



Flanders

State of the Art

A REPORT ON THE 20 YEARS OF THE FLEMISH

South Africa Cooperation

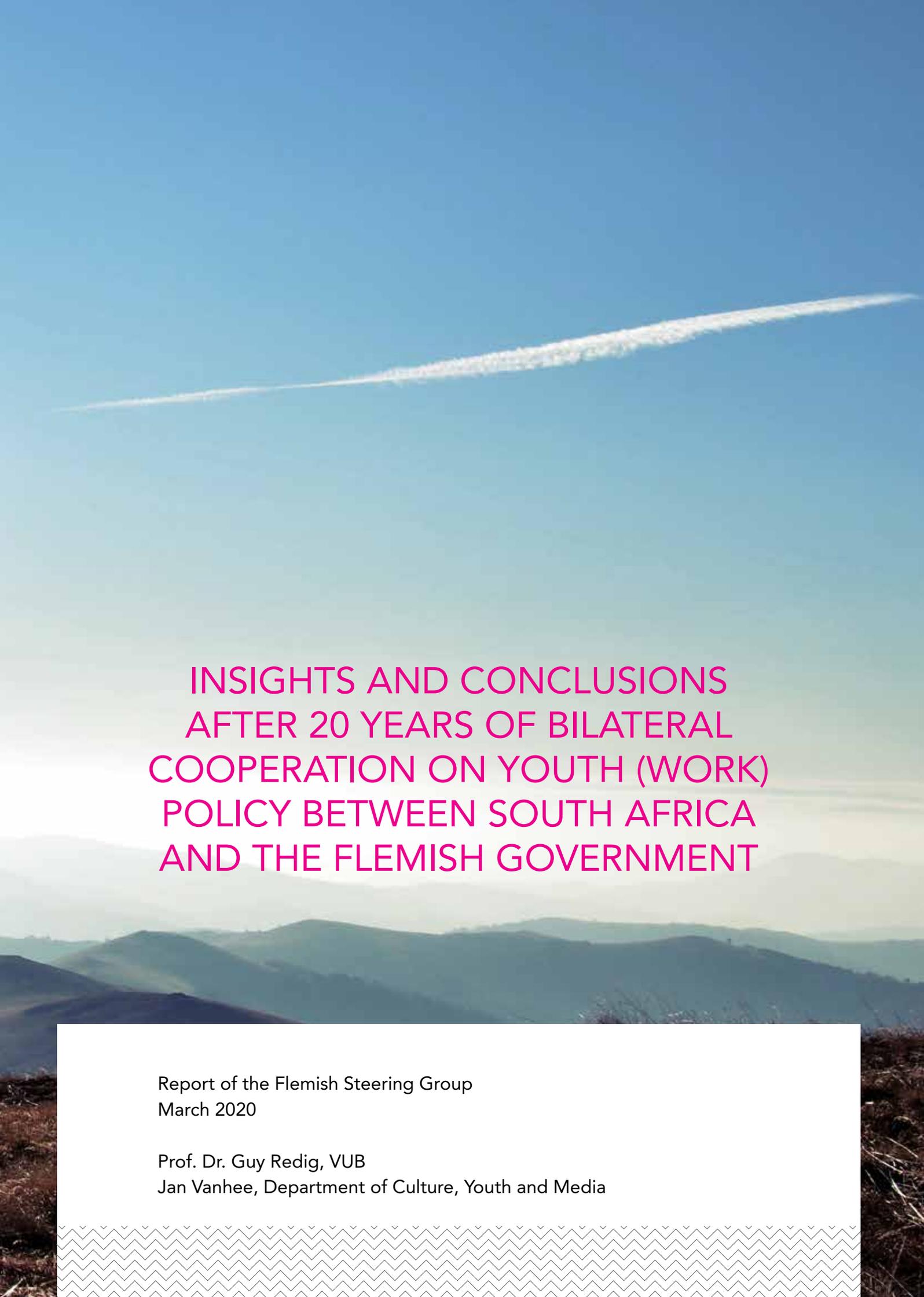


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NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
OUR YOUTH. OUR FUTURE.

SUSTAINABLE AND DYNAMIC, ENGAGING AND ENJOYABLE





INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSIONS AFTER 20 YEARS OF BILATERAL COOPERATION ON YOUTH (WORK) POLICY BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

Report of the Flemish Steering Group
March 2020

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FOREWORD

For more than twenty years, the Republic of South Africa and the Government of Flanders have been working together intensively in youth matters. Mutual curiosity and, above all, a great belief in the power of young people underpinned this exceptionally long and fascinating relationship. The two partners invested their respective visions, knowledge and experiences. This resulted in a long series of diverse initiatives commuting between South Africa and Flanders, involving hundreds of young, enthusiastic South African and Flemish youth workers and experts. They came together in dozens of exchanges and training courses, internships in Flemish municipal youth services, congresses and the coaching of youth and leisure centres. The emphasis was placed successively on training young volunteers and youth workers, supporting local policy makers, developing youth programmes in community centres and stimulating voluntary commitment in local communities.

An uninterrupted collaboration of more than two decades is remarkable. In fact, it is exceptional. Especially because this continuity developed in a very open atmosphere that was highly motivating from all sides. And there was at all times a conscious investment of human and financial resources, regardless of the changing Ministers and systems.

The report we are presenting here as a diptych is grafted onto the same shared motivation, namely a reflection by South Africa and Flanders on this collaboration. It not only tells a positive story, in all openness, focusing on successes and points for improvement. It is above all a narrative about how both governments discovered each other... and are still discovering each other.

This two-part report wants to offer more than an honest and delightful retrospective. It provides insights into how the sustainable collaboration developed in practice. And at the same time envisages a hopeful future. After all, governments that systematically and enthusiastically invest in young people, that want to make them stronger and encourage them to become active and committed citizens, immediately demonstrate how hopeful they feel about the future.

We sincerely thank anyone who contributed to this report and hope that they and all those who will later work within this collaboration will share the same enthusiasm and conviction.

For the Republic of South Africa,
Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women,
Youth and Persons with Disabilities

Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane

For the Government of Flanders,
Flemish Minister responsible for Youth

Benjamin Dalle





PREFACE: FRAMEWORK AND APPROACH

Status & objective of the paper

This report is part of a diptych of the National Youth Development Agency in South Africa on the one hand and the Flanders & South Africa Youth Steering Group of the Flemish government on the other. Both reports describe the formal cooperation between two governments, which began at the end of last century and continues uninterrupted until today.

The striking continuity of this cooperation should not obscure the fact that there were many different choices made in the course of two decades. Literally hundreds of youth workers from both countries found their way to each other's practices through study visits, internships, research and joint study days.

This report contains the quasi-exhaustive collection and classification of all the documentation that has been gathered on this long-standing cooperation. It concerns hundreds of documents, both official and internal notes, working texts and concept descriptions, supplemented with publications, photographic and film material and an inventory of employees and participants. This was painstaking work, which fortunately is now ready for immediate release and has been used as a basis for this publication.

In addition, this contribution offers a reflection on content, an interpretation and a weighing of what has been undertaken and organised. This part describes, processes, deliberates and lends relevance and perspective in all honesty. The rather journalistic approach is exceptional in this type of formal cooperation. It is the work of both 'operational' partners and is therefore neither a traditional government communication nor a political statement from the two governments involved.

So, in addition to safeguarding and providing access to the sources, the objective is mainly narrative. Telling a story that (hopefully) captivates with its successive plots and that - above all - makes learning processes possible and offers more opportunities for a future approach.

The text is thus a joint product of the South African partner (NYDA) and the Flemish Steering Group and may be attributed to the Joint Standing Committee South Africa - Flanders, Subcommittee Youth.





Lessons learned

The title immediately reveals a crucial objective of this publication: What can we learn from such a reconstruction? The learning processes from this long and intensive cooperation should contribute to an improvement of the practices, in this case international cooperation between two governments.

The narrative part of this contribution approaches the past mainly in a reflective way. It therefore makes considerations that are consciously somewhat distant from direct practices, aiming to place them explicitly in a broad time span. This means going beyond anecdotalism and, above all, seeking considerations that could be of interest both to other bilateral cooperation and, most certainly, to the continuation of the existing cooperation. Hence the English title 'lessons learned'.

For whom

The objective of 'lessons learned' makes it immediately clear to whom this report is addressed, namely everyone with an interest in international, in this case bilateral, cooperation between governments.

On closer consideration, this covers very different types of involvement. Within the governments there are the predictable actors, such as politicians (Ministers and parliamentarians), specialist officers and diplomats. In the field, the participants are civil society actors, especially at Flemish Community level, their interest groups and advisory structures. Even at local or intermediary level, there are certainly actors for whom international contacts hold promise. Regarding this report, the theme of 'youth' and more specifically youth work and youth development are of course central. Geographically, the emphasis is on the relationship between a typical Western European government and that of South Africa.

In other words, the wide range of target groups can extract from these reports whatever may inspire or help them.





STRUCTURE OF THIS PUBLICATION

This publication is structured as follows.

In a 'Preface' the time frame in which this cooperation took place is briefly sketched. It contains a concise exploration of the original relations and, in particular, an outline of how they developed after the end of the apartheid regime.

Subsequently, an initial description is given of the circumstances, the operating structure and culture, and the approach over the years. This deliberately does not zoom in on the thematic or obviously youth-related aspects.

This is followed by the thematic emphases (or focal points) that developed throughout these years.

Throughout this publication a number of quotes from very diverse Flemish stakeholders were inserted. They provide divergent reflections on this intensive collaboration for decades. We want to express our appreciation for these contributions to Katrien Van Belle, Herman Algoet, Yves Wantens, Marc Morris, Roger Claeys, Raymonda Verdyck, Joost Ramaut, Christophe Toye, Koen Lambert, Yves Vercruyssen, Bert Anciaux, Pascal Ennaert, Danielle Dierckx, Gerda Van Roelen, Eva Hambach, Sofie Van Zeebroeck, Bram Vermeiren, Elke Ijzerman en Steven Vanonckelen.

Finally, a number of general observations and recommendations are presented with a view to the future, i.e. post-2020.





THE EMERGENCE, THE ZEITGEIST

Why South Africa from Flanders?

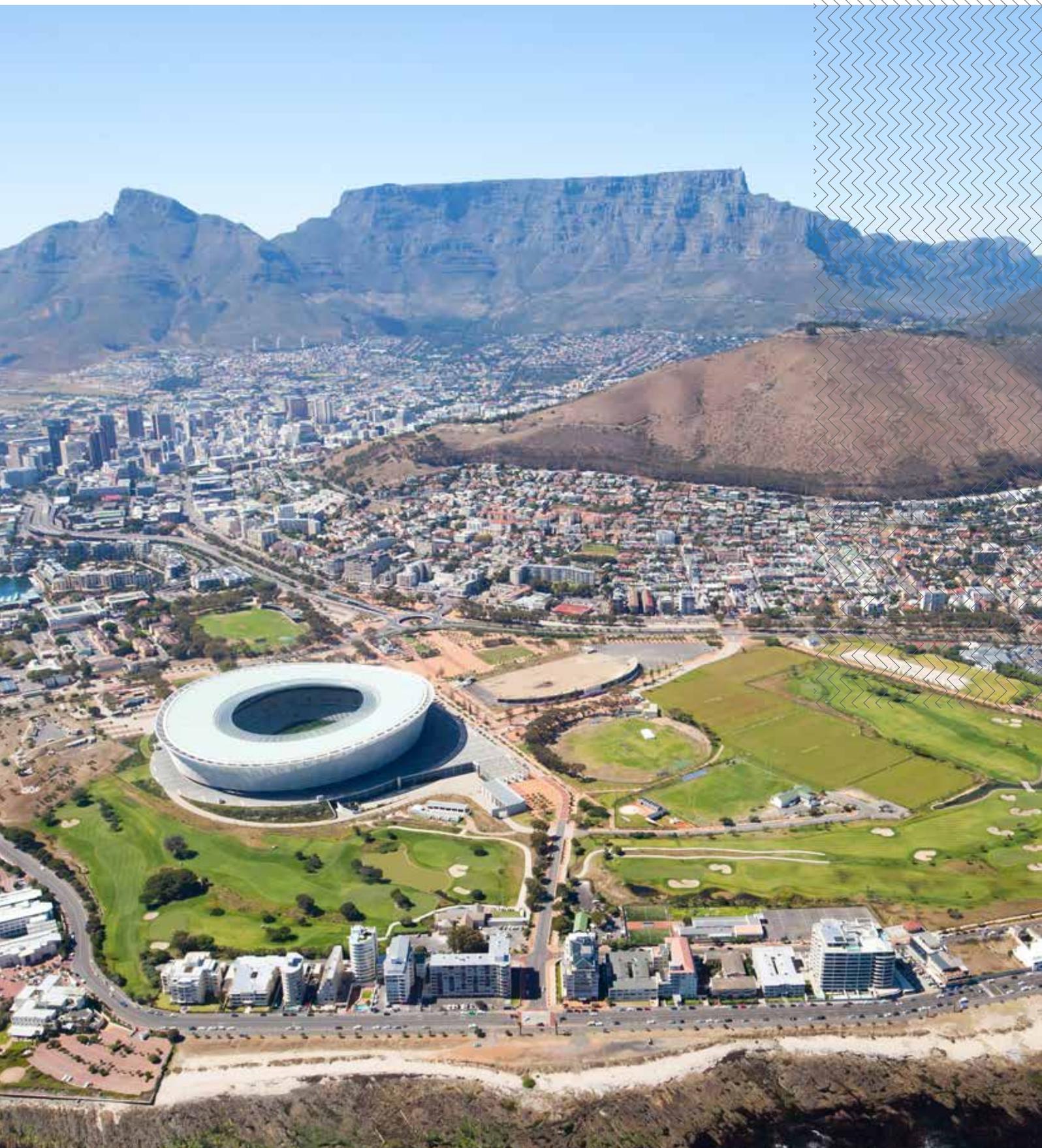
Old and recent momenta

The relationship between Flanders and South Africa goes back to the Boer War at the end of the 19th century. The linguistic affinity (Dutch remained an official national language until the 20th century) created a bond. The decision to be 'Pro-Boers' and against the imperialism of Great Britain seemed quite natural. The identification with David versus Goliath also played a role. This explains the many street names that refer to cities, political and military heroes of the Boers in almost every Flemish city, certainly in the period when the old city walls were demolished, and new residential areas were hurriedly created.

The critical reflections in the sixties exposed the horrors of apartheid. Whereas in the fifties and sixties, youth movements still shouted with conviction 'Sarie Marais'¹ and 'Rij maar an Ossewa, rij maar an'², sympathy vanished for many (not for everyone - cf. the right-wing pro-apartheid lobby 'Protea'). A strong anti-apartheid campaign arose (e.g. a ban on Outspan oranges, Cape apples, South African wines, etc.), especially with the new social movements. It continued to have a militant presence until the dismantling of the shameful regime and the arrival of Nelson Mandela as president of a new republic.

¹"My Sarie Marais is so ver van my hart, maar'k hoop om haar weer te sien. Sy het in die wyk van die Mooirivier gewoon, nog voor die oorlog het begin. O bring my t'rug na die ou Transvaal, daar waar my Sarie woon. Daaronder in die mielies, by die groen doringboom, daar woon my Sarie Marais"

²"Rij maar an ossewa rij maar an, weet je wel waarheen ie ga, wel naar huis toe rij die wa, rij maar an ossewa rij maar an"



*Beautiful country,
Plenty of contrasts although filled with harmony
Multicultural reality
Predicting our world of tomorrow
Roger Claeys,
Youth Advisor minister L. Martens (1995-1999) (vertaling: Guy Redig)*

The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa with iconic events such as Sharpeville, the murders of ANC leaders, the uprisings of young people in Soweto and elsewhere, and the haunting photo of Hector Pieterse created great sensitivity and sympathy for the Rainbow Nation, which emerged quickly and above all relatively non-violently. After decades of condemnation, South Africa suddenly acquired a special appeal with the combination of Afrikaans, an inspired political and social project and the emblematic Mandela. The old curiosity and even affection for Afrikaans (a language for which the Flemish people have a particular affinity, see <http://voertaal.nu>) confirmed this appeal. It was not surprising that the Flemish government (also relatively young) quickly devoted privileged attention to this new, hopeful democracy.

From within the Flemish youth policy, certainly the internationalist sympathies in it, interest in South Africa jumped to pole position. The intercontinental dimension, the cooperation with the South, the opportunities for intercultural learning, etc. presented an additional challenge which went far beyond the many contacts within Europe.³

This zeitgeist largely determined the priority choice to work structurally - including around youth - with the South Africans. From the very first contacts it also clicked between people, so that the explorations were quickly translated into more structural relations.





CHANGING TIMES

It is important to place this reasoning in a time frame. The atmosphere of that time changed steadily. As South Africa evolved, it became clear that the challenges in almost all areas remained particularly great (sometimes seeming insurmountable). The honeymoon of a new nation did not last. The Flemish partners frequently felt how hard and difficult the road to improvement, democracy, prosperity, identity, etc. was and remained. The situation in Flanders changed as well. The crisis thinking often weighed heavily on all the hopefully formulated projects, including internationally.



I will never forget the personal meetings I had with President Mandela and his supporters such as Nevil Alexander, Patrick Lekota, Reverend Beyers Naudé and Mamphela Ramphele (girlfriend of Steve Biko). Flanders also invested in the training of translators/interpreters and provided equipment to enable simultaneous interpretation for testimonies during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The sessions I was able to attend in person are also precious memories of the cooperation between Flanders and South Africa.

I am pleased to have been able to help lay the foundations for fruitful cooperation between Flanders and South Africa in the field of youth.

*Marc Morris, Honorary Secretary-General of the Flemish public administration
Department of Welfare, Public Health and Family. Deputy-director Flemish minister H. Weckx
(1994-1997)*

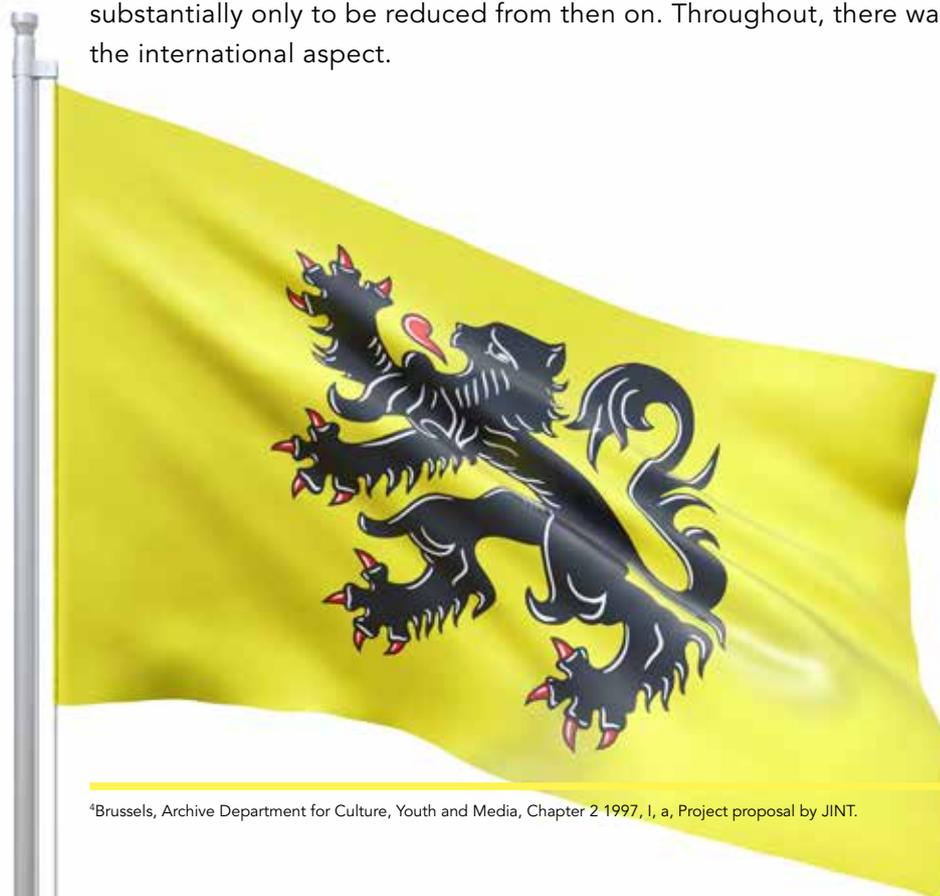
Even though the momentum of the South African revolution is over, the country retains a attraction. This is rooted in Africa's 'exotic' character and certainly the beauty of its nature, the socially, culturally and politically interesting project and the still existing overlap with European traditions, both Anglo-Saxon and of the Boers.⁴



WHY YOUTH WORK

After World War II, government attention for youth (young people), outside education and care (including the judiciary), gained momentum. Among other things, the lessons from fascism showed how important it was to approach the socialisation of young people in a policy-based way, including in the leisure sector. The steep rise of the welfare state (1950s and 1960s), the rising level of education and the strongly increasing importance of leisure time reinforced this government intervention. The first state reform (1970) focused on culture, including youth work. A series of decrees quickly followed that supported youth work at Flemish Community level by means of subsidies. From the 1980s onwards, municipal authorities also opted for their own youth policy practice, which from 1995 resulted in a decree integrating Flemish and municipal efforts (this decree was abolished in 2016). As a result of this, the focus on youth work became more explicit in policy, with numerous instruments and many hundreds of professional actors - not to mention the tens of thousands of volunteers.

In 1999, a Flemish Minister for Youth was introduced, along with comprehensive legislation which included a youth policy plan and other comprehensive policy instruments (administration, advisory structures, scientific research and subsidisation). Up to 2010, the funds increased substantially only to be reduced from then on. Throughout, there was always a special focus on the international aspect.



⁴Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 2 1997, I, a, Project proposal by JINT.



But what stuck with me the most is their exuberance, their kindness, their contribution to all the training courses and their eagerness to learn, but also what they taught us: respect for each other and another culture; to not approach life with a heavy heart, but to also enjoy life, their music, their dances, even in the restaurants (they suddenly stood up to sing their national anthem a Capella), and that moved me to tears each time again.

Katrien Van Belle, Staff Officer JINT (1989 – 2017)

JINT, a para-public institution whose mission is to operationalise international youth affairs (limited to young people), has been working on this subject since the mid-1980s. It included the bilateral cooperation with South Africa from 1997 (see below).⁵

Township Stories (Koen Lambert, director JINT)

Testimonials of young South Africans in the years following the abolition of apartheid. About hope, energy and the quest to move forward...

"I have nothing and I am nothing, but now I have time. Time to rest, time for my work, for the church, to relax."

"I've decided I don't want to get involved in drugs or crime, but I have no money to continue to study. While my friends are at school, I'm bored. I can't sit at home all day, but I don't have anything to do. And the only people I have around me during the day smoke dagga and commit crimes. I must have something to do, I must be able to go somewhere, with people who want to stay positive."

⁵Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 3 1998 - 1999, V, a, Note from Raymonda Verdyck: Project Proposal.



"My community is full of people with brilliant ideas. I think they just need some support and motivation. There should be information centres where young people can receive information about their ideas. I think if people in the community were better informed, they would be inspired to explore their ideas. If the local government tries to motivate and support the community in its ideas, people will be encouraged to go and earn an income and motivate young people to participate in different projects and activities."

"I went to the hospital to ask about the symptoms of pregnancy, because I thought I was pregnant. I met a nurse at the reception desk. When I told her why I was there, the nurse laughed out loud. She said: "What on earth?!" The people in the waiting room looked up. Then she said: "This little thing here says she's pregnant. Disgraceful! Maybe it's out of a lack of respect for your parents that you're now walking around with that garbage in your belly." She said many other things to me that made me run away. Later I found out that I was pregnant, but I think even an animal deserves better than that."

"My sister started a guest house in her own home. At first, she didn't get any support, but she didn't give up. And now the number of stays is growing each day. She is a role model to me because of her courage, her love for other people. She stands by what she believes in."

"I love Mrs. Moleleki because she is always positive. She has a positive attitude to life and gives people advice. Her advice lifts me up. She gives me the feeling that I have a purpose in life and makes me believe in myself. She's my English teacher and I would like to be(come) like her: to give advice and take a positive view of life. I wish she was our community advisor so that all other young people could see how important life is."

Source: *"Youth Perceptions of Development at Local Government Level"*, published by the National Youth Commission, Tshwane, 2002. With support from and in cooperation with the Flemish Community.

General conclusions on this cooperation

Over the past two decades, this collaboration has developed a number of characteristics that can be described as distinct or specific. This concerns both the structures that directed this cooperation and the culture, or way of dealing with each other.

On the structures of this cooperation

On the side of the Flemish government⁶

The stability of the supporting structure is striking. From the very beginning to the present day, the cooperation was concretely directed on the one hand by a 'steering group' and on the other hand by a variable number of people who participated in the many exchanges (in Flanders and South Africa).

⁶We use the term "Flemish government" because this stands for both the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region.

The Flemish 'South Africa Steering Group' always had the following characteristics:

- The chairmanship was held by an officer of the youth administration involved (in successive settings). This officer was responsible for the approach in terms of both organisation and content. Throughout this time, there have been two such officers - a fact that can be described as decisive for the sustainability and continuity. The officer was also responsible (via hierarchy or direct contacts) for the briefing of (1) colleagues and (2) the office of the successive Ministers (Weckx, Martens, Anciaux, Van Grembergen, Anciaux, Smet, Gatz and actually Dalle). The officer also coordinated the financial planning (including payments of subsidies to South Africa) based on regular financial and thematic reporting. This task also included the interpretation of the content and operational details of the bilateral subcommittees⁷ and the missions and receptions - see the detailed report on this cooperation. The close relations with colleagues who coordinate international relations from Flanders also received constant, intensive and constructive attention. The officer involved was undoubtedly the pivot around which the Flemish contribution to this cooperation revolved smoothly and intensively⁸.
- The members - in varying compositions - were invited to participate by the Flemish government and can be broadly divided into several subcategories:
 - Involvement of JINT vzw (www.jint.be). This youth association with a special mission (superstructure institution) was involved from the very beginning, often as a facilitator (in changing interpretations), and also as a thematic and organisational voice that advised on the basis of broad international youth involvement and contributed ideas. JINT also often played the role of reporter.
 - A number of 'youth work actors' who showed a specific commitment or explicit interest, especially at Flemish Community level. These were not so much representatives in the traditional sense of the word (appointed by others to make their voices heard), but rather acted as 'privileged' witnesses, with specific (and thus useful) experience, positions, etc. Numerous organisations found their way (sometimes temporarily) to the Steering Group in this context, including VVJ, JES, VDS, VVKSM/Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen, In Petto, JACs, VFJ, AFS, Chirojeugd-Vlaanderen vzw, VJR, Steunpunt Jeugd⁹.
 - People with specific expertise, partly from the academic community (VUB, UA, KUL), partly from an involved niche (e.g. Flemish Volunteer Centre)¹⁰.

It is striking that this Steering Group operated with great stability and sustainability. Throughout these years, albeit in varying compositions, almost all the thematic plans were prepared there. In the bilateral subcommittee as well, the officer was usually accompanied by members of the Steering Group.

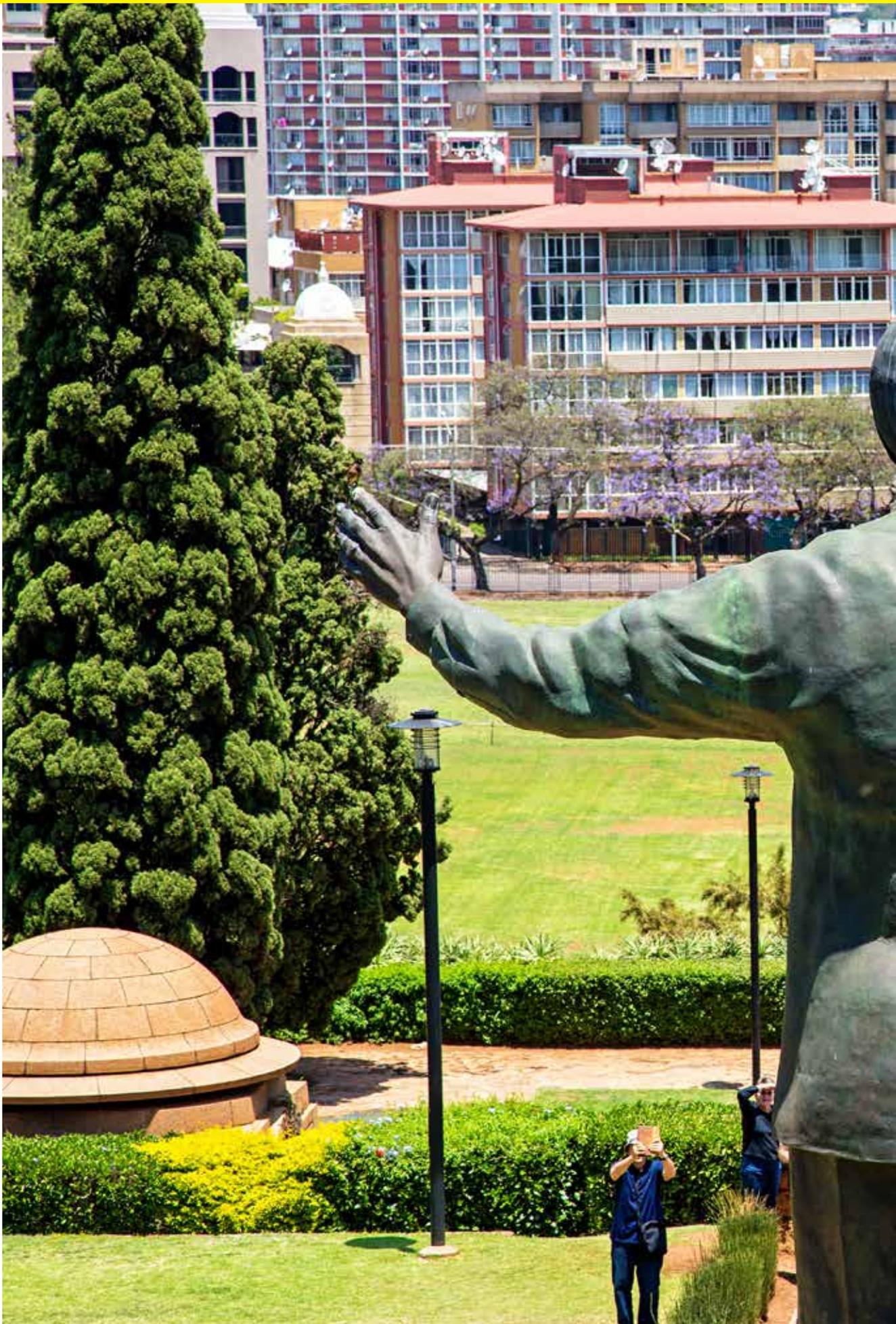
⁷ For the follow-up and implementation of the cooperation between Flanders and South Africa, the 1996 Cooperation Treaty provided for the establishment of a Joint Standing Committee. It meets, in principle, every two years and draws up work programmes for the implementation of the Treaty. For specific themes, e.g. youth and development cooperation, a subcommittee has been set up for this cooperation, in which only the youth-related aspects of this cooperation are discussed. These subcommittees altered/alternated in terms of meeting places. The agenda is determined by mutual agreement.

⁸ Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media

⁹ This list concerns civil society organisations that operate in Flanders as 'Flemish Community' coordination and/or support bodies and/or develop youth work practices for Flanders. In concrete terms, this involves relationships with various local youth movements, youth clubs, youth information, holiday playground work, youth work with socially disadvantaged youth, etc.

¹⁰ Steering Group. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 4 2000, III, b, Joint Cooperation Meeting 21st - 23rd of February 2000, Brussels: programme on youth work.







The cooperation was intended to expand youth work in South Africa with the aim of strengthening young people themselves. Youth work in support of young people's individual development. Concepts such as entrepreneurship, self-esteem, pride, etc. often recurred in the evaluation of the various projects.

At the same time, the cooperation held up a mirror to us and to youth work in Flanders. It made us realise that youth work in Flanders could count on a great deal of support from the government and - rightly so - received much appreciation for its work.

Even after I had left the culture division, I continued to closely follow the cooperation for a while.

To this day I have very nice memories of that time. The growing trust, the friendships, the many beautiful projects. The optimism of the South Africans and their great attitude to life which is that your own significance is also formed by others.

Raymonda Verdyck, Managing Director GO!

(Some of) the members of the Steering Group also supplied the many and very diverse basic memoranda that preceded the discussions on content and organisation and took responsibility for drawing up reports on site visits to South Africa. These memoranda included proposals for programmes, designs for research and projects, discussion papers on specific topics, etc. See also the detailed report on the cooperation in which these have for the most part been inventoried.¹¹

The self-evident shared involvement between the administration (Flemish government) and the field certainly fits in with the tried and tested practice that has characterised Flemish youth policy for many years. There are many advantages to this:

- The contribution of diverse types of competencies and experiences
- The embedding of this cooperation in various youth circuits
- The ability to call on partners, support, etc. for receptions, for example.
- It is important to note that participation in the Steering Group is not remunerated in any way (including any expenses). Throughout the functioning of this Steering Group, some members mostly considered this cooperation within the framework of their professional remit (e.g. of a youth or other organisation, including Scouts & Gidsen Vlaanderen, VDS and recently the former chairperson of the Flemish Youth Council).

There is also a sensitive issue to be noted, namely the not always constructive relationship with several formal youth (work) structures. The members of the Steering Group were never 'traditional' representatives. They collaborated mainly based on their personal commitment. This has not always been appreciated and has at times been viewed with suspicion by the formal representation bodies. Criticism was expressed that the cooperation was developing too obscurely and within a closed circle. On the other hand, the Steering Group made systematic efforts to communicate very proactively and dynamically. This was done through several events in Flanders ('Imbizo' on 16/10/2004 in Antwerp and 'Boost it' on 5/12/12 in Ghent), the involvement of various actors in delegations to South Africa and in receptions in Flanders, etc. There were also presentations at the Youth Work Commission and participation in activities of the Flemish Youth Council. Communication also took place through newsletters and the social media of the partners involved. Bilateral partnerships between organisations such as Formaat and SAAYC were encouraged and facilitated.¹²

For many years, Tine Cornillie played an important role as an intermediary between the two partners. Initially, she was seconded by Flanders (via JINT vzw) to the National Youth Commission (NYC) as coordinator of the operation in the four community centres (see below). After that she became an employee of the NYDA, where she was responsible for monitoring the cooperation between South Africa and Flanders. Tine (together with the Youth Division) made sure that the various activities were perfectly communicated, followed up and coached. In addition, she highlighted the spirit of cooperation and the significance of cooperation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and she established lively interaction between visions which did not always coincide, which then resulted in a common approach.¹³

In this context, special mention should also be made of the General Representative of the Government of Flanders, who assumes the role of representative of the Flemish government in Southern Africa.

¹¹ Example of a study visit. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 4 2000, III, g, Programme study visit 26th of November – 3rd of December 2000.

¹² Example of an event. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 14 2011 – 2012, IV, The event Boost-it.

¹³ Job description from Tine Cornillie. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 11 2008, I, g, NYC Draft Job description.



The cooperation between Flanders and South Africa in the field of youth is something to be proud of. To have been able to experience this as the first General Representative of the Government of Flanders during the term of office of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki in the 'new' South Africa, was a privilege. The bonds of friendship which were created then continue today and are a sign of mutual respect and appreciation. The enthusiasm and motivation of the young people from Flanders and South Africa also inspired many.

Yves Wantens, first General Representative of the Government of Flanders



This permanent diplomatic presence played a very important role in the cooperation. In order of succession these were Yves Wantens (1999-2008), David Maenaut (2008-2014) and \ Dr. Geraldine Reymenants (since 2014). Their interventions varied in nature and intensity:

- Establishing additional contacts from their specific networks, both with South Africans and expats
- Organising meetings where the Flemish government clearly manifested itself as a facilitator of various exchanges
- Diplomatic embedding of contacts with, among others, Belgian diplomacy.

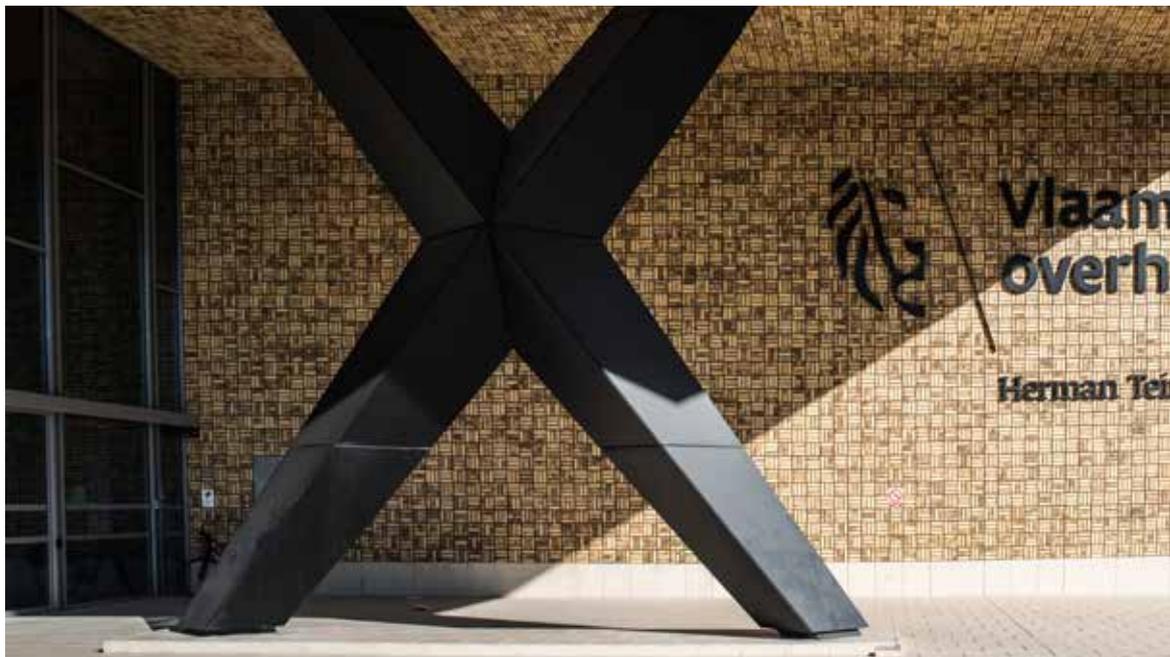
Again, and again, these permanent representatives played a stimulating and supporting role in the areas of cooperation that developed in South Africa.¹⁴



COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION

Cooperation between two countries is governed by many protocols. These include, inter alia

- the successive cooperation agreements, setting out the reciprocal commitments of the two countries.¹⁵
- the bilateral consultation occasions (in Flanders: A Subcommittee Youth (as part of the Joint Standing Committee Flanders - South Africa) - see earlier).¹⁶
- reciprocal visits, exchanges, missions, participation in European conferences and seminars, etc.¹⁷
- formal communication.¹⁸



¹⁴ Example of a report. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 9 005 – 2006, II, h, Design Report of the Prospection-visit: 18th – 24th of August 2006.

¹⁵ Example of a cooperation agreement. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 12 2009 – 2010, III, d, NYDA and the Flemish Authority Cooperation agreement.

¹⁶ Example of the result of a joint standing committee proposal. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 14 2011 - 2012, IV, o, Text Proposal Joint standing Committee Flanders – SA.

¹⁷ Example of a seminar. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 14 2011 - 2012, II, g, Knowledge Seminar on Youth Volunteering 24th – 25th of January 2012.

¹⁸ Example of formal communication to the ministers. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 9 2005 – 2006, IV, ee, Note minister in the Presidency Essop Goolam Pahad: 13th of October 2006 enn gg, Note to Bert Anciaux: 29th of September 2006.

- reporting, including statements of account, payments, etc.¹⁹
- exceptionally: the visit of a Minister.²⁰

These different aspects have two dimensions:

- Administrative: It was the respective officers who performed this work. Problems have never arisen here during the many years. Occasionally, the strict timing forced them to put in formidable efforts. Nevertheless, these administrative aspects went smoothly and were mutually approved.
- Communicative: The way in which the two partners treated each other. It is particularly important to note that the cooperation, almost all the time, transcended formal politeness and developed particularly warmly, openly and with a great deal of humour and empathy. Even at the most formal meetings, at times of difficult conversations and complex discussions, the atmosphere always remained cordial, with all those present being able to express themselves freely.

It is undoubtedly the combination of (1) accurate administrative work by the officers involved and (2) the open, pleasant but correct communication style in which this cooperation has been (and continues to be) intensively pursued. From the very onset, there was a strong focus on this mutual appreciation. Very often the partners discovered how different the reference frameworks were, but precisely because of the open and curious attitude, this was never an obstacle to constructive progress.



By jointly working on this, we must all render our 'self-evidences' explicit to some extent and sometimes question them. I found it interesting that policy makers, despite the political tensions, want to move forward with youth in South Africa, and that they would like to continue to call on know-how from Flanders, however little it may be. After all, the challenges remain great. I remember the explicit request to Flanders to jointly tackle a number of societal challenges with South Africa which are now very topical: violence against women and children, gender-based violence, intra-family violence. There is a huge need to educate and positively strengthen young people and youth organisations around these issues. It continues to be important that we keep our youth sector involved. Our partnership with NYDA is a perfect example of responsible development cooperation and partnership.

Department for Culture, Youth and Media – Youth Division (2006)

¹⁹ Example of the finances. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 18 2015 – 2016, I, r, Letter of Confirmation for the payment: 16th of May 2015.

²⁰ Example of an official visit of the minister. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 19 2016 – 2017, III, Study Visit Flemish Minister Sven Gatz: 25th of May – 2nd of June 2017.

This usually optimal working culture ensured that, with the many changes in scope and priorities, effective, feasible proposals were presented time and again. It is remarkable that the financial aspects of this cooperation varied strongly, peaking at a certain point at (on the Flemish side) €1 million (2007-2009) and then shrinking to €125,000. This huge fluctuation did not fundamentally affect the intensity or the good atmosphere between the partners.²¹



ABOUT THE CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF THE COOPERATION

The overall socio-economic and political situation

Obviously, South Africa and Flanders are almost impossible to compare. First of all, there are the huge geographical and demographic differences. South Africa is a young nation. More than half of it is less than 30 years old, a gigantic area in the south of a hot continent. Flanders offers a somewhat paradoxical picture of an ageing population on the one hand and greening on the other.²²

The way in which people, cities and all their activities are embedded in the very diverse landscape is in no way like Flanders, which is an entirely urbanised region, with man-made landscapes and medieval residential centres.

From a socio-economic point of view, the differences are impressive. South Africa is a country that, after decades of apartheid, deliberate deprivation and exclusion of most of its population, is trying to hold its own in the global economy. Meanwhile, Flanders (Belgium) is an old welfare state that has been trying to protect its core in recent decades but is struggling with the paradox of a relatively rich population (note: 6% extremely poor and up to 20% at risk of poverty) and a poor state. Nevertheless, there is a very big difference between the level of prosperity of both countries in almost all aspects of life.²³

Most of the South African population still faces shortages in the most necessities of life (water, health, nutrition, education, housing, etc.) and unemployment which paralyses the predominantly young population. Unemployment and generally poor industrial relations remain challenges for the country. Unemployment is high at 26.7% (early 2018), reaching no less than 64.8% for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 (Source: Flanders Investment & Trade). Flanders is confronted with challenges of a completely different dimension, but which are often also determined by socio-economic and socio-cultural factors.

²² Greening is most evident in the highly urbanised areas.

²³ The imbalance between rich and poor is one of the reasons for the cooperation between Tshwane and Maasmechelen. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 7 2003, I, m, Report Prospection Travel Tshwane and estimation proposal receiving SA.

Divergent terms

Policy, government ... government policy

In relation to the socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts, the political and administrative organisation of the two countries is very different as well. South Africa is very consciously working on 'nation building' in order to develop the whole nation as one entity. The provinces and local governments certainly exist, but the central government forms the most important level, as in a traditional nation state. The size and diversity of the country and the sometimes related, sometimes very diverse, linguistic and ethnic communities (South Africa has many official languages, these being Zulu (24.7%), Xhosa (17%), Afrikaans (12.1%), English (8.3%), Sepedi (9.5%), Setswana (8.8%), Sesotho (8%), Xitsonga (4.2%), Swati (2.6%), Tshivenda (2.4%) (Source: Flanders Investment & Trade)) give the rainbow nation its multicoloured character.²⁴ The crucial notion of 'race', which - perhaps paradoxically - prevails in South Africa both politically and socially, is striking, especially for Flemish people. The distribution is as follows: black (80%), coloured (8.8%), Indian/Asian (2.5%) and white (8%).



This is one of the reasons why the cooperation with the new South Africa has always inspired me. Based on a deep respect for Nelson Mandela, with his immeasurable courage to favour dialogue. Radically rejecting revenge and violence, resolutely opting for dialogue, full of empathy. Including for those who humiliated and gagged him and (fortunately without any luck) tried to silence him. He is still an exceptional statesman and personifies the model of the rainbow nation, where so many colours together make a beautiful, democratic and social whole.

Bert ANCIAUX, Senator, Flemish Minister responsible for Culture and Youth, among other things (1999 - 2009)

²⁴ Note with expanded information about the situation in South-Africa. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 1 1995-1996, III, I, Note to the Flemish government about the official visit to SA.



Government structures are strongly influenced by British traditions²⁵, although 'the Presidency'²⁶ has strong executive power (Pretoria), together with the government. Political traditions are still firmly rooted in the spirit of the liberation movement. In this respect, the search for a manageable organisation of the great diversity is no easy task.

Flanders, in all respects much more limited in size, has taken over a large part of the once central powers of the nation-state Belgium. In many important policy areas (education, welfare, culture, mobility, spatial planning, etc.), it has acquired almost full autonomy. This means that the Belgian level no longer has competence for these matters, except for multilateral international contacts. In this cooperation in the field of youth policy, the Flemish government can act completely autonomously. It is the Flemish Parliament that approves a cooperation treaty²⁷ and the Flemish Minister for Youth who implements it together with his or her administration. In this case, the cooperation takes place under the youth policy plan to be drawn up by the Minister for Youth for the duration of his or her term of office (5 years, currently Minister S. Gatz, until May 2019).²⁸



YOUTH, YOUTH WORK, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

It soon became clear that South Africa and Flanders barely share a common reference framework for youth. This has to do with many aspects, including:

- The definition of youth. Youth in an Anglo-Saxon-dominated conceptual framework means 'young people' in Flanders and not 'youth'. South Africa defines this category as being between 14 and 35 years old. In Flanders, 'youth' means the whole of children and young people, in other words an age group between 0 and 25/30 years. For Flanders, this is entirely logical from a developmental psychological and pedagogical point of view. In the Anglo-Saxon culture, children come either under education or care & welfare.
- Youth work. Here, too, the definition is difficult to reconcile. In Flanders, youth work means the whole of youth associations led by young people. They develop in leisure time, in which 'being young together', play and engagement are central. They can take different forms (e.g. youth movements, youth clubs, playground work, etc.), but they share a common identity. In South Africa, the term 'youth club' certainly exists, as the whole of private youth organisations (not comparable to Flemish youth clubs). These operate as NGOs or, better still, CSOs (civil society organisations) at different levels. They certainly form a civil society, but they are much more politicised than their Flemish counterparts (including national youth work) and are more strongly focused on youth welfare and unemployment, i.e. welfare-related themes.

²⁵ This applies, for example, to the organisation of the local authorities. In South Africa so-called 'afspiegelingscolleges' exist, whereby the executive is composed of a representative of all the political groups. In Belgium/Flanders, on the other hand, 'meerderheidscolleges' are in place, with only representatives of the majority going to the executive.

²⁶ <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/>

²⁷ http://www.etaamb.be/nl/document_n2003036178.html

²⁸ Different documents about the Youth and Child Rights Policy Plan 2015-2019. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 2014 2011-2012, III, The Flemish Youth and Child Rights Policy Plan.

When we arrived there at the beginning of the 1997-2000 cooperation period, we noticed the incredible eagerness with which they wanted to reform the country and give it shape again after the apartheid (which was abolished in 1995). They had lived through years of oppression and horror. They compared this period to the years of the war in Europe. One of us expressed the following reservation at the time: "You are so enthusiastic about the changes in South Africa that you want to go through the same evolution we had in Flanders during the reconstruction after the 2nd World War in a period of only five years. It took us 50 years ...".

Christophe Toye, trainer 1998 - 1999

- Superstructure: Civil society organisations (CSOs) for youth have two ‘umbrella structures’ in South Africa. On the one hand, there is SAYC, the South African Youth Council. This is an umbrella organisation, a meeting place which is mainly based on ideological-political movements, with a strong presence of the ANC Youth League, and which also performs highly politically inspired work. On the other hand, there is SAAYC, the South African Association of Youth Clubs, a meeting place of Civil Society Organisations, which is much more involved in networking, methodological exchanges and concrete service provision. However, SAAYC is not recognised as an umbrella organisation. In Flanders, the superstructures are built up differently. On the one hand, there is the Flemish Youth Council (independently brought under De Ambrassade), where youth work (youth associations) and individual young people, via elections, work as representatives of the interests of young people in relation to the Flemish government, etc. On the other hand, there are several Flemish structures whose special remit is to support youth (work) policy. These include (1) De Ambrassade, (2) JINT for international youth projects, (3) VVJ as umbrella organisation for local youth policy, (4) the Children’s Rights Knowledge Centre and (5) the Children’s Rights Coalition. In addition, the Flemish Parliament also has a Children’s Rights Commissioner within its services who operates from the legislature.
- Youth administrations. The way in which the two countries embed their public services for youth is very different. In South Africa, the original National Youth Commission (NYC) was an administration led by commissioners who came under the ‘Minister in the Presidency’, a kind of Chancellor who oversaw the internal organisation (at the time: Dr. Essop Pahad). In 2009, this NYC merged with the large Umsobomvu Youth Fund to form the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). This became an executive service, still embedded with the Minister in the Presidency. The NYDA is staffed by officers who are part of a more traditional ministerial hierarchy. Both the NYC and the current NYDA have several very explicit powers, e.g. the National Youth Service, which are coordinated on an executive basis. The original NYC, as the NYDA today, had a horizontal responsibility, namely, to try to make the focus on youth active and accurate in the various sector-specific ministries. The current NYDA has a devolved service in each province, which is responsible for, among other things, the more local implementation of NYDA programmes, including through cooperation with the local authorities and CSOs at provincial level²⁹. (Lwazi Mboyi: The history of youth work – The South African perspective, see https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084952/YK_Youth_Work_vol_2.pdf)
- Youth policy or youth development. The term youth policy, which was also defined by a decree in Flanders, is not common in South Africa. Youth development (‘jeugdontwikkeling/ jongerenontwikkeling’) is used as the whole range of measures aimed at young people. Whereas Flanders has a youth policy plan in place, no real equivalents exist in South Africa. However, there are the National Youth Policy, as an implementation platform for the application of youth development, and the integrated policy plans of the local authorities.

²⁹ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/-the-history-of-youth-work-in-europe-and-its-relevance-for-today-s-youth-work-policy-2nd-workshop>

Social and terminological confusion

Setting priorities

Despite the great differences in terminology and the underlying approach to youth and policy, the communication was not problematic. The divergence, even in basic terms, never caused any real discussion or any disturbing confusion.

Nor did it ever become an objective to converge the two partners in terms of terminology... as far as this would even be possible. The two reference frameworks existed alongside each other. Nevertheless, it is very important to always interpret the differences in their historical and current context. This may not have been given enough attention at times, certainly in the case of exchanges or missions, although all the programmes made time for it. However, it is almost impossible to properly explain in brief terms the many aspects in which the two countries differ.

Paradoxical objectives

Much more important than the different social, terminological reference frameworks are the sometimes paradoxical (apparent) contradictions that showed from the objectives that were set in the cooperation. Of course, both partners have always shared the basic vision that young people deserve the best possible development opportunities and that governments can and must play a very important role in this respect.

When interpreting 'the best possible development opportunities', it turned out that there was a different hierarchy in the values that were put forward by South Africa on the one hand and Flanders on the other.

It quickly became clear that it is literally vital for South Africa to make young people as strong as possible, because they can only achieve a hopeful future through a combination of perseverance and specific competencies such as leadership.

South African researchers with scientific expertise are very committed to the society in which they conduct research. Practices are measured and analysed to get to work immediately: to change the reality or to remind politicians of their responsibilities. Research is conducted much more outside the academic context than in Flanders. This means that social relevance and applicability have a high priority. The passion and power of the civil servants, volunteers, researchers, and politicians, with whom I have had the privilege of working together, are inexhaustible and deserve all my respect. The collaboration was an enrichment, both in terms of content and on a personal level. But there remain a great many challenges. Giving up is not an option.

Prof. dr. Danielle Dierckx, University of Antwerp, Poverty Expert (2004-2011)



In this approach the double notion of 'hard skills' and 'soft skills', as well as 'life skills' are used. The hopefulness relates above all to gaining a good position on the labour market and securing an income that will enable the development of a prosperous life. Therefore youth development in South Africa gives high priority to this approach. At the same time, there is also an emphatic commitment to a civic and community spirit and to belief in an open, democratic South African nation.³⁰

The Flemish approach to youth work is based on a different starting point. This mainly involves encouraging young people and giving them the opportunity to organise themselves with great autonomy and voluntary commitment, while also paying much attention to 'being young together', play and fun, creativity and commitment to each other and to society. This objective is closely in line with what is defined as youth work in Flanders.



³⁰In South-Africa the focus is on skills. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 11 2008, I, ii, Action Fiche for SA: Youth Empowerment through Culture and Sport Programme.





On the South African return visit, we spent the night in Ghent, close to the Citadelpark. On that evening one of the famous and at the time infamous Belmondo parties was taking place at the SMAK of Jan Hoet. We all went there together. The South Africans made a great impression with a number of rhythmic group dances to the rhythm of Western dance beats. We wanted to go back to the hotel on foot, but the South Africans didn't like that. A few phone calls later, two huge luxury SUVs were waiting for the South Africans at the front entrance of the SMAK. The embassy had made its vehicles available to them. However, there was no room for us, the Flemish people, so we had to go home on foot.

Pascal Ennaert - 'Coordinator of the Vlaamse Kunstcollectie vzw', advisor of Youth minister Anciaux 1999-2009

Nevertheless, here too influence can be seen of more competitive thinking, the formulation in terms of 'citizenship' and the rise of a form of usefulness that is primarily translated in terms of employment and related abilities.³¹

The Flemish priority does not really work in a South African context, although nobody questions the enormous value of play, fun and self-organisation. Nevertheless, a more concrete usefulness always made itself felt when programmes were drawn up. Acquiring a small income through limited commitment, for example, figures strongly in the encouragement of play and encounters.

Volunteers and volunteering

A similar paradox arises with the introduction of the notion of volunteers and volunteering. For Flanders, these concepts are very clearly separated from the labour market - although their proximity is becoming increasingly evident³² and pressing. Essential to the Belgian definition of volunteering is, among other things, that it is not compulsory and unpaid and takes place for the benefit of others/society and in 'an' organised context. It is (was?)³³ clear that this approach is situated fundamentally outside the labour market. A large majority of volunteers can be found in the associations (in a wide range of sectors) and also within the authorities. They are legally excluded from industry.³⁴

On a professional level, the missions and meetings inspire me to reflect on my own practices and views, and to look for what we can learn from the South Africans. In Flanders we complain a bit too often that 'something is too difficult, that we lack the resources...'; statements which you hear less from the mouths of the South African youth. We met a lot of people who, despite bitter poverty, a broken family or damage to their integrity, pick themselves up again and even draw strength and positivity from a dot of sun (so to speak) to go on, while believing in a better future.

Eva Hambach, Director Flemish Volunteer Centre, member Flemish Steering Group (2011-)

The South African approach sees volunteering as a promising step towards increased labour market opportunities, including through the skills and competencies acquired, the networks discovered, and the discipline needed. The priority is on socio-economic rather than socio-cultural usefulness. Even a small fee can make a big difference to volunteers in their chances of survival. For many young people, it means an opportunity to build both self-respect and social respect. This reasoning also applies to the Flemish context, certainly in connection with socially disadvantaged groups, as often emphasised by the Flemish Network against Poverty. In addition, in South Africa an approach described as 'nation building' and 'patriotism' prevails which is hardly to be found in the Flemish context.

The South African approach is strongly determined by a principle that is deeply rooted in Africa and is presented to us through the term 'ubuntu'. It is about a fundamental belief and practice that you assist your fellow human beings and, especially, that you give shape to this in close cooperation, almost as an organic whole. Of course, ubuntu is a fundamental starting point for both volunteering and community building (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_philosophy).³⁵

³¹ A global picture of youth work in Belgium. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 3 1998-1999, II, j, Report of the study Tour to Belgium: 5th – 16th of March 1998.

³² A legislative proposal to exempt a monthly income of up to €500/person (€6,000/year) from both tax and social security contributions is currently under discussion. This measure is unclear in relation to the current limits on the volunteer allowance, which are much stricter (€34/day and €1,362/year). It is important to note that under the Belgian legal framework for volunteering, it is impossible to describe this approach as volunteering.

³³ See previous footnote in connection with recent initiatives by the federal government.

³⁴ Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 15 2012-2013, I, c, The diversity of volunteering in Flanders 2013.

³⁵ Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 14 2011 -2012, I, a, Proposed Cooperation NYDA – Flemish Government 2011 – 2013: Promoting and Upscaling Youth Volunteering in SA.

No choice, but rapprochement

How was this dealt with in the cooperation between South Africa and Flanders? It was clear that the order of priorities did not overlap but differed slightly.

Still, this difference should not be overemphasised. Flanders, too, clearly feels the pressure of socio-economic usefulness. Volunteering is considered almost naturally as a means of launching into the labour market or a therapeutic steppingstone to 'normality' or as a last resort for combating loneliness or poverty. The pressure from, for example, the sports and amateur arts sectors to substantially increase remuneration of volunteers is gradually becoming unsustainable - hence the legislative work around this issue. A clear ultra-liberal agenda wants to take volunteering out of its social profit environment and extend it to the business world or the hotel and catering industry, for example. In this context, the Flemish vision on volunteering is evolving entirely towards what also prevails in South Africa.

In South Africa, there is a growing focus on volunteering as a social 'driver', a way to put community spirit into practice, to build a caring society. It is also becoming clear that volunteering has a place in social life... and that it creates a civil society that must be a basic element of an active democracy. In this sense, South Africa is evolving towards what Flanders is aiming for (or aimed for?).

The exchange, the cooperation has really opened my view on the world and has also shaped me into who I am today. I even made representing a community into my profession later on. Now, almost 20 years later, there is still a feeling of bliss, the urge to go back. It is such a beautiful country ... with such beautiful people.

Yves Vercruyse, trainer – playground work (1998-2000)

This also applies to the focus on fun and enjoyment, and simply giving young people the opportunity to be young together. Young people will inevitably seek each other out. Numerous artistic projects prove this. During the many site visits, it became clear that theatre, dance, music and sports offer so many opportunities for this - and for many other purposes.

Understanding and mutual inspiration

The divergent reference frameworks have been and still are crucial in determining the content of the cooperation. They have always required constant reflection from both partners. This could sometimes be seen as a problem... which quickly disappeared, however. Because the differences in priorities and methods forced each of the partners to question their own choices. For Flanders it quickly became apparent that the ideological vision on e.g. youth work and volunteering was also under the influence and even pressure of an increasingly obvious mercantile approach. For South Africa, it soon became clear that young people, regardless of their precarity, always and everywhere need their own space, to have fun and be young together.





They showed an energy and drive which I do not always feel in Flanders. However, our nice models did not really seem to meet the needs of organisations. And then you just start wondering, "Are we getting too comfortable in our privileged situation?". Since then I have been deeply impressed by the strong (verbal) expression of young people who express their worries and dreams through dance, speeches, poetry or theatre. This is particularly inspiring and at the same time urges us to show modesty.

Sofie Van Zeebroeck, Deputy Director JINT, member of the Flemish Steering group

The cooperation put almost constant pressure on the relativity of each reference framework. Precisely because of this, the differences never acted as a brake, but rather as an incentive to tackle them together, with respect for other choices and needs. Not seldom did discussions and conversations develop during bilateral and other contacts in order to sharpen the essence of the priorities... and at the same time to put them into perspective. At no point was there any form of 'missionizing' to convince each other.

On the other hand, these discussions continued to be necessary in order to rediscover each other's position.

In the end, this is all about basic intercultural learning and cooperation. An explicit focus on intercultural differences remains necessary, not as a brake, but as a stimulus. These differences manifest themselves in very different aspects of daily life (experiencing and organising time, eating & drinking, creating conviviality, etc.) as well as in social processes (dealing with hierarchy, degree of (in)formality, relationship with authorised representatives, place of the authorities, etc.). It is precisely in these mutual learning processes that many of the values of the cooperation lie. Their sustainability proves that these processes usually developed successfully.





EVOLUTION OF THE BUDGETS OF THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT FOR COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA ON YOUTH³⁶

How was this dealt with in the cooperation between South Africa and Flanders? It was clear that the order of priorities did not overlap but differed slightly.

	Article 12.22: Training courses for youth workers as provided for in the work programme	Article 33.05: Local youth work policy project as provided for in the work programme	Total
1997	No amounts can be found in the Division's Youth Work Chronicle 1997		
1998			
1999			
2000	81.804,86	104.115,28	185.920,14
2001	81.804,86	116.509,96	198.314,82
2002	81.804,86	116.509,96	198.314,82
2003	82.000,00	139.590,00	221.590,00
2004	28.736,53	46.667,00	75.403,00
2005	No longer applicable	222.000,00	222.000,00
2006	No longer applicable	225.000,00	225.000,00
2007		Batsha Youth budget	
2008		Batsha Youth budget	
2009		Batsha Youth budget	
2010		Batsha Youth budget	
2011		100.000,00	
2012		125.000,00	
2013		125.000,00	
2014			
2015		125,000.00	
2016		125.000,00	
2017		125.000,00	
2018		125.000,00	
2019		125.000,00	
2020			

³⁶ Source: Chronicle 2002 Youth and Sport Division; Chronicle 2003 Youth and Sport Division; Chronicle 2004 Youth and Sport Division; Chronicle 2005 Youth and Sport Division Chronicle 2006 Youth Division

Thematic emphases over the years

Joint determination

In addition to the structural and cultural characteristics of this over 20-year-long cooperation, there are of course the (perhaps most important) thematic emphases. It was crucial in this respect that over the years the thematic emphases were always jointly determined. Both partners (countries) checked with each other what they considered most necessary at that time.

These discussions (or rather conversations) did not always take place in the same way. Certainly from 2004 to 2009 it was the two Ministers involved (E. Pahad and B. Anciaux) who, on the basis of a strong personal relationship and affinity, put a project on the table themselves (the choice of four local community centres as a meeting place for youth, culture and sports). This phase also received by far the most funds (from Flanders up to €1 million) and led to a very intensive mutual exchange between South Africa and Flanders.³⁷



³⁷ Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 9 2005 – 2006, IV, The Partnership with SA 2006: Capacity Building in 4 community centres.



It is more than 20 years ago that we landed in Johannesburg with a group of youth workers for an intense exchange with South African colleagues. I was part of one of the first groups that were sent on a mission. Both parties were still looking to set the right tone and to find the ideal programme.

I still have a vivid recollection of the trip, the discussions and the experiences with the Flemish and South African colleagues. The exchange also created a feeling of connection between the travelling

companions who now often work in different sectors.

Joost Ramaut, VVJ-staff officer (1998)

For the other phases, there was always a consensus between the two steering groups, which resulted in a concrete cooperation agreement and a detailed work plan, in which both themes and 'deliverables' (products, events, etc.) were agreed. This is set out in detail in the comprehensive report on this cooperation.

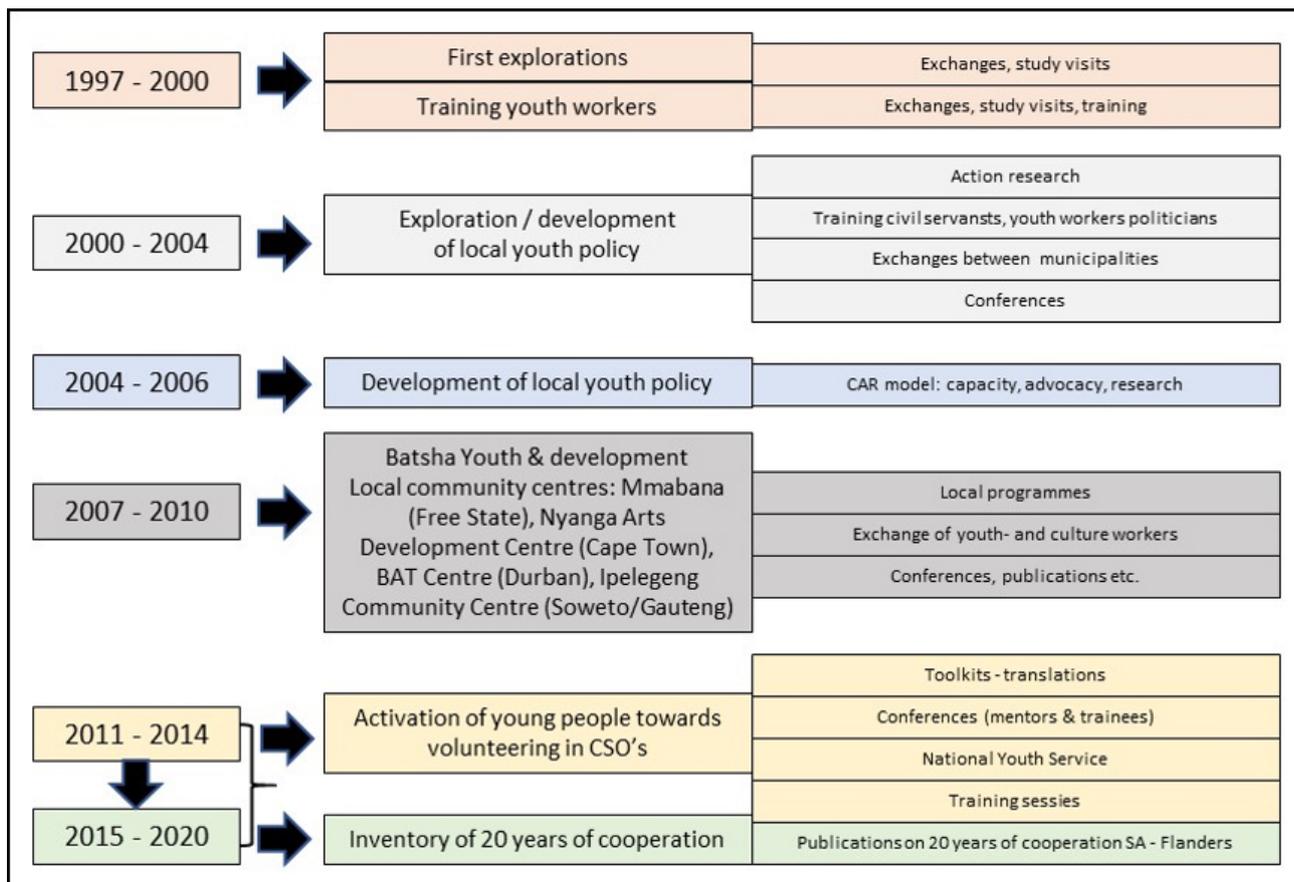




EVOLUTION OF THE THEMATIC EMPHASES

In brief, the evolution of the thematic emphases can be summarised as follows:

Figure 1 Evolution of the thematic emphases over the years - main lines



Brief discussion of the successive thematic emphases

The diagram shows the successive 'major' choices in terms of content. Each of these phases was interpreted and implemented in its own way. This is illustrated in detail by the inventory of texts, publications, events, etc. In general terms, the following can be said about this.

<http://fdfa.be/nl/verdrag-tussen-de-vlaamse-regering-en-de-regering-van-de-republiek-zuid-afrika-inzake-samenwerking>

³⁸ Documentation of a study visit. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 2 1997, IV, Study visit in SA from 2nd - 10th of March 1997.
Documentation of a training. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 3 1998 - 1999, II, I, Program training for SA youth workers 5th - 16th of March 1998.

Training of youth workers (1997 to 2000)

<http://fdfa.be/nl/intentieverklaring-tussen-de-vlaamse-minister-van-cultuur-en-brusselse-aangelegenheden-en-de>

This immediately seemed a natural choice for both partners, prompted by a two-fold need, namely to explore each other's practices and especially to work on the knowledge, skills and competencies of young people who are committed to this through youth work, youth development and CSOs. The instruments for this are equally predictable, i.e. a combination of site visits and training sessions. Experts from Flanders were deployed in the area of youth information, the organisation of youth initiatives, etc. These were often organised as exchanges, so that lively and organic contacts could grow between the participants as well.³⁸

This phase and certainly these instruments have come back time and again, at almost every stage. Because the first partner in South Africa was SAAYC, the focus at the beginning was really on the 'field workers' rather than policymakers.

Conversely, over the years the cooperation from Belgium has always tried to convey the power of play and the joy of volunteering. Children and young people should be allowed to play, have fun and learn by trial and error. Due to the economic situation this is often impossible in South Africa, but hopefully the cooperation will continue to inspire the fun and values of playful learning among young people.

Dr. ir. Steven Vanonckelen

Policy officer DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT, Flemish Steering group

Questions must be asked about the sustainability of this phase (as well as about further developments). What 'stuck'; how could these exchanges and training courses create an impact (i.e. a lasting influence on beliefs, opinions, views, etc.). Honesty requires this to be answered in a very nuanced way. Hundreds of young South African and Flemish 'youth workers' of very diverse nature passed through these (and subsequent) phases. No doubt these were very important experiences for them personally. This is a familiar evaluation in international youth exchanges. On the other hand, with both partners, it proved difficult to follow the participants in their further careers. Almost all of them disappeared into their own circuits, and it is not known to what extent these experiences continued to have an effect. This applies equally to supervisors and trainers. For them, too, these intercultural work experiences were/are exceptionally important. In general, it can be concluded (and this also applies to training, exchanges, etc. in subsequent phases) that only a promising and optimistic hypothesis on sustainability can be expressed. There are no longitudinal monitoring or evaluation results that can provide more empirical information here. Perhaps an element that requires attention?

³⁸ Documentation of a study visit. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 2 1997, IV, Study visit in SA from 2nd - 10th of March 1997.

Documentation of a training. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 3 1998 - 1999, II, I, Program training for SA youth workers 5th - 16th of March 1998.



Local youth policy

With the arrival of the NYC as structural and government partner, the demand for a sustainable impact was strong. Mutual consultations quickly showed that prioritising local authorities would be a good choice. Flanders had great in-house knowledge, experience and vision in this respect. For South Africa, it became clear that this should be done at local level. This broadened the target groups that required attention within the cooperation: the CSOs of course remained in place, also at national level, but the local (and provincial) officers and politicians were emphatically brought into the picture as well.

This project aimed to structurally anchor local and provincial youth policy and focused on education and motivation through conferences, publications, study visits, peer learning, research, etc.³⁹

This choice translated into the concept of action research: practices would be developed which would be monitored and described 'on an ongoing basis'. In this section some new choices were made, including (for more details: see detailed inventory):

- Scientific support (KULeuven, Katrijn Vanduffel, UA, Dr. Danielle Dierckx and VUB, Prof. Dr. Guy Redig)⁴⁰;
- The link between Flemish and South African municipalities, including Antwerp, Ghent, Maasmechelen, Kortrijk and Vilvoorde⁴¹;
- The organisation of three conferences bringing together local actors from South Africa and Flanders. This was combined once with a visit by the Flemish Minister for Youth, Paul Van Grembergen:
 - National Conference on Youth Development Level, 21 - 24 May 2002⁴²;
 - 2nd National Congress on youth and local government in Johannesburg, 16 February 2004⁴³;
 - Third National Conference: Local Youth Policy 2006 in Cape Town, 23 - 25 February 2006⁴⁴;
 - Training on the job in Flanders, in which several South Africans participated in a Flemish municipal youth service for one week⁴⁵.

Here, too, there is a need for sustainability. Some of the 'twinings' continued to exist for a while, but all ended. The many hundreds of actors from both countries also disappeared out of the picture. No follow-up (e.g. questionnaire after a few years, evaluation, etc.) was organised. This was due to a sudden change of priority (see below) on the one hand, and on the other hand to the transition of the South African partner, which saw the NYC transform into the NYDA. Interesting opportunities to acquire more knowledge remained underused.

³⁹ Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 5 2001, I, Project Proposal 2001-2002.

⁴⁰ Framework for policy analysis with the help from Dr. Danielle Dierckx and Dr. Guy Redig. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 9 2005-2006, I, b, Cooperation Flanders – South-Africa Program youth policy.

⁴¹ Expanded note about the cooperation on local level. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 6 2002, I, A, j, Note about the cooperation of SA and Flemish Communities.

⁴² Detailed overview of the conference. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 6 2002, III, d, National Conference on Youth Development Level 21st - 24th of May 2002.

⁴³ Expanded report about the conference. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 8 2004-2005, II, B, d, A report about the Congress 'Youth and Local Policy'.

⁴⁴ Documentation about the conference. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 9 2005 -2006, VIII, Third National Conference: Local Youth Policy 2006.

⁴⁵ Example of the content of a training on the job. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 8 2004-2005, VI, A, c, 17 areas of Competence (Training on the Job).

Four local community centres in South Africa

<http://fdfa.be/nl/memorandum-van-overeenstemming-tussen-vlaanderen-en-zuid-afrika-inzake-samenwerking-op-vlak-van>

The priority 'local youth policy' ended quite abruptly when the two responsible Ministers, namely Dr. E. Pahad (Minister in the Presidency⁴⁶) and B. Ancaux (Flemish Minister for Culture, Youth, Sport and Brussels Affairs) opted for a totally different approach between themselves. They evaluated the previous priority as too ethereal, too far from essential activities and opted for a change of course. Consequently, they decided to select four 'community centres' and to allocate a substantial operating grant to them, at least for a number of years. The objective was clear: to give these concrete practices a 'boost' to realise more activities at the interface of youth, culture and sport.⁴⁷

The selected centres were spread over South Africa:

- Ipelegeng Community Centre in Soweto, Gauteng
- BAT Centre in Durban, Kwa-Zulu-Natal
- Nyanga Arts Development Centre in Cape Town, Western Cape
- Mmabana Cultural Centre in in Bloemfontein, Free State.

The centres would be supported in three ways, namely through

- a direct operating grant which they were able to use autonomously for their operation
- central coaching and monitoring by a member of staff integrated into the NYC (Mrs T. Cornillie)
- a budget to give Flemish experts the opportunity to develop a project in these centres.

To this end, the budget for cooperation from Flanders was substantially increased to around €1 million per year.

The four centres grasped these opportunities, each in its own way, and were able to implement many projects during the period covered by this priority (2007-2009). The national coaching consisted of (1) following up and reporting on everything that happened, (2) providing assistance where necessary, (3) organising the administrative aspects for e.g. payments and (4) networking these centres at national level, getting to know each other's experiences and transferring them to other comparable actors in South Africa (dissemination). To this end, several workshops and conferences were organised.

During this phase, the Flemish Minister for Youth, Culture, Sport and Brussels Affairs, Mr Bert Ancaux, paid a working visit to South Africa, which included an active introduction to three of the four centres. The contacts with Minister Dr. E. Pahad were also intensified.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The 'Minister in the Presidency' is a member of the Cabinet of the South African President and is one of his main advisers.

⁴⁷ Documentation about the 4 centres. Brussel, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 3 2008, III, The 4-local community centres.

⁴⁸ Bilateral meeting between both ministers. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 8 2004-2005, IV, A, v, Program Visit Minister Ancaux 28th of November – 4th of December 2005.



During the changes of government in Flanders and South Africa (2009), this type of cooperation ended. The decoupling of the competences of sport, culture and youth put an end to the integrated approach. At the same time, the budget in Flanders was drastically tightened and reduced to €125,000. As a result, a different priority was urgently required in the short term.⁴⁹

It is striking that this phase was hardly evaluated and that the gathered knowledge and experiences were retained only to a limited extent. Nevertheless, a mid-term evaluation was carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) after 2 years of cooperation. For the time being, it is not entirely clear how these centres developed further. A later visit to the Ipelegeng Community Centre in Soweto, among others, made it clear that few lasting effects had remained. On the other hand, NADC continued to be a great success in Cape Town and is still active today, even though this did not seem very impressive at the time of Minister S. Gatz's visit in 2017. In addition, there was no longer any response from the various Flemish experts (mostly artists) who realised a project in South Africa. This can be seen as a clear weakness. The resulting conclusion is that stopping funding at too short notice poses a serious threat to sustainability, especially if this is done without preparation. A sudden termination will make an exit strategy impossible and cripple long-term effects. In this case, the project coach remained active within NYDA, so that in any case the contacts and experiences at central level were not entirely lost. This phase seems at risk if the political choices after elections change drastically.

In this phase, it appeared that the attention which Flanders pays to 'civil society' and the great faith it has in civil society, nevertheless led to an increased focus on and structuring of the dialogue with civil society in South Africa.

Activation of young people for competencies and engagement in civil society

After the period of the four local community centres and the drastic budget cuts on the Flemish side (Minister P. Smet and J. Schauvliege), a new choice became imperative. The South African partner (National Youth Service) placed emphasis on a combination of volunteering and working on competencies, with the aim of increasing employability. The Flemish partners concurred with this, also because the concept of 'volunteering' featured more explicitly on the Flemish policy agenda. Although here too the contexts were certainly not congruent (see earlier), a consensus was soon reached to concentrate on this. It was quickly decided in favour of a combination of a toolkit for dealing adequately with volunteers and the development of a dynamic database in which supply, and demand could be attuned to each other. By Flemish standards, South Africa is very extensive and in places very sparsely populated! The term 'Youth Service' was also specifically recognised in the partnership. This concept established a link between the coaching of local actors (the mentees) who focus on community building and competency enhancement of young volunteers, and the support provided to them by national partners (the mentors). A connection to the Ministry of Public Works, organiser of the EPWP programme, was able to free up part of the funding for stipends for local volunteers. The NYDA directed the networking of local and national actors. This was done through national meetings, training, etc.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 16 2013-2014, I, n, Ministerial Order on the allocation of a project grant to the SA partner NYDA.

⁵⁰ Expanded overview and background. Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 7 2003, I, k, National Youth Service Policy Framework: 2nd of May.



The Flemish partner had to reflect regularly on the position of this project in the offensive interpretation of the partnership (the youth work inspiration), but still found much common ground. South Africa's approach stimulated the questioning of our reference frameworks. At the same time, it became clear that the Flemish approach too was influenced by a more instrumental (and Anglo-Saxon-dominated) approach. This process is currently still strongly felt. Flemish youth work also offered a limited number of actors (e.g. JES) who consciously positioned themselves at this interface.

This theme is still ongoing and is currently being enthusiastically interpreted in a way that is relevant to both partners.

Youth research efforts

Apart from the frameworks of the partnership and the chosen priority, the two partners also shared the objective of systematic youth research. In Flanders, this had already been achieved through the Youth Research Platform JOP (inter-university approach to unlock the most relevant youth research). In the 2010-2012 work programme, Youth is explicitly mentioned in Article 2.3.4.⁵¹: "This cooperation will also look at research and youth policy work in relation to voluntarism".⁵²

The Flemish delegation formulated several proposals, including a link to the cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe (Partnership on Youth). One of the missions was joined by the person in charge.⁵³

On the other hand, NYDA opted for a fast and structural approach by setting up a Youth Research Centre together with the University of Johannesburg.

<http://www.nyda.gov.za/knowledge-management/Pages/default.aspx>

Yet, no links have been developed between the two actors.

⁵¹ http://fdfa.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12_Werkprogramma%202010-2012%20in%20het%20Engels.pdf

⁵² Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 19 2016-2017, VI, e, A Youth Policy Research Platform in South-Africa.

⁵³ Brussels, Archive Department for Culture, Youth and Media, Chapter 11 2008, V, c, Cooperation between SA and Flanders: Council of Europe.



Strengths and weaknesses analysis of the thematic phases and their sustainability

An evaluation of these successive thematic choices leads to the following conclusions, among others.

There are certainly several constants, characteristics and actions which regularly occurred, although in different forms:

- Training sessions: Especially at the beginning, there was a strong focus on the training of youth workers. The themes varied, but the approach was usually based on a combination of South African and Flemish training workers who carried out their work in small groups. The effects of this are unmistakable for both the course participants and the course supervisors, but they were not systematically inventoried.
- Site visits, fieldwork explorations. In almost all exchanges, including subcommittee meetings, time was always made for visits. These were of course limited in time (and space). Over the past decades, however, this has involved many dozens of meetings, where an actor presented himself (verbally and by means of guided tours or performances) and there was (admittedly limited) time for questions. These visits, although modest, were nevertheless indispensable to make the complex reality of the 'partner' and the rather abstract stories vivid, sometimes to introduce nuances, sometimes to validate.
- Internships: Especially in the early stages of the cooperation, up to the choice for community centres, several people were able to work and live in the 'other' reality for a somewhat longer period. This included job shadowing at Flemish youth services and developing an artistic project in some centres. Naturally, this involves fewer people but more intensive familiarisation.
- Conferences, congresses and fairs. Activities of this kind were organised during just about every phase, involving as many people as possible from both countries. Through a mixed presence at workshops, introductions, etc., reality also took on a much more concrete form. Formal and informal contacts provided a deepening of experiences and lessons learned. Of course, these activities were also a 'public' manifestation, where officials could convey their messages. These public stages are necessary, certainly in formal cooperation between two countries.
- Bilateral meetings, which naturally continued to take place, were about much more than just updating or evaluating the cooperation. It was precisely through the consultations and discussions on thematic and organisational choices that all those involved learned a great deal from each other.





GENERAL CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

Effects and impact

Drawing lessons and evaluating them are not the same thing. For evaluation, one reverts to the original purposes and the question to what extent these were realised (and the possible side effects). When learning lessons, one tries specially to extend one's knowledge in order to improve later practice.

Yet, they partially do mean the same thing. International cooperation always has its objectives, namely getting to know each other in order to learn through mutual inspiration and understanding. This certainly applies to the formal level, as a result of which the two governments develop a specific and usually somewhat privileged relationship. This also applies - mutatis mutandis - to the people involved. Precisely because of its remarkable sustainability, the cooperation between South Africa and Flanders has more than succeeded in this, albeit it in the modesty of the youth theme. The official partners share a broad and deep past, which stands firm and offers opportunities for much more.

I think the strength of the cooperation lies precisely in the mutual respect of the partners and the ambition of very strong South African leaders (in NYDA and civil society organisations) who, at their request, want to and can gain input, ideas and inspiration from youth and volunteering work in Flanders. This has led us to a capacity building tool for volunteers with a training programme, to an online competence diary, and to a number of exchanges and conferences of youth and volunteer workers at national level in South Africa to share experiences and strengths.

Bram Vermeiren, member Flemish Steering group (2011-2014)

What about the people, institutions, etc. who joined 'en route'? Without a doubt, the objective also applies here. The hundreds of people involved (young and not so young) will have to decide for themselves. This has neither been monitored nor systematically evaluated. That calls into question the sustainability, insofar as this was explicitly aimed at. It may be assumed that it is not great, measured by the number of contacts that persisted for a longer period or that developed outside the cooperation framework. It should be noted, however, that at the beginning and even in the course of this cooperation, the aspect of sustainability in the sense of longitudinal cooperation was never an item on the agenda as such. It has only been in recent years that this aspect, namely achieving two decades of intensive cooperation, has received attention.

In terms of content, it should be clear that the parties directly involved certainly had a lot to deal with, particularly as a result of the interaction between two reference frameworks that were so different. Herein lies a strong feature of this cooperation: at any moment, with every choice, a penetrating discussion was held that always resulted in a solid consensus. A very rich learning process that at least forced the parties to put their own reality into perspective... often to be enriched with out-of-the-box information. In this respect, we can speak of 'impact', which is the most penetrating form of influence.

It should be noted that as budgets were cut, and as a result of additional support for the exchange of workers on the ground being scaled down, the impact diminished. Without physical encounters between workers on the ground, a very important dimension in the cooperation disappears. This may be interpreted as a sore point and a point of attention for the future.

Monitoring and evaluation?

Reference has already been made to the fact that there was usually a lack of reflection after completion of the thematic phases. This is a weak and vulnerable point. Ideally, precisely because of the high level of sustainability, the cooperation should have made monitoring and evaluation a priority. This did not happen, perhaps because no one had foreseen this sustainability in advance. However, there was still (much) room for improvement. This does not mean that no deliberations or even thorough evaluations took place. Certainly, in the bilateral meetings, this aspect was always on the agenda. But there was no such thing as a system or chain of reporting. There may be a lesson to be learned here, certainly with respect to other projects and/or the continuity of this cooperation. This has been done in the interim, with the NYDA paying much more attention to monitoring and evaluation in the recent period.

Strengths, lessons learned

Nevertheless, several strengths can be reiterated:

- The almost perfect administrative follow-up and business-like seriousness. Credit should be given where it is due: the official follow-up was exemplary;
- The open, enjoyable and pleasant working culture. It was always interesting but certainly also enjoyable. The usefulness and the pleasure of the cooperation was a combination that made it appeal to everyone involved;
- The efforts to understand each other's reference frameworks, however diverse they might be, while not falling into the trap of seeing one as worthier than the other. On the contrary, in addition to the many differences, there have almost always been strikingly similar inclinations and concerns;

- The honesty, even in the more difficult moments of the cooperation, to tell each other clearly what was difficult or arduous. As a result, frustrations and misunderstandings did not get a chance; discussions about these, although sometimes complex and sensitive, made the collaboration stronger.
- Focus on the hinterland. Although the management in South Africa was completely different from that in Flanders, both partners spent a lot of time 'bonding' parts of hinterland. This certainly concerned the successive Ministers and their offices. For Flanders, there was the sometimes-difficult connection with, among others, the Flemish Youth Council, although a number of Flemish Community organisations co-managed almost on a permanent basis and were very involved. It is not surprising that public opinion showed little to no interest in this, certainly not in Flanders, where youth (work) is hardly a popular subject. Excepting disasters...;
- Documents, publications, reports: This cooperation produced a large and diverse number of documents of all kinds. These are very wide-ranging, but all interesting and forming a sustainable result of the cooperation (see inventory in this respect);
- Regular change of 'navigators' linked to continuity. Both partners combined constant renewal with the retention of several senior positions in their management systems. Of course, too much change can also have a negative impact on continuity;
- The search for locomotives: During the cooperation, regular use was made of opportunities to link the project either to other, obviously useful, projects or to events. And, reversely, the cooperation could sometimes be the locomotive for other, relevant activities.



Conclusion: What next?

Still promising

Over the past decades, the belief that this cooperation holds promise clearly prevails among those involved. It is not easy to provide crystal-clear evidence of this, partly because there are no comparison models.

On the other hand, it goes without saying that during all these years, both partners remained resolute. A more logical course of action would be to let such partnerships slowly erode after several years and allow them to come quietly to an end before setting up other projects. Such a practice certainly prevails in many other international contexts. Understandably, innovation always creates energy and curiosity. This decision was never taken, and not even considered.

The reason for this lies mainly in the ever-present challenges and a basis of mutual belief that together we are doing something useful.

As time went on, continuity also became a strong motive. Not out of habituation or reluctance to change, but because the strengths (see earlier) manifested themselves at each stage. Even though explicit monitoring and evaluation was very limited, the predominant inclination remained a quiet driving force for further action.

Great enthusiasm

Based on the previous point, there is undoubtedly enthusiasm among those involved ... for as long as the cooperation lasts. This means that although there is a question about continuation, those involved certainly have no hesitation in providing a positive answer.

After discussing this paper and studying the overabundance of documents and data, this enthusiasm remains undiminished.

The authors of this report can strongly recommend moving forward based on this continuity, while retaining the reflections and considering the lessons learned and adding another decade.

It is important that the turnaround of those involved, of those who direct and operate the cooperation, is given every opportunity while retaining continuity. In the hope that both partners, the Republic of South Africa and the Flemish government, together continue to believe in this modest but extremely exciting story... with young people and their autonomous activities and social position as the main scenario.

March 2020

For the Flemish Steering Group

Jan Vanhee, Department of Culture, Youth and Media

Prof. Dr. Guy Redig, VUB – Psychology & Educational Sciences

With thanks to Els Van Effelterre, Eva Hambach, Sofie Van Zeebroeck, Tine Cornillie,

Dr. Geraldine Reymenants, Benedicte Roose.

"I first came to South Africa on the occasion of the 3rd national conference on youth policy at local level from 9 to 11 May 2006 in Cape Town. The visit made it clear to me how we should and can work together as partners. I was impressed by the seriousness with which the then NYC and the South African Youth Council, but also the participants in the conference, wanted to set to work to develop a local youth policy ... and this with a very limited staff and at great distances from each other. Very interesting were the in-depth working group discussions and the projects we visited.. I learned that it would be better for us in Flanders to adopt a more modest stance: there really was no need for patronage. I remember that we enjoyed the 'statesongs'. The politicisation is a striking fact... in our country, youth policy is not political... in South Africa, this is on edge. South Africa turned out to be a country of contrasts. When I came back in 2018 ('Youth volunteer conference on 'increasing youth volunteering in civil society organisations in South Africa' - 'Celebrating 20 years of sustainable cooperation'), it turned out that a lot had already changed, but there was still a lot to do. Youth policy is deliberately built up step by step, as is working with volunteers. By working with them we need to question our own self-evidence a little. I found it interesting that the policy, despite the political tensions, wants to move forward with the youth in South Africa, and that they are happy to continue to call on the know-how from Flanders... no matter how small we are. After all, the challenges remain great: violence against women and children, gender-based violence, intra-family violence. There is an enormous need to educate and positively strengthen young people and youth organisations around them. It remains important that we keep our youth sector involved. Our cooperation with NYDA is a good example of responsible development cooperation and partnership".

Gerda Van Roelen



Flanders
State of the Art

REFLECTIONS ON THE COOPERATION FROM KEY ROLE PLAYERS FROM THE PAST 20 YEARS



NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
OUR YOUTH. OUR FUTURE.



Key figures in South Africa who led the Cooperation over the course of the twenty years of its implementation were asked to share their views based on the following thematic areas.

- Role and length of involvement in the programme.
- The effectiveness of the programme focusing on what worked well, highlighting best practices and areas for future improvement.
- Why this relationship survived despite changes and value derived from this relationship citing instances where the relationship was under threat.
- A message to the partners on the future of the cooperation.

Following is a summary of the key issues that the selected interviewees highlighted as key milestones for the cooperation over the past 20 years.



ALL THE ROLEPLAYERS HAD IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WHEN THEY GOT INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Most of the people interviewed were involved with the National Youth Commission before they got involved with the NYDA and the Flemish project. This meant that they were familiar with the needs and the realities of the South African youth.

Mr. Sifiso Mtsweni: Executive Chairperson of NYDA



In his capacity as the Executive Chairperson of the 3rd NYDA Board of Directors, Mr. Mtsweni acknowledged that the partnership has come a long way. He highlighted the NYDA's happiness when he said "I want the partnership to be strengthened" for the youth of South Africa and the country to derive real value out of the program.

He sees this partnership becoming stronger and lasting even beyond the next 20 years. **"it's one of those things that will actually be handed over to different generations to make sure it continues"**. His message to the Flemish government was, "on behalf of the young people in South Africa, we appreciate the support, we appreciate the partnership and we call on you to continue to work with us. South Africa is a country that is alive with possibilities, a country that has a lot of potential and it just needs that potential to be harnessed to ensure that the partnership contributes to building better societies for the future".

Mr. Waseem Carrim: CEO of NYDA



Mr Carrim the current CEO of the NYDA notes that "The Flemish government was one of the first international governments to support youth development post 1994 and we really value the investment from the Flemish people". The CEO further indicated that the cooperation generated important lessons for South Africa on areas such as social cohesion through the National Youth Service Programme, which was one of the key priorities at the time.

In his reflections, the CEO reported that many young people have participated in the various activities that have taken place. This cooperation has contributed to the rejuvenation of our youth service framework and policies. He believes that this has had immeasurable impact. **"And I think it has influenced, to a greater degree, the volunteer space in the South African landscape currently"**.

Ms. Ankie Motsoahae-Maepa: Executive Director, National Youth Service



The National Youth Service Program is a program of the South African government with the NYDA coordinating it on behalf of the government. She outlined its main objective as ensuring that we promote social cohesion and nation building to deal with the plight of South African young people and address the problems that impact them as a result of the painful history of our country.

The program is anchored on two broad programmatic areas. The first one is the Volunteer Program. The second being what is popularly known as Category One program – which is really the skills program where young people are engaged in activities that ensure that, upon completion, they accredited skills, they have participated in volunteer community services, but also their chances of employability have been enhanced.

Ms. Nthuseng Mphahlele: Former Executive Director, NYS and Skills Development Transfer



In Ms. Mphahlele's recollections, the Cooperation was effective and assisted in entrenching proper principles of youth development. According to her, the Flemish Corporation enabled the continuation of efforts to implement the NYS programme in the country. She lamented the missed opportunities to escalate the implementation of the Cooperation. **"We could have designed and emerged with a bigger programme under the Corporation with a new model of how we could best serve young people and deliver quality"**. In her closing remarks, regarding the future of the Corporation, she highlighted the beauty of the project and appealed that it must continue for another twenty years.

The Hon. Ambassador Jabu Mbalula



Mr. Mbalula was the second national chairperson of the National Youth Commission (NYC) in 2000. He observed that the Cooperation's survival over the 20 years, despite the many changes in Government, was due to the consistency in focus on youth development from the countries. This ensured that the Cooperation grew from strength to strength. It also helped that the Flemish were not imposing their views on how things were to be done. The Flemish were always open and amenable to engagement on the proposal that were brought up for discussion.

The Ambassador remarked that in his view the cooperation was a success "because it continued implementing projects without a break for twenty years". The merger of the NYC and Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) to form the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) never affected the conceptual understanding and commitment on the project. In fact, it is apparent that the merger reenergized the cooperation by redefining and broadening its scope. Mr. Mbalula further noted that the cooperation enabled practitioners from South Africa to "gain some valuable insight on youth development models that were being applied in Belgium". His message of support to the partners was that the work must continue and "not only with the Flemish government but with the entirety of the strategic bilateral relations that the South African government has, because in so doing, we'll continue the culture of connecting young South Africans with the spirit of internationalism".

Mr. Patrick Mphale: Former NYS General Manager



Mr. Mphale reflected that the Corporation was of mutual benefit to both countries with mutual respect in their dealing with each other. He observed that **“joint planning with the Flanders ensured a robust programme and enabled the execution of projects in record time”**. The regular bilateral meetings led to effective monitoring and evaluation of progress in the implementation of the programme.

Mutual respect was also key in achieving and realizing programme goals over the years. He also noted that “the work with the civil society was effective in upscaling the programme interventions at grassroots levels”. His message, regarding the future of the partnership, is that more work needs to be done to mobilize additional resources through the private sector for sustainability.

Mr. Thabang Molefe



Mr. Molefe remarked that the Cooperation did an excellent job during his time. The experience gained by young people’s visits to Belgium had a lasting impact on youth development work in South Africa. His message to the NYDA is that the relationship must continue and be strengthened with more young people from both South Africa and Belgium exposed to the interventions presented by this relationship. The Cooperation should pursue the agenda of social cohesion utilizing some of the best practices from both countries.

Mr. Lwazi Mboyi:
Former CEO of National Youth Commission and
Former Executive Director at NYDA



Mr. Mboyi shared the view that the Cooperation was very effective, considering its contribution to broader society and the broader youth development agenda in the country. He further pointed out that the initial action survey and conferences that were facilitated earlier in the partnership, assisted a great deal in identifying the youth development needs and strategies focusing in municipalities. Mr. Mboyi remarked that “We should have continued with entrenching youth development into local government with clear guidelines and reporting mechanisms”.

He also highlighted the value and the effectiveness of the exchange study visits that ensured cross cultural lessons and best practice models for both countries. These led to the development and implementation of tools by different stakeholders and role players. This gave South Africa a different perspective in youth development and volunteerism, such as the possible age at which to start inculcating the spirit of service and volunteerism among the youth. The Flemish deliberate focus on voluntarism also made South Africa appreciate the importance of focusing on promoting the culture of volunteering among the youth. He also remarked that there was a need for more resources to be invested in targeted interventions at a municipal level for youth development. With his strong believe in the partnership, Mr. Mboyi recommends a consideration of a concept of Sabbatical for officials of both the NYDA and Flemish who may want to spend more time and be part of various communities in the two countries.

Mr. Malose Kekana: Former CEO of the Umsobomvu Youth Fund and Transitional CEO of the NYDA



“The requirements that were agreed upon between us as partners encouraged the development of smart measures to guide the implementation of the programme” reflected Mr. Kekana. He further remarked that we should encourage more cross pollination and peer learning between the two countries. He noted that “this will assist in breaking down silos and encourage collaboration and learning from different experiences”.

He further reflected that the willingness by the Flemish Government to associate their brand with the NYDA had a positive impact in raising the profile of the NYDA beyond reputational deficit issues that the organization suffered from in the past. The concept of international solidarity was also reflected by Mr. Kekana in his interview when he noted that “The world can’t be prosperous if people in emerging countries are not prosperous. Developed countries have a moral duty to support emerging countries such as ours, as newly freed countries, to make sure that we have credible democracies around the world”. His message on the future of the Corporation, is that it is critical for the NYDA to profile this relationship as a symbolic milestone in international cooperation.

With thanks to the following NYDA Staff members for the contribution towards this publication:

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NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
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