

Flanders
State of
the Art


JKP

The Flemish youth and
children's rights policy plan
2015 – 2019

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PRE- FACE

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan is a policy instrument of the Government of Flanders which bundles together the youth and children's rights policies in Flanders.

For the policy period 2015 through 2019 it is the first fully integrated youth and children's rights policy plan. What is new is that this plan includes both the youth policy and the children's rights policy. This means that a separate Flemish Children's Rights Action Plan is no longer drawn up.

The Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan outlines in one single plan all the concerns regarding children and young people and their rights which the Flemish Ministers will pay heed to in their policies in the coming years.

The Plan pursues four large societal objectives: equal opportunities, broad development, space and greater involvement in society for all children and young people. Focus is placed, for instance, on room to play, the quality of education or the fight against child poverty and youth unemployment.

As Minister for Youth I want to make sure, through this plan, that each Minister actually carries out his or her intentions.

I have also made important resolutions within the framework of my own competences. For instance, I advocate the provision of good support to children and young people in the digital society. Cyberbullying, privacy and screen addiction are terms we encounter sometimes when talking about the dangers of social media and the Internet. In a variety of areas we want to teach young people how to use digital technologies and their applications responsibly, safely and respectfully in their dealings with others.

Furthermore, I also consider the participation of all children and young people in social life important. We live in a diverse society which will become even more richly diverse in the future. However, it seems that this diversity is not so easily embedded in our traditional youth associations. In the coming years, I want to devote particular attention to the participation in youth work, culture and policy of difficult-to-reach young people.

The process for drawing up the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015–2019 completed several stages and adopted a participatory approach.

Working groups composed of young people, youth workers, children's rights actors, civil society, civil servants and researchers worked together intensively for several months around nine selected themes to arrive at strategic and operational objectives on the basis of priority policy challenges. These themes were poverty, ecology, being young, mobility, education, participation, space, well-being and housing. We also added the themes 'employment' and 'youth culture'.

Sven Gatz

Flemish Minister for Culture, Media, Youth and Brussels Affairs

A GOVERNMENT OF FLANDERS PLAN

FLEMISH PARLIAMENT ACT, MISSION AND PROCESS



IMPOSED THROUGH A FLEMISH PARLIAMENT ACT

It is the fourth time that the Government of Flanders presents a youth policy plan to parliament. As decreed by Flemish Parliament Act, this must be done one year after the start of the Government's term of office. What is new is that the Flemish children's rights policy has been integrated entirely for the present policy period. With the youth and children's rights policy plan the Government of Flanders pursues the following objec-

tives for all children and young people up to and including the age of thirty.

- To create and guarantee equal opportunities.
- To create and guarantee broad development opportunities.
- To create space.
- To increase the formal and informal participation of children and young people.

BUT A REAL EXERCISE IN PARTICIPATION

Behind a simple provision in a Flemish Parliament Act lies an intensive process of preparation. The youth and children's rights policy plan tries to serve as an example of participatory policy with great involvement from children, young people, their organisations and experts. Preparations started in the spring of 2013. An extensive environmental anal-

ysis, the Great Priorities Debate, several working groups and feedback through an online survey provided the seedbed for a framework of objectives around 12 priority topics. After that, the competent Ministers were asked to submit their action plans. Finally, the administrations developed projects, processes and indicators.

AND MORE THAN WORDS ON PAPER

This whole set of objectives, indicators, projects and processes constitutes the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2015–2019. The Government of Flanders is now responsible for actually implementing this plan and will

issue interim reports after two years. This will allow for midterm adjustments to be made. At the end of the Government's term of office a final report will be drawn up.



.....
BRIDGING THE GAP

Children and young people in poverty experience the gap with their peers in several ways. By focusing on the strengths of children and young people in poverty and giving everyone equal opportunities for participation in every

aspect of society, the Government of Flanders wants to help close this gap. This requires a structural and integrated approach which takes the context of family and environment into account.

.....
BY PROMOTING A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING

The Government of Flanders is looking for ways to guarantee a decent standard of living, since this offers future perspective. We invest in efficient allowance schemes, both for families and in education, for instance. We adequately inform

the different target groups and raise their awareness. Naturally, sustainable development is an important key and we will develop a customised approach in this context as well.

.....
BY FACILITATING A PLEASANT AND USEFUL PURSUIT OF LEISURE TIME

In terms of leisure, youth work, sport and cultural activities, children and young people in poverty as well should be able to truly make their own choices. We want to guarantee this by making a broad provision available. We contin-

ue to support the specific provision for this group. At the same time, we work to increase access to the general provision. For groups that are currently not reached, we provide additional guidance.

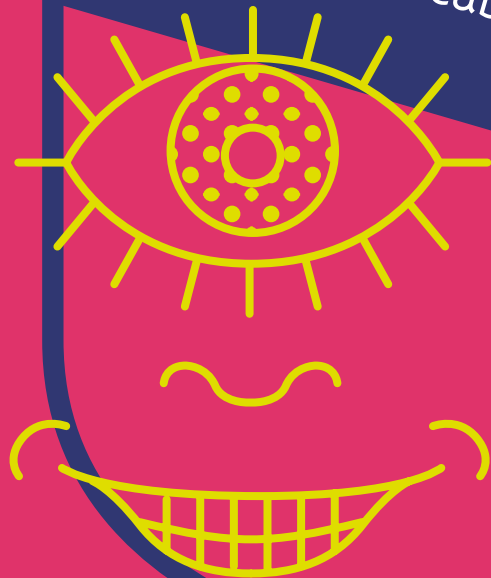
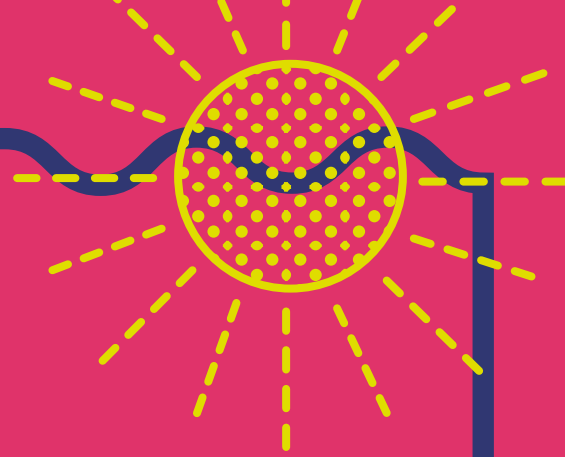
.....
AND WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO SCHOOLS

More attention is also demanded for poverty in Flanders' education policy.

To that end, we focus on parents and local networks, amongst others.

SUSTAINABILITY

Actively working together for
a green and liveable Flanders!



REDUCING THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

Sustainability is an interplay between ecological, social, global and economic dimensions. In this policy plan the Government of Flanders places the emphasis on the ecological component.

Children and young people can make their own active contributions to a sustainable living environment. Structural measures are to ensure embedment. Several social actors play a role in this.

BY MAKING DELIBERATE CHOICES

The Government of Flanders will support projects and initiatives in all kinds of areas which will make sure that sustainable choices are deliberate choices. These projects must devote special at-

tention to young people. Either because they (help) implement the project, or because it is specifically targeted on them. Creating involvement and enhancing competences are key concepts.

AND BEING ABLE TO REALLY MAKE CHOICES

The Government of Flanders wants to help make sustainable and ecological products as attractive and accessible as their non-sustainable counterparts. We give financial injections and raise

awareness of this theme. Making the choice for sustainability is rewarded. When doing so, we keep in mind that we ourselves have an exemplary role to fulfil.

IN A HEALTHY LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Children and young people have the right to grow up in a healthy living environment. We adopt this approach on several fronts. Monitoring may lead to action plans. Sustainable construction, renovation and housing is given a boost.

The school too is an important environment where children and young people spend a great deal of time. Creating a healthy indoor environment is essential. A green playground can only be motivating and fun.

.....
NATURALLY BEING GIVEN A PLACE

Children and young people have their place in Flanders. The Government of Flanders is aware that 'being young', with respect for each other and for other

generations, does not take place in a vacuum. We give children and young people a chance to be themselves and to express themselves in society.

.....
SEEING AND BEING SEEN

Meeting each other and enjoying experiences together can create mutual understanding: of more vulnerable groups, between groups of young people, and between young and old people. Although youth work, sport and culture seem ideal for this purpose, additional incentives will be offered. Even the tourism sector promotes family- and child-friendly ini-

tiatives. Family-friendliness is a point of focus in urban renewal projects.

The Government of Flanders believes that children and young people should be allowed to be seen and their voices be heard. We highlight this through a number of campaigns and conferences.

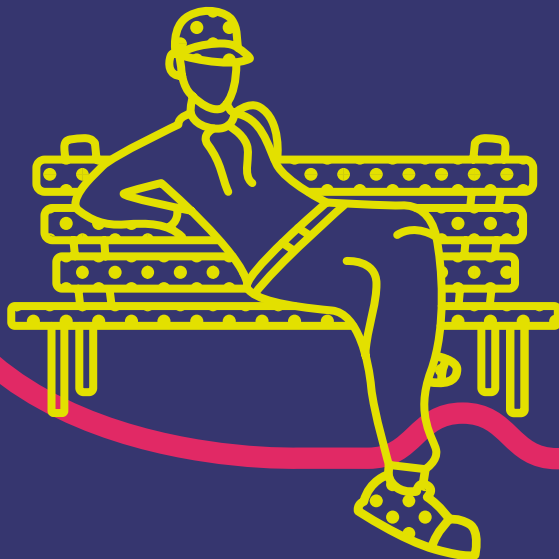
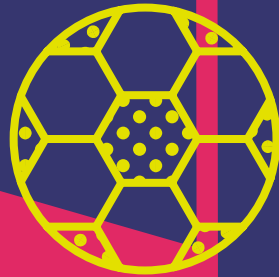
.....
WITHOUT TOO MANY RULES

The Government of Flanders is trying to cut back on regulations that prevent children and young people from taking initiative. Administrative simplification should allow youth workers to concentrate on their work instead of several difficult regulations. This will also benefit individual young people, for instance

if they want to stage an event. On the other hand, the Government of Flanders itself tries to tailor new regulations even better to the interests of children, young people and their organisations through the Child and Youth Impact Report (JoKER).

BEING YOUNG

Being able to organise and create in your environment, irrespective of your age



MOBILITY

You can safely travel around
without any worries



CAN YOU GET ANYWHERE?

The Government of Flanders wants to reinforce the position of young road users in traffic. Children and young people must have the opportunity to choose. They must be able to develop into fully-fledged road traffic participants. This is

about where they want to get, how and with whom. The starting point in this context is STOP, which stands for 'walking', 'cycling', 'public transport' and 'private transport'.

A STRONG FABRIC HELPS

Children and young people go and travel to a lot of formal and informal places. To make this connective fabric safe and sustainable, the Government of Flanders is introducing a number of measures.

The aim is to promote public transport accessibility, to further extend the cycling route network and to focus on awareness-raising and knowledge-building.

ALWAYS MOVING AND LEARNING (MORE)

Learning (more) about how you should behave in traffic and what this means for your mobility, as well as the consequences of your behaviour for yourself and your environment. The Government

of Flanders is planning several actions around traffic and mobility education. These will take place at schools and through associations and take the form of projects and testimonies.

CONTRIBUTING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Children and young people also have something to say about how and where they move in public space. The Government of Flanders wants to involve them

as well in the development of a mobility policy. To that end, it organises several initiatives at various levels.



.....
PLENTY OF EXPECTATIONS, POSITIVE CHOICES

The Government of Flanders is aware that educational policy should take regard of the highly diverse backgrounds of children and young people, their individual talents, society's different expectations and the aspirations of the

labour market. The Government of Flanders aims to make all children and young people stronger and give them every opportunity to develop a dynamic positive learning career.

.....
CREATING STRONG PERSONALITIES

We aim for a broad education as person and as citizen. This is integrated into the secondary education reform and the social debate on the attainment targets, with citizenship education still forming an essential part of the curriculum. We put the pupils at centre stage, who, from

whatever background, should be able to make a positive and informed choice of study and feel at home in their schools. Finally, we will not lose sight of other places where children and young people 'learn'. Other actors, like youth workers, play a crucial role in this context.

.....
WORKPLACE LEARNING

The Government of Flanders wants to make learning and working a fully-fledged and positive process. We try to ensure a better alignment with and transition to the labour market by

strengthening the system of learning and working. In fact, a standardised framework should be created for all types of workplace learning.

.....
VALIDATING QUALITIES AND COMPETENCES

Not all learning careers are equally successful. Nevertheless, the Government of Flanders wants to enable young people to use their acquired qualities and talents on the labour market to the fullest

extent. Projects with flexible learning pathways, qualification certificates and the recognition or validation of competences acquired within and outside education may facilitate the through-flow.



.....
THE SCHOOL IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

Schools may play a big role with respect to their wider environment. Youth work, sports clubs, community organisations, etc. can all contribute to realising a

school's remit. Schools can in their turn successfully look beyond their own walls by entering into dialogue and working together.

.....
WANTS TO BE AN EXTENSIVE LEARNING ZONE

The Government of Flanders wants to further stimulate the development of open and broad learning zones. The local reality serves as a starting point. We will sup-

port bottom-up initiatives. Cooperation is also possible with several interesting partners, like youth, welfare and sport.

.....
WITH GREAT FOCUS ON YOU

Each child and each young person has his or her own background. Schools must provide a safe and familiar environment for each one of them. School management teams and teachers play a crucial role in this. The Government of

Flanders wants to support them in this role. Various training and awareness initiatives are in the pipeline. They devote particular attention to (contact with) vulnerable children and young people.

.....
AND IN A COOL ENVIRONMENT

Children and young people should enjoy going to school. Pleasant, accessible, safe and multifunctional infrastructure will definitely be helpful in this respect. Within the available budgetary resourc-

es, the Government of Flanders will invest in such infrastructure by means of a master plan for school construction and the contribution of expertise and support.



PARTICIPATION

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE AN IMPACT

The focus is on policy participation. It is about what is very close to the hearts of children and young people, but most definitely also about themes in all policy areas affecting them. The Government

of Flanders wants to help create preconditions which will make a permanent participatory attitude the logical standard.

BECAUSE FURTHER EFFORTS ARE MADE TO CREATE SUPPORT

The Government of Flanders invests in training and education for anyone who works with children and young people in a large variety of policy areas. It concerns initiatives relating to media, sport

and youth, but certainly also to work, well-being and education. A networking group will promote knowledge exchange and information flow.

AT ALL LEVELS, INCLUDING FOR MORE DIFFICULT-TO-REACH TARGET GROUPS

Participation is not a strange concept in policy documents. The Government of Flanders is aware that in reality a great deal of work still needs to be done and that several target groups are insufficiently reached. We want to increase the involvement of young people of immigrant origin and young people in pover-

ty. We introduce a label for child-friendly municipalities and an award for the most youth-friendly municipality of Flanders. The local youth council must still be consulted about important decisions. We thus keep the local level close, while renewed efforts are also being made at the Flemish level.

THROUGH FURTHER KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING AND A VARIETY OF INITIATIVES

The Government of Flanders stimulates a variety of participatory practices and builds further knowledge around this. The 'Cijferboek' (Book of Figures) and the '1-meting lokaal jeugdbeleid' (first post-baseline assessment on local youth policy) may help, for instance, to detect needs and gaps in local participation.

We develop new initiatives ourselves, like the establishment of a citizens' cabinet, and keep existing initiatives up-to-date, like the structured dialogue, which is a participation instrument from the European framework of cooperation in the field of youth.



SPACE

There is room for everyone
on streets and squares

SEVERAL USERS, WITH SPACE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS WELL

The Government of Flanders is aware of the major challenges posed by spatial policy. We want to make the best possible use of the limited space, including for children and young people. Smart shared use will be the norm of future spatial planning. We adopt a flexible approach to the use of various spaces and to functions of infrastructure. We pro-

mote temporary use and use public and private spaces together. Children and young people must find their place, together with the adults. One of the key elements is involvement and participation in planning, organisation, development and use. If necessary, space can also be reserved for a specific target group.

SMART SHARED USE

The Government of Flanders wants to motivate owners and users into smart shared use. This is done by developing a vision, building knowledge, raising awareness and giving incentives. The multifunctional use of school buildings

or BLOSO sports centres and urban renewal projects promote shared use and keep a close focus on children and young people. Mentoring projects and sharing examples of good practice should have an inspiring effect.

WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS CO-OWNERS

If we want to regard children and young people as fully-fledged co-owners of public space, we must also involve them in all stages from design to use. This is

also a means to increase support and co-responsibility. The Government of Flanders involves the youth sector in the creation of the spatial policy plan.

AND NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT SPACE AND USING IT

Existing space must be used optimally. Flexible and temporary use must be made possible. A different approach is taken to the various options, even ex ante.

We will look for inspiring examples abroad and develop a number of initiatives in the sport and youth sectors.



.....
INCREASING RESILIENCE

Three elements constitute the basis of 'well-being', as referred to in the Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan. Children and young people feel good about themselves, are not afraid to say otherwise and know who they can turn

to with questions. The Government of Flanders wants to take measures to increase the resilience of children and young people by focusing on preventive work and investing in accessible support.

.....
YOU ARE MORE THAN JUST A LABEL

There is a growing tendency of applying labels to children and young people. As the number of labels grows, so does the use of medication by minors. The Government of Flanders is taking initiatives which will ensure a more conscious use of these labels. In sectors coming under integrated youth support

the Diagnostics Quality Centre wants to develop instruments, do research and offer support in order to realise higher-quality diagnostics. This should allow for the achievement of higher-quality care. Efforts are also made towards a policy for pupils with special educational needs.

.....
HELP BREAK TABOOS

The mental well-being of children and young people is often surrounded by taboo. Several methodologies and tools are already in place to open up discussion about this topic. However, the process used for this is mostly too complex or cumbersome. The Government of Flanders wants to do a thorough job in

making information accessible. We realise broad access to youth support. The accessibility to services and support is improved by extending the 'Huizen van het Kind' (children's centres), organising parenting support for parents from disadvantaged groups and investing in extensive and easily accessible networks.

.....
THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE YOU CAN TURN TO

Every child and young person should have someone to turn to for support and who can refer him or her, if necessary. We look into the possibility of establishing a unique communication platform for children and young people.

We more widely publicise the helpline 1712 (violence, (child) abuse). Finally, we offer support to confidential advisers of minors in youth support.



RIGHT TO DECENT HOUSING

The Government of Flanders acknowledges the right to decent housing of all children and young people. It wants to make progress in this field by extending

the range of housing concepts, continuing to invest in social housing and increasingly publicising existing instruments.

FLEXIBLE HOUSING, DISCOVERING NEW POSSIBILITIES

The housing market is quite rigid. By building in greater flexibility, several target groups can gain access to more and better housing. We examine the regulatory framework for shared housing and offer support to foster the accessibility of different and more unconventional

living arrangements. Attention is paid to energy efficient and accessible construction/renovation and housing in the social housing sector. Work is also done to improve the quality of housing and ensure a sufficient provision of caravan sites.

CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE BARRIERS

The barriers impeding access to housing are known. The Government of Flanders takes actions to further eliminate these barriers for both (candidate) tenants and owners/landlords. We do so in the social housing market, but also provide

support in the private rental market and generally adopt a comprehensive approach. We examine the regulatory framework and remove a number of red tape obstacles through the automatic allocation of rent premium rights.

DEVELOPING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE TOGETHER

Following the state reform the Government of Flanders has been given a number of opportunities to provide increased direction to the housing market. When

drawing up a housing policy plan for Flanders, we involve children, young people and youth organisations.



EMPLOYMENT

..... REDUCING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Youth unemployment in Flanders exceeds the total unemployment rate. The situation of low-educated young people and young people of immigrant origin in particular is not rosy. A successful

employment policy starts at school. Too many young people leave education without a degree or certificate and consequently miss out on labour market opportunities.

..... THE SCHOOL AS A STEPPING STONE TO AN INTERESTING JOB

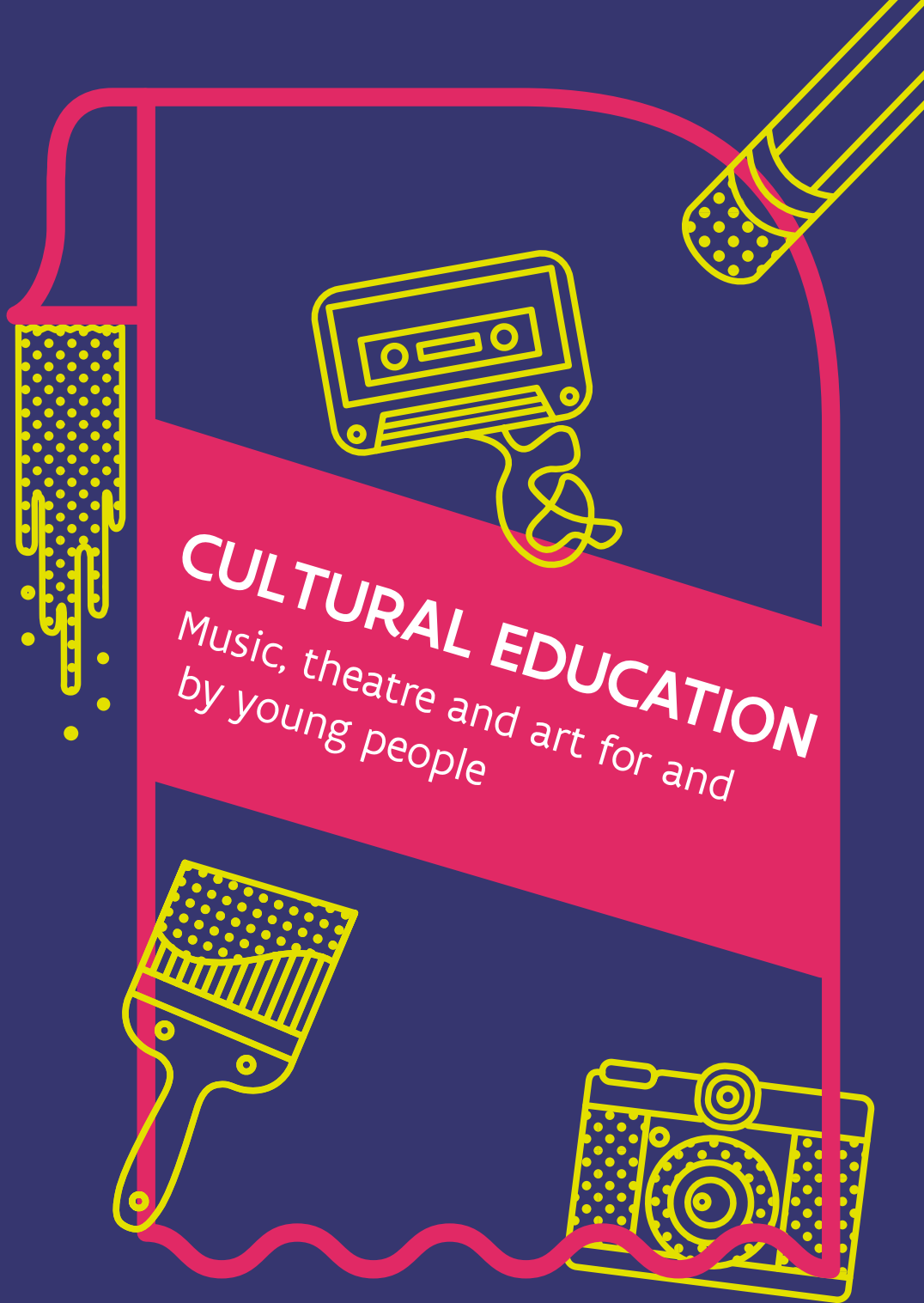
The Government of Flanders is developing a new dual system of working and learning, as well as an unambiguous and easy-to-use legal framework for all types of workplace learning. The aim is to achieve better alignment between education and the labour market. Following a well-founded study and career choice,

a start is made already at school on developing career competences and providing pupils in a timely manner with information about the labour market. In this way we prevent young people from ending their school careers without a degree or certificate.

..... CUSTOMISED SUPPORT

We aim to support all young people in developing a sustainable career by implementing a number of targeted projects. We focus on training courses for shortage occupations and work experience projects. With the Youth Guarantee

Plan the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training (VDAB) wants to guide young people as quickly as possible towards sustainable employment. In this context the emphasis is on low- and mid-educated young people.



.....
ALLOWING TALENTS TO FLOURISH

We want to let the talents of children and young people flourish. We promote different types of youth culture. Culture contributes to identity development, stimulates needs, and provides a broader view of the world. Children and young people are entitled to rest and leisure time. This also includes the right to free

participation in cultural and artistic life. The Government of Flanders wants to guarantee a sufficient provision and help make sure that children and young people can create their own art and culture. In this context we also promote cultural education.

.....
BY DISCOVERING CULTURE

The Government of Flanders wants to encourage more children and young people to participate; bring a more diverse group into contact with different types of culture. Cultural education too should have a greater outreach. To that end we subsidise a large number of culture

and art educational organisations and appropriate funds for various project subsidies. Some target groups are given extra attention: young children, children and young people in special youth care and other disadvantaged groups.

.....
LEARNING ABOUT IT

We consider cultural education important and therefore want to monitor and enhance its quality. That is why we focus on the training and education of mentors and volunteers in formal

and non-formal learning environments. Cultural Education Day, the activities of Dharts in Destelheide and other events and activities help highlight all these aspects.

.....
AND CREATING IT

Arousing the interest of children and young people and giving them room for personal experiments and personal development during their free time and supporting top-level talents in their development requires continuous efforts. That is why this deserves a great deal of attention. We do this in consultation with the sector and by disseminating

knowledge regarding room for experimentation. We allocate a top-level arts status to young talents to allow them on the one hand to obtain their degree and on the other hand to fulfil their high artistic ambitions. With the Week of Amateur Arts we put this rich area under the spotlight.

COLOFON

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