

A group of children are running away from the camera through a lush green field. The scene is bright and sunny, with trees in the background. The text 'LET'S GO OUTSIDE!' is overlaid in large white letters.

**LET'S GO
OUTSIDE!**

***“We don’t stop playing because we grow old;
we grow old because we stop playing.”***

George Bernard Shaw



Children and young people use the public space. They go outside to play, romp around, exercise, go for walks, meet up with friends and catch up. The environment in which they do so plays an important role in their development.

Children play outside a lot when it is the natural thing to do. An outdoor play policy can be designed to make it as natural as possible for all children to play outside. By being outdoors, young people feel closer to society, experience a greater sense of group belonging and feel they can show who they are to society at large. A loitering policy focuses on the positive aspects of loitering and a positive perception of loitering youth.

Through this 'Let's go outside!' action plan, I want to make a positive contribution, together with the partners, towards creating more and better play and meeting opportunities for children and young people in Flanders and Brussels. A policy around this shared use of space fosters positive and respectful intergenerational coexistence.

Enjoy reading the action plan, and who knows, maybe I will see you

out there somewhere soon! Benjamin Dalle



Problem definition

Children and young people increasingly appear to have a dual relationship with the outdoors and public spaces: even though they use it, their presence in it seems to be dwindling. The reasons for this are not underpinned by science in an unambiguous or strongly coordinated manner.

The 2018 environmental analysis from the Flemish Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan (JKP), which inspired the drafting of the 2020-2024 JKP, revealed the trend of children and young people being less and less present in the outdoor space. Liveability, social cohesion and personal safety are vital elements for being outdoors. These elements are coming under pressure in urban and more rural areas due to several factors, such as population growth, shrinking family sizes, the economic activity in and around urban centres, increasing mobility, fragmented infrastructure and soil and air pollution. Children growing up in deprived urban neighbourhoods are hit all the harder because their living environment is unsafe and unfriendly to children.

Children and young people have a larger action radius than ever before, but are less and less able or allowed to play freely outside and move around on their own. In addition, there is less tolerance for playing and 'loitering' children.

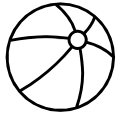
The latest surveys on the State of Youth in the '2018 JOP-monitor IV' allow for a connection to be made between non-organised leisure (both offline and online), with a focus on being outdoors among other things, and the role of friends, parents and family in leisure, as well as the safety aspect.

- The 'JOP-kindmonitor' (10-13 age group) indicated that children reported playing outdoors with friends more than indoors, with 36.1% versus 24% of children saying this is how they meet up with friends at least once a week. They mostly spend that time cycling, skating and hanging out in the neighbourhood with their friends, followed by going to the park, forest or square. Children also appear to spend a relatively large amount of time with family; 76.4% go on family outings at least monthly and 87.5% visit family at least once a month.
- According to the 'JOP-monitor' (14-25 age group), more than three quarters of young people meet up with their friends or sweethearts at least weekly (79.7%). The percentage of young people meeting up with friends outside of associations is substantially higher here than among the 10-13 age group (36.1%). In addition, groups of friends are much more differentiated at this age. Young people are more likely to meet one another in the street than in cafés: 80% of young people sometimes meet in the street, on squares or in the city, compared to 70.6% in cafés or bars. Young people also spend a relatively large amount of time with family; 61.2% of young people participate in leisure activities with family at home at least weekly and 24.8% also do so outside their home.
- In terms of online leisure, the use of the internet and social media was already widespread among children and young people in 2018. Based on the results from these surveys, however, the continued increase in internet and social media use does not seem to be at the expense of participation in association life, contrary to what is generally assumed. These new developments seem to mainly complement children and young people's leisure time. Moreover, comparisons between this and previous JOP surveys suggest that online activities are more likely to replace traditional indoor leisure forms such as reading, spending time at home with family, etc.
- Just like in previous JOP surveys, girls are found to be slightly more likely than boys to be harassed or threatened in the street or the digital world. This shows how important it is to have a good understanding of the locations where young people spend their leisure time.

The 2019 Great Outdoor Play Survey revealed a reduced presence of children in the public space compared to previous similar research in 2008. Girls, in particular, emerged as a vulnerable group:



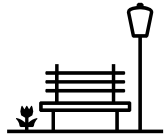
In 2019, 37% fewer children played in the street, in squares and in parks than in 2008



From the age of nine, girls tend to play outside less than boys



Children play more often unaccompanied and more in organised settings



The quality of the space and the surrounding social climate have an impact on the type of play and the attractiveness of playing outside or not

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how important the public space is for children and young people, and especially for residents of socially deprived urban neighbourhoods. Much attention was drawn to the open space by Flanders but also by the Security Council. Telling examples include the reopening of the parks, playgrounds, sports grounds and skate parks after the first lockdown in 2020 and the decision on the camps and activities during the summer of 2020.

Accordingly, recommendations in the Social Recovery Committee report pay explicit attention to the expansion of public and green spaces in the living environment as nodes for exercise and association, leisure and mobility. It was recommended to ensure that children and young people specifically could play, engage in sports, meet up with one another and move around safely and independently. In doing so, it was asked to show consideration for young people, as during the COVID-19 period, a large number of fines were issued to this group precisely in those places where little private space was available.

Policymakers responded to the importance of sufficient quality youth spaces by launching a project call entitled 'Investment Grants for Quality Basic Infrastructure and the Organisation of Youth Infrastructure'. The focus was on decent basic infrastructure, safe and accessible meeting places for children and young people and youth-friendly neighbourhoods and play areas. The call also gives a boost to organised leisure for children and young people by strengthening and expanding the public indoor and outdoor space available for that purpose.

A survey on leisure opportunities among people in Flanders (over the age of 18) within the framework of the 2020-2022 Participation Survey shows that the safety and availability of places for children and young people in the public space may be under pressure:

- Flemish young people and those over 60 experience fewer leisure opportunities than Flemish people aged 31 to 60.
- Within the group of Flemish young people, 18- to 25-year-olds report having significantly fewer leisure opportunities than those aged 26 to 30.
- One quarter of parents (with children up to the age of 26) do not consider the neighbourhood they live in sufficiently safe for their children to play outside.
- Only one in three parents think there are sufficient places in the neighbourhood where young people can meet outdoors.

More recently, Digimeter survey results indicate that 36% of people in Flanders feel they spend too much time on their smartphones, which is a 7% increase compared to the previous year. This increase appears to be stronger among young people aged 18 to 24. For the first time, young people are starting to regard their smartphone use as problematic, with 35% even indicating that they are addicted (+4%).



Explanatory and defining elements

The above analysis of several surveys allows for some explanatory and defining elements to be identified:

Urbanisation, infrastructure and the importance of green space

Cities and municipalities are becoming increasingly built up, urbanisation is expanding and traffic mobility on our roads is increasing. As a result, public space is becoming scarcer. The action radius of children and young people is growing smaller and more limited. Moreover, green spaces are less available in urbanised areas, even though they have a function in terms of use, health, experience and imagination. Young people value green spaces in their neighbourhoods, but user preferences differ according to social background and access to green space in the neighbourhood. Young people with a lower social status indicate that green space in the living environment is mainly important for health reasons, whereas those with a higher social status consider green space intrinsically important, regardless of any specific activities. Young people with a lower social status more often indicate that they do not have access to green space in their neighbourhood or are less likely to have a garden or a green view.

Social structure (social fabric and the neighbourhood)

The neighbourhood in which children and young people grow up in part determines the opportunities and limitations they face in their development. The degree of social cohesion and accessibility is important, especially in neighbourhoods where little is available. There is little to no outdoor space in metropolitan cities. Young people must be allowed to be present in the public space, whether organised or otherwise. The role of parents in their behaviour should not be underestimated either. Sometimes they encourage their children; other times, they are protective of them.

Safety (liability)

Society is experiencing a strong juridification and pursues a zero-risk approach. Playing risky games, playing outside, moving around alone in public spaces, meeting up with friends outdoors (and especially at dusk), being outside as a girl, etc. are no longer so self-evident. Events involving child victimisation, such as the Dutroux case, road accidents, fights, etc., reinforce feelings of insecurity and evoke a protection reflex towards one's own children and young people. Regulations ranging from game design to incident liability reinforce a protection reflex and the urge to act with caution to avoid any risk.

Digitalisation (screen use)

Online leisure is becoming more available and accessible year by year. Users are also getting younger and younger. Recent Apestaartjaren research (2022) shows that the average age for a first smartphone is 8.4 years. The number of people with myopia as well as the severity thereof are increasing substantially worldwide. Researchers attribute this to two main factors: less exposure to daylight outside and more activities close by (reading, screen use). Daylight is the strongest protective factor to prevent myopia. It is recommended to spend on average 2 hours outside every day from an early age. Playing outside, walking and meeting people is all about discovering and being amazed. Enjoying all your senses. Research by JAMA Pediatrics considers outdoor play to be a mitigating factor in the association between screen time for young children and neurodevelopmental outcomes.

Pressure on children and young people (mental well-being)

Children and young people have increasingly more options to choose from, and a growing number of activities are possible in an organised context. Young people experience greater pressure on their well-being, including at school. In its advisory opinion 2301, the Flemish Youth Council states that it has made mental well-being a priority theme for the past eight years already. The COVID-19 crisis has only reinforced this. Young people themselves indicated how heavily the lockdown and lack of contact and association with peers weighed on their mental well-being. There is less tolerance for playing and 'loitering' children and young people. Children and young people need space to be able to do what they really want to do and be who they want to be in their leisure time. There should be places where this is allowed without them being (or feeling) targeted.

Public and shared character of the public space

For children and young people, going outside and being outside is not limited to the private space of a balcony or a (front) garden. Moreover, some children and young people, especially in urbanised areas, grow up in living situations where a balcony or a (shared) garden is not even available. These children and young people have to rely on the public space to be outside. The remaining group of children and young people equally use the public space, possibly accompanied by their parents, mentors or leaders. From a developmental perspective, it is often the most obvious place for children and young people to be, and one that is away from the controlling eye of their parents or educators.

However, the public space should be accessible, reachable and available to all, regardless of age, gender, origin, disability, etc. This intersectional, multipurpose and shared use promotes happiness and well-being, but also creates challenges in terms of liveability, respect and tolerance.

Less play in the own neighbourhood, although more play opportunities

Outdoor play has a lot to offer that children simply do not get through other types of play and leisure. They seem to have even more opportunities to play outside than before. The possibilities for organised play and sports seem endless, there is a glut of outdoor toys for sale, and gardens of people with children are, more than ever, fitted with sandpits, slides and trampolines. Still, children are playing less in their own neighbourhood than they used to do. There are fewer children in the street, and foreign research shows that children are obliged to stay closer and closer to home. If they play outside less in their own neighbourhood with other children, they have fewer opportunities to take control of that outdoor play, to organise themselves with other children and to think of things to do. Since other children are the main trigger for children to play, the decline in outdoor play is a vicious circle. Fewer children in the street make that street less interesting to play in. Johan Meire, coordinator at Kind & Samenleving, describes this as the outdoor play trap that children are in danger of falling into: they seem to have more space, materials, facilities and activities to play outdoors than ever before, but the play that they are most in control of and shape with each other, i.e. the play in their own neighbourhood, is becoming less and less self-evident.



Outdoor play and 'loitering' in an international perspective



The current generation of children and young people is often seen as a generation that “doesn’t go out any more”, “only surfs on the net”, “is lazy”, etc. Events like COVID-19, however, show that extreme conditions make more outdoor play possible and that there is definitely a margin for change. The changed circumstances during COVID-19 altered the perception of the importance of being outdoors. Children and young people were also outside more often. Parents play an important stimulating role in this respect. Admittedly, the access to and use of the public space was restricted by the COVID-19 measures.

A survey among primary school children from the fourth to sixth grades (ISCWeB Flanders, 2021) during the second lockdown shows that children spend more time at home studying and doing homework, using social media and playing games on the computer, mobile phone or other devices. Besides these indoor activities, they also spend more time playing outdoors. This outdoor play has increased compared to a similar survey carried out in 2018 (77% versus 66%).

Flanders scores very well (ISCWeB international, 2022) when considering this Flemish data in the light of international research of 20 countries/regions, of which the Flemish research cited above was an integral part. Flanders shares a place with Albania, with 35% of children reporting having played or ‘loitered’ outdoors every day during COVID-19. Only countries like Romania and Finland (39% each) and Estonia (40%) score better. In some countries, children barely played outdoors daily, e.g. in South Korea (2%) and Chile (9%).

Even in the group where children reported never having been outdoors, Flanders is among the better-scoring countries and regions (5%). Only Albania (4%), Germany (2%) and Estonia and Finland (1% each) scored better. In other countries, this rate was higher with the outliers being Chile and Taiwan (36% each), Algeria (33%) and Bangladesh (27%).

The fact that countries like Finland and Estonia score well is in line with a lifestyle culture in which being outdoors (friluvsliv) traditionally plays an important role, inspired by respect for the natural environment. This also translates in an upbringing and education in which it is natural to be outdoors and to learn and play outdoors.

It is also interesting to consider the situation in the Netherlands, where the outdoor play policy is indeed experiencing similar developments, for instance in terms of playground provision and the role of the local level. However, they do not really have a more national (regional) policy, which leads to the demand for a coordinated policy impetus for outdoor play and a policy-oriented knowledge agenda. In the Netherlands, children played outdoors for an average of 9.5 hours per week in 2022. Four in ten children played outdoors for less than one hour a day. Cycling, climbing, scrambling about and inventing games were the most popular activities among children up to and including 12 years of age. Chilling was the primary activity among children aged 13 to 15. Half of the children consult their parent(s)/carer(s) on whether or not they are allowed to play outdoors, whereas one third is allowed to decide for themselves. Half of the children believe their parents sometimes think they play scary or dangerous games outside. Just over a quarter of children themselves think they sometimes play scary or dangerous games outside. COVID-19 has had an impact on outdoor play here as well. About one in seven children played outdoors more often before COVID-19 than during the 2022 survey. One quarter of children played outdoors more often during COVID-19 than now (Jantje





A shared ambition to be allowed, willing and able to go outside

The right of the child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This children's right includes not only organised leisure but equally non-organised leisure, including being outdoors to play, to meet up with friends in a square, etc.

In its latest 2019 concluding observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child advises Belgium to step up its efforts to [provide leisure activities for all and to ensure more access to landscaped green areas and open spaces for children and young people](#).

In the 2018 JKP Environmental Analysis young people indicated that they would like more green space in cities. They would also like the public space to be designed as a meeting place whenever possible, not specifically for young people, but for different generations and groups of people to use interchangeably. Young people consider it important to be involved in the design of playgrounds and other recreational facilities. Moreover, they pay attention to children growing up in poverty, for whom leisure time is often considered a luxury. Some of the young people feel unsafe, which is why they would like more police patrolling the streets spontaneously. Others do not feel unsafe.

One of the JKP's four policy objectives laid down by decree is 'creating space for children and young people'. 'Priority 2. Healthy and Liveable Neighbourhoods' of the 2020-2024 JKP fleshes this out by responding in terms of space, child- and youth-friendly policy, intergenerational coexistence, mobility, housing, anti-littering policy, etc.

Several youth work organisations have been shaping the realisation of the right to leisure, recreation and association for years. Some of them have built up specific expertise in policies, offerings and knowledge regarding outdoor play and/or being outdoors/loitering. Many are also organised in networks, with partners both within and outside of youth work. They give shape to a multitude of actions from a shared vision.

At the international level, the International Play Association (IPA) has set itself the explicit goal of 'promoting the child's right to play' since the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, invoking Article 31 of said Convention. In 1989, IPA stated that "PLAY, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children". This right is too often undervalued.

*When a child asks, ‘Can I go out to play?’, it basically
means,
can I do what I want?*



Visio

Children and young people make intensive use of the public space. It is where they play and engage in sports, meet up to have a chat, eat and drink, use the facilities or wait for each other, for public transport, etc.

The key benefits of playing and meeting up with each other outdoors for (skills) development, social cohesion and stronger physical health and mental well-being are known.

It gives children and young people a sense of 'freedom', the feeling of being able to take control of something and do it themselves. It promotes the basic feeling of 'belonging' and 'mattering', which is crucial for a healthy life, development and well-being.

Not only are a lot of competencies and skills linked to leisure experience, including playing outdoors and being in the public space, children and young people also assign great importance to the following, both for themselves and in relation to others:



Stimulating creativity



Enhancing citizenship, identity development, and a sense of belonging



Promoting brain development



Creating intergenerational respect



Learning negotiation and conflict resolution skills and to make decisions



Enhances participation in the broad sense of the word



Promotes health and well-being: energises/invigorates, motivates, strengthens physical and mental health



Offers insight into perspectives of children/young people



Fosters social cohesion with the neighbourhood, residents and the community, and builds relationships and friendships





This action plan does not start from scratch

The present action plan explicitly starts from a children's right and a human right, and builds on existing Flemish policy such as 'Priority 2. Healthy and Liveable Neighbourhoods' of the JKP and expertise from the youth work sector and its partners, as well as international expertise, in particular through IPA, Child in the City and Jantje Beton.

There is a multitude of activities, experts, materials, campaigns, etc. A lot of youth organisations have built up expertise over the years based on research, practice and/or policy. Being outdoors and public and green spaces are crucial for children and young people, but the function, perception and use thereof differ. The

- independent - use is under pressure due to the aforementioned factors such as infrastructure, safety, social structure, digitalisation, pressure on children and young people, and the public and shared nature of the public space.

This action plan aims to provide a response to that and map what already exists, what works, where there are blind spots and how we can strengthen matters. The plan is based on the strength of children and young people and the youth sector. It aims to bring together, inspire and encourage children and young people and enable them to spend more and better time outdoors, realising more play and meeting opportunities because they are willing, able and allowed to do so.

Being able, willing and allowed to be outdoors

We build on what Sven De Visscher wrote in his 2008 thesis 'The socio-pedagogical significance of the residential environment': How are children *able* (the living environment as actual, material space), *allowed* (the limits placed on presence) and *willing* (actorship in public space) to be present in their living environment? We are broadening the scope so as to also include young people's being able, willing and allowed to be in the public space.

Child and youth perspective

The child and youth perspective presupposes a focus on the importance and the needs and wants of children and young people. Participating, providing information, listening and hearing, taking appropriate action and giving feedback are an integral part of this. The objectives and actions are interwoven with the perspective of children and young people and their rights. This also implies taking the function of being outdoors into consideration, depending on the age group and the associated terminology. Generally speaking, an artificial boundary is often drawn. For children (0-12 age group), being outdoors is associated more with 'playing outdoors', whereas being outdoors is more about meeting people and being present (often also referred to as 'loitering', which often carries a negative connotation) for the older age group (children aged over 12).

Building on concentric circles around the child/young person

Being able, willing and allowed to go outside is not achieved by focusing on the child and young person alone and placing the responsibility on them as a result. This would be all too easy. Three concentric circles facilitate being outdoors.

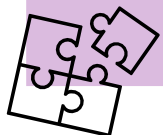
These are:

1. the pedagogical (parents, educators, mentors, leaders, etc.) circle
2. the social (neighbourhood, wider environment, society) circle, and
3. the spatial (infrastructure, location, etc.) circle.

Reinforcing and broadening the strengths of the youth sector while reaching out to other areas

Promoting, reinforcing and increasing opportunities for spending more and better time outdoors is in the youth sector's DNA. Activities, being at a camp, outreach presence, community work, etc. are often intertwined with the outdoors, beyond the walls of the classrooms, buildings or places of residence. The many volunteers who enrich the youth sector are often still young people themselves.

The plan therefore starts from the uniqueness and expertise of the youth sector. It wants to engage in dialogue on shared ambitions by translating the knowledge and expertise of youth work.



The action plan

The following actions are bundled into three clusters:

1. Conducting research and building knowledge, which is needed to inspire policy and practice and stimulate more in-depth research.
2. Sharing knowledge and expertise to open it up and make it accessible and to pursue shared ambitions through collaboration.
3. Providing information, support and inspiration to make positive choices based on children and young people in the public space.



1

Research and knowledge building

Objective:

Align policies and organisational objectives with concrete needs and trends observed through monitoring and research to the maximum extent possible. Relevant research findings relating to children and young people in the public space are applied to underpin policy and new initiatives in practice. This is how we will strengthen science- and evidence-based policy and practice.

Partners involved:

The Department of Culture, Youth and Media, in cooperation with the Youth Research Platform (JeugdOnderzoeksPlatform/JOP) and relevant partners from the field (including Kind & Samenleving, Netwerk Jeugdvriendelijk), is responsible for pooling, conducting, opening up and monitoring scientific research on children and young people in relation to being outdoors and the public space.

3

Expanding and sharing knowledge and expertise

Objective:

Through targeted campaigns and the dissemination of support materials, we seek to raise awareness and create a positive perception and experience of being outdoors. The aim is to achieve a shift in culture in children and young people and their environment such as parents, grandparents, mentors and others. Cities and municipalities are encouraged to develop policies on children and young people in the public space.

Partners involved:

The Department of Culture, Youth and Media, in cooperation with partners such as the Outdoor Play Day partners (Goe Gespeeld, Bataljong, Netwerk Lokaal Sportbeleid, Kind & Samenleving) and intermediary organisations, is responsible for raising the awareness of the broad group of people involved in a targeted manner in order to get more children and young people to be able, willing and allowed to go outside.

2

Expanding and sharing knowledge and expertise

Objective:

Knowledge and expertise often require a translation to be applicable in diverse contexts. This gives a boost to opening up knowledge and expertise through practical and clear tools. We bring together existing knowledge, expertise and practical experience regarding children and young people in relation to being outdoors and the public space through existing and renewed networks. Meetings have an action-oriented focus. Collaboration and alignment connect and inspire as well as stimulate shared action and commitment.

Partners involved:

The Department of Culture, Youth and Media, in cooperation with partners such as Goe Gespeeld, Netwerk Jeugdvriendelijk and intermediary organisations, is responsible for collaboration and alignment in order to achieve a proper access to and application of the knowledge and expertise around being outdoors and the shared use of space.

1 Research and knowledge building



1.1. Mapping and compiling existing, ongoing and future scientific research (Flemish and international) on children and young people in relation to being outdoors and the public space. Blind spots and gaps in research are identified to have an overview of what knowledge is still lacking and to encourage new or more in-depth research.

1.1.1. In the short term, it concerns at least the following research projects:

1.1.1.1. The existing 2019 Outdoor Play Survey is further built on and it is aimed to systematically draw up a status update of being outdoors in Flanders.

1.1.1.2. Kind & Samenleving is conducting quality research into barriers to and incentives for outdoor play in the neighbourhood. The research findings will be presented during a study day on 23 May 2023.

1.1.1.3. The 'JOP-monitor V' survey and the metropolitan survey will be carried out during 2023 among a representative group of young people in Flanders, and also in the Brussels-Capital Region for the metropolitan survey. Data collected with regard to going outside will be analysed and opened up.

1.1.1.4. In 2023, the JOP will survey Brussels youth from three neighbourhoods on the liveability of their neighbourhood. Together with young people, it will be mapped where and how they are able, willing and allowed to be present.

1.1.1.5. The research 'Children's Rights Well-Being and Public Space' will be completed and opened up in 2023.

1.1.1.6. The Department of Culture, Youth and Media's two-year support contract 'Quality Basic Youth Infrastructure' (2023-24), which is linked to the project call of the same name, supports ongoing youth infrastructure projects and acts as a source of inspiration for others. The contract aims to support and coach the local authorities and youth associations concerned in developing and implementing the projects. In addition, examples of good practice are collected and shared so that creative and innovative practices serve as inspiration for other local authorities and associations.

1.1.2. Existing survey tools (participation survey, youth survey, etc.) are being scrutinised. It is being examined whether or not new surveys should update positions so as to better gauge the presence of children and young people outdoors and in the public space. This complements and is aligned with other relevant research on children and young people in the public space.

1.2. Committing to collecting, exchanging and widely disseminating research results through appropriate communication channels. This may vary depending on the target group.

1.2.1. Together with the Youth Research Platform (JOP), it is examined what data of the youth research database can be opened up and which other knowledge platforms might be more appropriate, if any.

1.3. A knowledge network is being built with relevant partners (including JOP, Kind & Samenleving, Netwerk Jeugd vriendelijk, etc.) on the theme of children and young people and being outdoors, including in the public space.

1.3.1. It is worked out in mutual consultation how this knowledge network can function as best as possible in terms of tasks, responsibilities and lines of communication and in inspiring and stimulating researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

1.3.2. Suitable methods are determined to be able to follow up on the monitoring and impact in the long term.

2 Expanding and sharing knowledge and expertise



2.1. Efforts are made to educate and share knowledge and expertise about children and young people in relation to being outdoors and the public space consciously and purposefully within and outside of the youth sector. This can take various forms: learning networks, making existing educational material available whether or not in combination with training, support programmes, webinars, etc. This includes, among others, the following:

- 2.1.1. Existing networks such as Goe Gespeeld and Netwerk Jeugd vriendelijk are joining forces and pooling existing knowledge.
- 2.1.2. In cooperation with the Goe Gespeeld network and relevant partners, a 'Let's go outside' inspiration day will be organised in the spring of 2024 with the focus being on sharing knowledge on the topic of children and young people in the public space.
- 2.1.3. The book 'Hangman' is being reworked by Netwerk Jeugd vriendelijk into an updated series of web articles.
- 2.1.4. On the initiative of Netwerk Jeugd vriendelijk and Bataljong, research knowledge, practical knowledge, inspiring (policy) stories about young people in the public space and user perspectives are shared and widely disseminated to partners, local authorities and interested parties in an innovative and comprehensible manner, such as webinars. To support this, guidance and digital tools will be developed and existing material will be updated where necessary.
- 2.1.5. We provide aligned information and increase the accessibility and publicity of the websites of experts and partner organisations, customised to different target groups. Existing knowledge websites or information databases are linked to each other so that those looking for information are directed to the requested information in a targeted manner.

2.2. The pioneering role in involving children and young people as experts and experts by experience is strengthened. After all, children and young people are part of the solution and are crucial partners in achieving a shared and respectful neighbourhood experience and use of space with other users of the outdoor space.

- 2.2.1. Participation can take different forms. Focus is also placed on the use of innovative - digital - tools that provide insight into the public space, for example, from different user perspectives, allow the space to be designed and the effect of interventions to be shown/experienced, etc.
- 2.2.2. We are committed to digitising existing 'physical tools'. Kind & Samenleving is developing the Picto-play tool as a digital application. The tool focuses on the possibility of designing the space together with children and young people.
- 2.2.3. We incorporate the - intermediate - lessons learned and the recommendations from the 'Platform C (2022-24): Participation in a Strong Local Youth and Children's Rights Policy' trajectory.

2.3. The 'Mee(r) naar buiten?!' action plan will be translated into English and publicised across Europe and beyond. Knowledge and expertise are strengthened through international exchanges and bilateral collaborations involving civil servants, experts, actors from the sectors and youth workers with other countries and regions that have specific expertise on child- and youth-friendly climate in the outdoor space.

- 2.3.1. International examples of good practice are implemented in Flanders' youth and children's rights policy whenever possible.
- 2.3.2. We also propagate our own expertise on this topic and put examples of good practice in Flanders in the international spotlight. The following actions will contribute to this:
 - 2.3.2.1. We will organise a European conference within the framework of the EU Presidency for Youth (European Conference on Local Youth Work and Democracy) where the right to play outdoors and young people in the public space will be discussed at large.
 - 2.3.2.2. We will develop a specific action around children and young people in the public space in cooperation with the City of Ghent on the occasion of Ghent's tenure as European Youth Capital in 2024.
 - 2.3.2.3. Netwerk Jeugd vriendelijk, together with Child Friendly Cities Nederland, will organise an exchange programme for municipalities using a grant from the ERASMUS+ programme. The theme is child-friendly neighbourhoods where children and young people can grow up healthy.

3

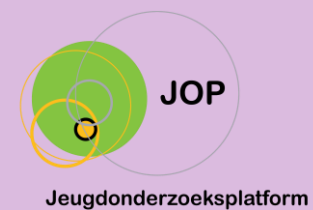
Inspire, encourage, support



- 3.1. Further work is done on the 365 Days of Outdoor Play campaign, together with the Outdoor Play Day partners. We broaden the scope and complement children's outdoor play with young people's being outdoors:
- 3.1.1. The annual Outdoor Play Day (campaign) is the highlight of the 365 Days of Outdoor Play campaign. We use this day to disseminate the vision and activities associated with this day more widely. The activity radius, which is currently focused more on children under 12, will be extended so as to also include activities for teenagers and young people.
 - 3.1.1.1. We ensure the registration of all activities taking place on Outdoor Play Day and communicate them on the relevant websites.
 - 3.1.1.2. The existing content of the speelidee.be database will be linked to other communication channels. The focus of the database on groups is extended to include more individual play ideas, including videos and activities aimed specifically at families/upbringing environments and play ideas for young people. Attention is devoted to renewal and innovation.
 - 3.1.1.3. Youth work massively supports the idea behind this day and is launching the #wijgaanmeernaarbuiten hashtag!
 - 3.1.2. We increase the focus on the importance of playing outdoors and meeting people outdoors by investing in awareness campaigns throughout the year through the 365 Days of Outdoor Play campaign.
 - 3.1.2.1. Partners and experts periodically launch campaigns on the ground. Campaign images will be collected before, during and after the summer of 2023 and will be compiled and distributed in autumn 2023.
 - 3.1.2.2. Young people and their organisations are encouraged to go outdoors and make their presence visible using creative methodologies and mobile infrastructure.
 - 3.1.2.3. Existing campaign material is clearly visualised depending on the goal and target group of a specific campaign. This can be done through integration into the Outdoor Play campaign website or through cross-references to partners or other experts.
- 3.2. We bring existing and renewed support (campaign) material to the actors and make sure that all the inspiring content, guidance and tools, customised to the different target groups, are easy to find digitally and/or made physically available.
- 3.2.1. The Kind & Samenleving poster entitled 'Ten Challenges for the Outdoor Play Hero' is highlighted and distributed to the different target groups in a targeted manner. Kind & Samenleving creates a similar outdoor hero poster on the barriers and incentives for children to play outdoors in their neighbourhood.
 - 3.2.2. We will translate the IPA child-friendly poster on Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Dutch together with children and further publicise it.
- 3.3. Local authorities are supported in developing a vision and creating action plans.
- 3.3.1. Bataljong organises a practical safari to inspire and motivate local actors to work on a policy centred on children and young people in the public space (vision + action plan).

LET'S GO OUTSIDE!

The 'Let's go outside!' action plan was created in cooperation with



More information is available at www.benjamindalle.be