired young people)	44
TOTAL	105

- Inclusive operation of VGC Playgrounds

The table below shows how many children with care needs participated in the inclusive operation of VGC Playgrounds each year.

Year	Number of children with care needs
2021	95
2022	122
2023	114

If the care capacity of the operation chosen is sufficient to meet care needs, children can play on the playground of their choice. Sometimes, the administration – in agreement with the activities team, the OCB and the parents – has to move the children to other workplaces.

- Encouraging integration into childcare services

Support for families with children with (presumed) specific care needs for the period July 2022-June 2023:

	Crèche	After-school childcare	School	Total
Families with children with specific care needs	39	1	2	42
Families with children suspected of having specific care needs	15	6	/	21

- Distribution of free laptops and Internet subscriptions to vulnerable students through schools

At the time of the first lockdown in 2020, the non-profit organisation STARTPROjecten, supported by the VGC, installed internet connections in the homes of 73 students from 13 Dutch-speaking secondary schools in Brussels who had no internet access at home. In 2021, the VGC awarded a new subsidy to STARTPROjecten to extend the internet subscriptions of these 73 students for a further year. After this, the subsidy was not renewed, with a return to full-time face-to-face teaching in 2022. The non-profit organisation STARTPROjecten continues to offer free laptops to schools that want them, and still provides IT support to schools at a reduced rate.

Teachers can contact an Infopoint directly for students with limited financial resources. The Infopoint provides free laptops for students to use at home. The Infopoint is part of Brussels' e-inclusion policy and aims to offer support to all Digibank partners, schools and organisations, as well as to all Brussels residents who are excluded from the digital narrative.

- Subsidies to cover the cost of activities

See the action: "The VGC's subsidy policy for schools focuses on reducing financial barriers to participation in educational and leisure activities". This subsidy can also be used by schools to contribute towards the cost of excursions and activities.

- Broad Schools

In recent years, Broad Schools have been extensively reformed, following a unified model. By 2024, all pupils in Dutch-speaking primary schools and in the first and second levels of Dutch-speaking secondary schools in Brussels should be enrolled in a Broad School. This means that there will be a total of 40 to 45 Broad Schools, run by the municipalities, thanks to content and financial support from the VGC.

Health care

- Huis van het Kind development

On 1 July 2023, a new Huis van het Kind Brussel subsidy regulation was implemented, providing funding for Huis van het Kind anchor points and physical locations. The consultation offices, where young children receive medical monitoring and vaccinations, are an intrinsic part of this.

	2023	2024
Anchor points (=consultation offices with a broad scope)	11	7
Huizen van het Kind (= childcare, games and meetings, support for parents, consultation offices)	8	10

- Enhancing the provision of support for children and young people

- On the one hand, efforts are being made to ensure the VGC's complementary policy is sustained, in parallel with Flemish policy (e.g. subsidising the CAW, vertrouwenscentrum kindermishandeling (centre of trust for abused children), D'Broej)
On the other hand, innovative initiatives focusing on the mental health of young people are being encouraged (e.g. cooperation between paediatric psychiatry and education).

- Bringing care closer
On the one hand, efforts are being made to make the VGC's complementary policy more sustainable, in parallel with Flemish policy (e.g. subsidising the CAW, the BraP-DOP).
On the other hand, innovative initiatives focusing on the mental health of young people are being encouraged (e.g. cooperation between paediatric psychiatry and education, an integrated project for wide-ranging "Well-being issues at school" care in primary school in three pilot municipalities).

- Student support centres

Number of students reached by CLB Brussels in 2022: 9,536

- Making healthcare more accessible to vulnerable groups
Many organisations are funded by the VGC to make healthcare more accessible to vulnerable groups. Here are a few examples:
 - Temporary strengthening of the non-profit organisation Foyer – providing information and raising awareness among for hard-to-reach target groups: the "translated vaccination" project called on experienced people to raise awareness among Brussels residents with an immigrant background who are difficult to reach through traditional communication channels.
 - Subsidising Huis voor Gezondheid to produce health fact sheets: a simple explanation of the health system.
 - Subsidy to strengthen Brusselwerking de Magenta, a project for and by parents of children and young people with additional care need.
 - Strengthening of the 8 Brussels associations in which the poor have a voice

- VGC COVID-19 vaccination in Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels

This action was based on three points:

Firstly, strengthening communication, awareness and vaccination against the coronavirus (in collaboration with BruZEL, LOGO Brussel and schools).

- Overview for secondary schools and all the links to material developed by COCOM and BruZEL to raise awareness
- Distribution of brochures and posters, letters to parents in 3 languages, consent document for young people under 16
- BruZEL information sessions for schools
- Translations of the letter and consent document for parents of OKAN students

Secondly: Facilitating vaccination points in schools (vaccination by BruZEL) → 549 students vaccinated in schools.

Thirdly: Facilitating group agreements between schools and vaccination centres → 283 students vaccinated with the school at a vaccination centre.

Healthy eating

- Brussels residents can make healthy choices thanks to tailored prevention and health promotion initiatives

LOGO Brussel has focused on the following concrete actions and projects over the period in question:

- Distributing healthy eating campaign materials and prevention methods
- Personalised advice on healthy eating (e.g. to the VGC Education Department as part of the "refurbishment of canteens" call for subsidies, to school head teachers as part of the creation of a breakfast shop).
- Organisation of parent cafés, workshops and webinars on healthy eating in schools and youth organisations, among others (e.g. smaakmakers webinar, "Healthy Ramadan" workshops).
- Course with Avansa Citizenne to enhance knowledge of healthy eating among teams of volunteer cooks, and enable them to prepare healthier meals.
- Implementation of the "halt2diabetes" project at Peterbos
- Loan of healthy eating materials and games
- Distribution of research on empty lunch boxes

The Slimme Zet 2.0 project, which encourages organisations to pay more attention to healthy eating and exercise, as well as to the following themes

3.5. Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Early childhood education and care

Issues and challenges:

Alongside the progress made, however, it is also important to highlight the difficulties encountered by the early childhood sector:

- Shortage of places + shortage of care staff; recruitment difficulties and staff turnover (professionals leaving the sector to go into teaching, where salaries are higher, less flexible working hours, etc.), → putting a strain on professionals in the sector, who are above all calling for solutions to their overload of work. The sector also requires better funding.
- With regard to the creation and subsidisation of new childcare places, a risk has been identified concerning the increased cost of raw materials and construction and renovation costs due to the financial crisis. This could lead some project owners to abandon their projects.

These difficulties have an impact not only on the number of places available, but also on the (slower) development of certain projects (cultural awareness, optimising places, etc.), as the resources available are limited.

In this respect, when implementing measures, it would appear essential to consider not only numerical data, but also more qualitative data, enabling a better understanding of situations on the ground to take account of these realities.

Discussions around inspiring practices and the results of research (in particular, see the ONE's research on non-uptake of leisure childcare services and childcare environments) are thus highlighted as beneficial in nourishing reflection and work on accessibility.

Finally, it should also be emphasised that a great deal of work needs to be done to support the changes brought about by the actions implemented and the questions that these changes raise. Similarly, certain professionals (less aware of the issues or used to working with more vulnerable groups) also need to work on their image, and this requires time, meetings and support.

Education and school-based activities

With regard to education, progress has been made with the implementation of several reforms resulting from the Teaching Excellence Pact, which meet several of the objectives of the European Child Guarantee. However, a number of issues and challenges also remain. The information is summarised on these pages, with additional details such as budgets provided in the appendix to the power-point presentation at the "Garantie_E_pour_l_Enfance_MFWB_AGE" seminar.

Objective 1.1 Identify and eliminate financial and non-financial barriers preventing children in need from attending early childhood education and care facilities, going to school and participating in extracurricular activities

The decree of 14 March 2019 aiming to strengthen free access to education, limited the scope of the fees that nursery school pupils can be charged, and in exchange, granted additional resources to schools. Since the start of the 2021-2022 school year, all years at nursery schools have been covered by these measures. They have been extended to 1st and 2nd years of primary since the start of the 2023 school year.

Regarding challenges for the future: *continuing to progressively strengthen access to free education in the other years of the core curriculum, developing the reflection process for the post-core curriculum years; deepening the analysis of the costs of supplies and activities, with a view to analysing the impact on the reduction of educational inequalities (accessibility, etc.).*

Objective 1.3 Remotivate children who are close to dropping out of school or training, or who have already dropped out, in particular by providing personalised advice and strengthening cooperation with families

A comprehensive plan with 3 pillars – prevention-intervention-compensation – is underway to combat absenteeism and school dropouts. The guidance paper has been adopted by the government; the drafting of the decree is being finalised; the adoption process is set to be launched during the first half of 2024. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and what causes it, to prevent dropouts and make plans for young people who have dropped out to return to school, by coordinating players in schools and from outside the school system. Some aspects of the project are scheduled for completion in 2024, while others have been postponed until the next legislature. *This complex, multi-dimensional project requires sustained attention, even more so in view of the significant increase in unjustified absenteeism linked to the health crisis.*

In order to develop a positive educational approach to career guidance, the Assises de l'orientation was organised in 2021, an educational approach to career guidance is included in apprenticeships, and the official career guidance portal was launched in June: <https://monorientation.be/>

Objective 1.4 Offer learning support to children with learning difficulties, to compensate for their linguistic, cognitive and academic shortcomings

The DASPA programme, in place since 2012, aims to gradually integrate pupils who are recent immigrants into school life. It provides for additional staffing resources for schools catering to these particular pupils. In 2019, the "French as a learning language" (FLA) programme was added, to better take into account the situation of non-literate students. The roll-out of the two programmes continues to be analysed on the basis of their monitoring and to identify any necessary adjustments. The (annual) DASPA monitoring report is available (2021-22, 2022-23).

Objective 1.6 Implement measures to promote inclusive education and avoid segregated classes in early childhood education and care facilities

The 2017 Decree guarantees the right to reasonable accommodations for students with specific needs in mainstream education. To strengthen collaboration between mainstream and special education, 48 territorial clusters have been set up, to pool the management of resources and coordinate reasonable accommodation and permanent full integration. By setting up multi-disciplinary teams, these clusters aim to support children with specific needs in order to promote their schooling in mainstream education. The monitoring report will be available in 2024.

There are also 26 inclusive classes and establishments (types 2 and 3 special education).

Objective 1.13 Set up a cooperative framework to promote inclusive education, provide after-school childcare facilities and opportunities for participation in sporting, recreational and cultural activities

The aim of the PECA is to provide equal access to culture and art, in line with the achievement of every child's cultural rights. This pathway is integrated into the core curriculum (with a minimum of two activities per year), and will eventually reach all pupils from 1st year of nursery to the end of secondary school (over 900,000 pupils). To support implementation: regional platforms to strengthen dialogue between schools and cultural and artistic operators; 10 groupings of cultural operators to enhance the cultural offering; 40 cultural specialists to support schools in implementing the PECA; PECA delegates and contact persons within the schools themselves; budgetary resources to support more artistic and cultural projects. A new portal: www.pecab.be

3.6. German-speaking Community

Data

There are no synthetic data or explicit statistics on child poverty in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. Nevertheless, there is data on groups identified as priority target groups for the European Child Guarantee, which can be used to shed light on child poverty in the German-speaking Community:

Children who are homeless or face serious housing problems:

In October 2022, in collaboration with the King Baudouin Foundation and a research team, a survey of homeless people and those facing serious housing difficulties was carried out for the first time. Children were part of this survey. The aim was to obtain reliable data on this phenomenon. The research team produced a report on the survey using reliable data and statistics. The aim is to repeat this survey at regular intervals (every two or three years) in order to implement policies based on objective facts.

In the appendix: *Zählung von Obdach- und Wohnungslosigkeit - lokaler Bericht Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft*

Children who benefit from alternative care

The youth protection service collects data on the number of children placed in institutions and foster families. These data could also be differentiated according to the age of the children, the placement authority (youth protection service or youth court) and the duration of the placement.

Activity reports have been published for 2018, 2019 and 2020. There are also plans to prepare one for 2023.

In the appendix: 2020 Activity Report (*Tätigkeitsbericht 2020*)

Children with disabilities

The data are available on the statistics portal of the German-speaking Community

Link: [Ostbelgien in Zahlen - Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft](#)

[In the appendix: 2022 Annual report \(*Dienststelle der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft für selbstbestimmtes Leben*\)](#)

Children living in vulnerable family situations:

The "Poverty Monitor" is a database that is constantly updated, and measures the poverty situation in the German-speaking Community on the basis of selected indicators. However, poverty is difficult to measure, due to the many ways in which it manifests itself (subjective perception of the feeling of poverty). It is therefore not possible to base the analysis on a single indicator, such as income.

The report contains the following indicators: Beneficiaries of social integration income or equivalent, social loans, loans to individuals, collective debt settlements, median net income, unemployment rate, Red Cross food aid beneficiaries, increase in health insurance reimbursements, minors in households with no earned income, income guarantee for the elderly, assistance to support the elderly.

Link: [Ostbelgien Statistik - Armutsmonitor der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft](#)

Children with an immigrant background (including refugee children)

There is no specific data collection for the German-speaking Community.

Appendix No. 2

Conclusions from thematic seminars

Organisation of thematic seminars

In March 2023, an online meeting was organised with the various contact points or "SPOCs" in preparation for the Belgian presidency in 2024.

It is important to note that the National Action Plan mainly lists existing actions, as it was drawn up in the middle of the legislature. As a result, the focus is sometimes on existing or planned measures.

The thematic seminars therefore enable us to assess the situation and identify gaps and good practices, within the given framework of the European Child Guarantee.

The agendas for the seminars were always drawn up in a similar way:

1. Presentation of what the European Child Guarantee involves and the general preparations for the Belgian presidency
2. Explain the reasons behind participants' attendance
3. The SPOCs of the various federated entities explain which action points are included in the part of the action plan relating to the competences of the entity they represent, and describe the current situation.
4. In a round-table discussion, participants are invited to briefly share their areas of expertise concerning the European Child Guarantee.
5. With the help of questions for reflection, a discussion is held that goes beyond a simple progress report. For example:
 - In your experience: what is working and what isn't?
 - What recommendations would you like to add to the existing Action Plan?
 - What are the challenges to be met as part of the next strategic programme?
 - ...

Conclusions were drawn up after each seminar, which allowed for a better summary of the main points of the seminar. They are listed and summarised below.

Participants repeatedly asked if it was possible to go further and formulate recommendations, so that we could, for example, include them in a memorandum for the next legislature.

A closing seminar will therefore be held on 18 December, at which the conclusions of the thematic seminars will be presented, together with a report by Anne Van Lancker on the implementation of the European Child Guarantee. Participants will then have the opportunity to continue their reflections and formulate their own recommendations. It is important to note here that this is not an evaluation of current policy, but rather a reflection on what can be improved in the future.

Conclusions from thematic seminars

Nutrition:

- What can be done to prevent **stigmatisation** and increase accessibility? It's not enough to advocate meals "for all children" → find a way to ensure that certain groups don't fall through the cracks.
- Hunger is certainly not a problem that only affects children in poverty: think, for example, of highly educated parents who don't take the time to make sandwiches.
- **Parental involvement** in school is essential.
- The need for a commitment to **local services**, and not just healthy food in schools: this will enable the services to reach a wider audience, and perhaps parents who are less involved in school.
- It's not enough to provide healthy meals, it is also essential to set up initiatives to help parents **learn how to cook healthy meals: education** in healthy eating is extremely important.
- **Ownership in schools** is important: one-size-fits-all solutions don't work (e.g. the needs of urban schools are not the same as those of rural schools); → schools need to be able to define their own priorities and ensure that everyone is involved in the process. In doing so, however, they shouldn't be faced with additional administrative burdens.
- Preventive thinking on access to fruit and vegetables for pregnant women.
- Bring free is no guarantee of success.
- Rely more on **contact persons** and set up an institution to govern them.
- **Sustainability** is extremely important in this field: people living in poverty are often the first victims of climate change.
- Social supermarkets that focus on support are a good practice.
- The challenge remains how to reach as many children in poverty as possible, with poverty rates continuing to rise.
- Involvement is important at every stage of the process: to increase participation rates and achieve behavioural change.
- It's often enough for something to be offered at school, without it necessarily having to be a hot meal.
- Can certain initiatives be made **more accessible**? (some initiatives are held back by strict food safety rules).
- ...

Housing:

- There are also other noteworthy projects not included in the action plan (e.g. "Housing First for Youth", "Winter Shelter", "Mind the Gap", "Upstream").
- A good practice is "family finding": focusing on the search for blood relationships, and therefore family members, to link the child to their family.
- Children from **single-parent families**: higher risk of poverty (which is set to worsen) → the focus should therefore be on the needs of single-parent families.
- **Social housing** is an important housing guarantee for children: the underlying problem is the shortage of social housing → a possible solution is more social housing.
- The private market can also have a social potential; there is a proposal to consider private owners as partners.
- Early detection of vulnerable groups is sometimes lacking.
- **The intergenerational aspect** of poverty is unavoidable: it is therefore important to anticipate problems from one generation to the next; the trauma-based approach is one option.
- **Insufficient emphasis is placed on prevention** (see, for example, the close link with domestic violence) and on the child's perspective.
- **"Housing First" as a vision** that is an integral part of policy, rather than an isolated initiative.

- The problem is the need for a diverse supply of affordable housing.
- Adapt regulations from a children's rights perspective.
- The link with care and mental health needs to be established in the context of this theme.
- **Negative perception** of social tenants leads to stricter conditions.
- **The impact of climate change** must not be forgotten.
- Avoid evictions through preventive housing support.
- Challenges related to children/families in **overnight shelters**: no room for children.
- Removing the cohabitee status is one possible solution.
- ...

Health care:

- It's important to make **healthcare more accessible** to vulnerable groups: through associations, leaflets to raise awareness, etc. → it's important to work on "health education".
- The link between poverty and health must not be underestimated.
- Although there are already basic services available free of charge, an extension to broader **preventive treatments** could certainly be useful.
- **General practitioners' contracts** should be communicated more transparently to the public.
- Particular attention should be paid to children who are illegal residents → there's a real lack of care here.
- **Contact persons and trusted persons** play an essential role: we should involve them, and above all integrate them, more widely.
- People in vulnerable situations who start to share information about the supply of care should be encouraged.
- Supporting **communication** is crucial, especially when it comes to mental health.
- Affordability of medical care is not bad, but it could be improved.
- General practitioners are generally easily accessible, but there is the issue of under-utilisation, particularly of **specialist care**, with negative effects on health: this should be remedied.
- Regarding mental health, efforts must be made to remove not only social and psychological barriers, but also **waiting lists**.
- **The multi-dimensional aspect** is important, and the link with the other themes of the Child Guarantee can be easily established (e.g. health and childcare).
- Frontline services should be multi-disciplinary.
- There is a need for **more integrated care**.
- In the context of **mental health**, it's important to look at children at the crossroads of different sectors (think health, disability, youth care and justice, for example) → so a multi-dimensional approach is crucial.
- Working with other political levels and departments is a huge challenge: sometimes you have to knock on many doors, especially concerning care needs in complex situations.
- Isolated projects are not viable: we need to avoid **further fragmentation** and adapt/strengthen existing structures.
- Youth medicine needs to be upgraded.
- **Prevention and participation** are important.
- It would be useful to offer free, systematic invitations at certain transitional ages.
- Price isn't the only factor that determines access to care: consider waiting lists, for example.
- Being present where the child lives is essential to the provision of frontline services.
- Early detection is crucial, for example, through systematic surveys.

- The **first 1,000 days** are crucial: the best option here is to focus on research (e.g. using a tool to initiate interviews with families).
- There's a **lack of indicators and research** that precisely define needs and can measure developments → usefulness of zero diagnosis. Certainly for the next legislature, it would be interesting to have a plan with specific indicators and monitoring.
- Special attention should also be paid to children with immigrant backgrounds and children in custody.
- Improving children's health also involves improving the environment in which they grow up.
- The **preventive role of schools** should not be underestimated.
- **Approach sex education** from a health angle, enabling students to talk about it if we know that it's a subject avoided at home.
- Isolation is a risk factor for families in vulnerable situations: once again, this demonstrates the usefulness of a contact person to build up a social network.
- It's also important to **involve parents** in discussions about mental health (see the example of Finland).
- The use of a systematic survey can enable more targeted interviews and more preventive action.
- ...

Education and care

- **Childcare is a crucial lever** in combating poverty.
- Improving access for vulnerable groups is essential: accessibility to childcare services must be improved.
- We also need to increase **the participation of pre-school-age children**: for example, by improving communication or input into the design of the offer.
- Knowledge about child poverty should be enhanced: for example, through **monitoring and data collection** (e.g. examining the number of hours a child spends in care).
- Engaging experts in real-life experiences as a solution.
- The fact that **information on financial interventions** (e.g. sport in this case) often doesn't reach the target group and is only used by those who already know about it, but don't really need it, needs to be corrected.
- It's also important to **improve the quality** of care, rather than focusing solely on creating new places.
- There are also **significant geographical differences** in the availability of childcare: there should be better territorial distribution, adapted to needs.
- Non-users face not only financial obstacles, but also problems of availability, flexibility... → strive to remove these obstacles.
- **Income-related places** should be developed.
- **A multi-dimensional strategy** as a solution.
- Education: introduce free/affordable and healthy meals and remove financial barriers.
- Consider ways to optimise well-being in teaching.
- The importance of a **local approach**.
- Work could be done on the gap between culture and school culture.
- Challenge: a high degree of autonomy for school authorities when it comes to fee policies.
- Schools should be more transparent **regarding fees**.
- Good initiatives, such as the non-profit organisation Krijt, should be better funded.

- Integrate **contact persons on a structural basis**.
- Address the **digital divide** between schools → in this context, physical and local services are still hugely important.
- Good local initiatives need to be encouraged and made more structural.
- Improving the quality of childcare and education is a potential area of work.
- We must not lose sight of the target group of undocumented children.
- Childcare must be available and understandable, and offer a **wide range of services**.
- Broaden the use of "leisure passes".
- Childcare is not just a question of availability, but also of retaining children within the structure.
- Childcare should be more representative of society.
- It's also interesting to look beyond the simple distinction between "poor families" and "other families", and examine the common characteristics of families.
- We often work on economic thresholds, but we mustn't forget **social thresholds** either.
- Enhancing the role of front offices.
- This theme also places a great deal of importance on **parents/families**: how can we ensure that discussions take place within the framework of a relationship of trust? How can we broaden knowledge through training?
- The link with other themes is also crucial here: for example, work, mobility and housing.
- ...

General conclusions

- The importance of parent participation (at school, local services, etc.).
- The importance of participation in general.
- Focus on local services, local approach.
- Structurally integrate contact persons and trusted persons.
- Sustainability is important, given the impact of climate change.
- Meet the challenge of reaching as many children in poverty as possible.
- Make initiatives more accessible.
- We must not forget the intergenerational aspect of poverty.
- It's essential to focus on prevention.
- The challenge of making services more accessible (role of awareness-raising, contact persons, etc.).
- The multi-dimensional aspect is important: all the themes of the Child Guarantee are interconnected.
- The need for indicators and research to monitor and strengthen knowledge surrounding child poverty.
- Focus not only on financial/economic thresholds, but also on social thresholds.