



brussel

# An outline of the Dutch-speaking services for Brussels families

Third Cartography study conducted by UGent on behalf of the Vlaamse  
Gemeenschapscommissie - Summary

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# INTRODUCTION

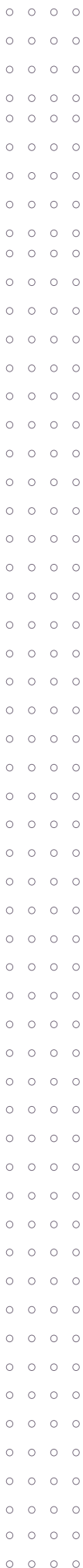
In this third Cartography edition, the Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC - Flemish Community Commission) presents the results of a follow-up study the *Vakgroep Sociaal Werk en Sociale Pedagogiek* of the University of Ghent conducted on the Brussels Dutch-speaking family services landscape during 2015.

We list the most important developments and challenges.<sup>1</sup> The previous two Cartographies from 2005 and 2010 described a number of sticking points in the sector of childcare for babies and toddlers: a shortage of places, accessibility for disadvantaged groups and the registration of childcare needs. This follow-up study charts how matters have evolved. Other than childcare for babies and toddlers, the 2015 study also describes preventive family support (infant welfare clinics, the Huis van het Kind) and out-of-school childcare.



**'It takes a whole village to raise one child'. This proverb underlines that parents are not left to their own devices. Brussels parents and children can bank on the support of the Dutch-speaking services for families with young children. But what type of family support and childcare services are there available in Brussels?**

<sup>1</sup> For an extensive analysis, we refer to the report by Vandenbroeck, M. & Bauters, V. (2016). *Cartografie van de Nederlandstalige gezinsvoorzieningen in Brussel*. Brussels – Ghent: VGC – UGent.





# A YOUNG CITY WITH PARTICULAR CHALLENGES

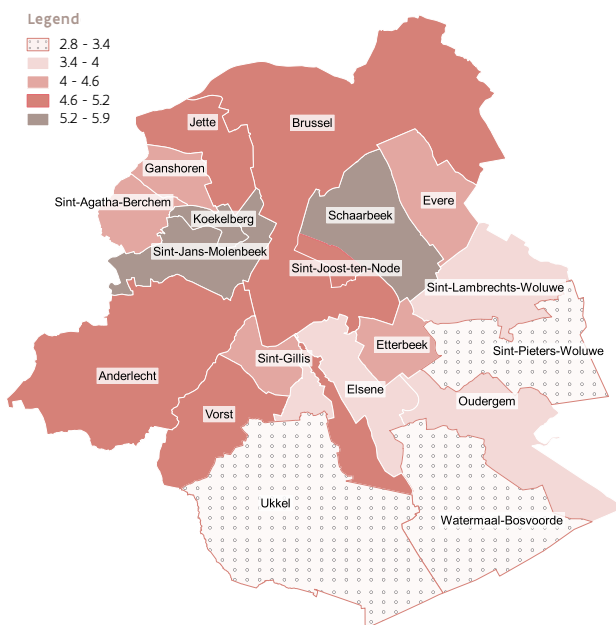
## Youngest population

The Brussels-Capital Region has the youngest population in the country.

In 2015, almost 5 in 100 Brussels residents were under the age of three. In Flanders (3.19%), like in the rest of Belgium (3.38%), that ratio is much lower. This higher baby and toddler ratio can in part be explained by the fact that more young adults have chosen to make Brussels their home. But there is also a difference between the northwest and the southeast of the Region. The northwest numbers relatively more children than the southeast [see Figure 1].

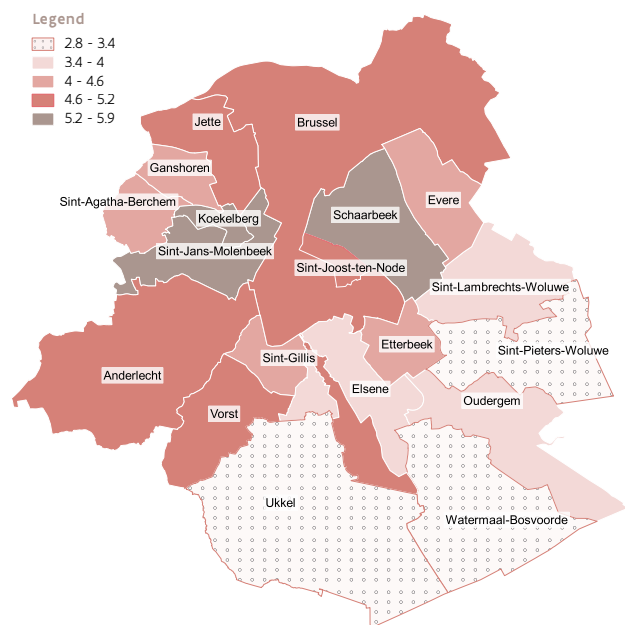
The 2014 birth rate stood at 15.83 per 1000 inhabitants. Watermaal-Bosvoorde (8.76), Sint-Pieters-Woluwe (10.84) and Ukkel (11.05) have the lowest birth rates. The highest birth rates were recorded in Sint-Jans-Molenbeek (19.31), Schaarbeek (18.55) and Koekelberg (17.83). The Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis (BISA) predicts the greatest rise in Anderlecht, Koekelberg, Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, Sint-Joost-ten-Node and Schaarbeek.

Figure 1 : Proportion of 0 to 2-year-olds in the Brussels-Capital Region (2015) - Source: BISA



With 12.94%, also the percentage of schoolchildren aged between 3 and 12 years is higher than in Flanders (10.92%). As in the case of the youngest age group, the number of schoolchildren is once again higher in the north-western part of the Region [see Figure 2]. Also this age group continues to grow. The municipalities of Sint-Joost-ten-Node, Sint-Gillis and Sint-Agatha-Berchem are projected to experience the most substantial increase.

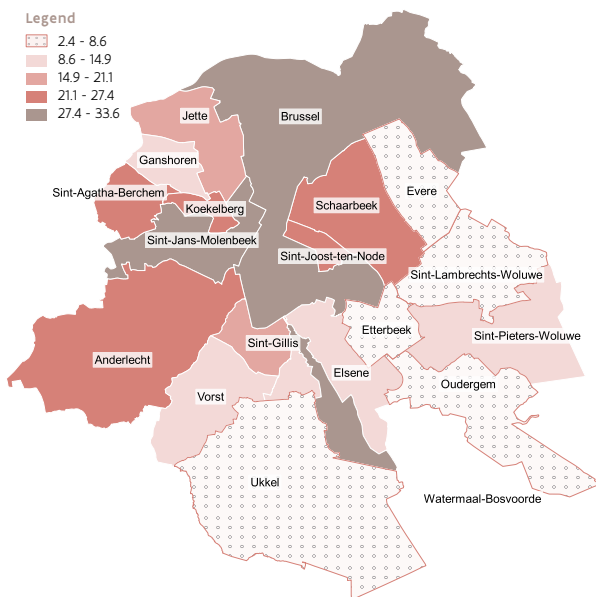
Figure 2 : Proportion of 3 to 12-year-olds in the Brussels-Capital Region (2015) - Source: BISA



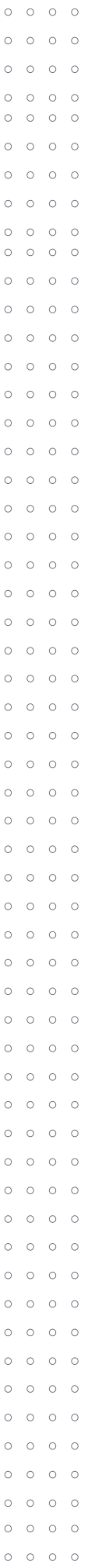
## Vulnerable families

Kind en Gezin (K&G) calculated the deprivation index for the Brussels Region. To do so, they based themselves on six criteria: monthly income, employment situation, level of education, housing, child development and health. Where a family's living conditions are on a par with or below the lower limit for three or more criteria, the family is deemed to be living in a disadvantaged situation as this often tends to compound the risks of child poverty. In 2014, the deprivation index in the Brussels-Capital Region stood at 23.3%. Almost one in four children under the age of three was living in vulnerable circumstances. In this case also, there is a difference between the municipalities in the northwest and in the southeast of the Region [see Figure 3]. By way of comparison: in Flanders, central city Antwerp comes out worst in the deprivation index with a score of 14.3%.

Figure 3 : Kind en Gezin deprivation index (2014) - Source: Kind en Gezin











Brussels is an extraordinarily diverse Region. The number of different languages and the cultural and socio-economic diversity bear testimony to that. In Brussels, relatively more children are growing up in a disadvantaged situation or in a family without earnings from labour than in the rest of the country. Also the percentage of young children and schoolchildren is higher here. We expect birth rates to increase precisely in those municipalities where deprivation is worst.





## PROFILE OF BRUSSELS FAMILIES

	IN BRUSSELS	IN FLANDERS
 births per 1000 inhabitants (2014)	15.83	10.46
 children under the age of 3 years (2015)	4.58%	3.19%
 children aged between 3 and 12 years (2015)	12.94%	10.92%
 children under the age of 3 years growing up in a single-parent family (2015)	16.99%	7.40%
 children under the age of 3 years growing up in a disadvantaged family (2014)	23.3%	11.4%
 children (0-17 years) growing up in a family where no one is gainfully employed (2014)	25.7%	6.6%
 average annual family income (2013)	€ 26,871 lowest average income is € 18,748 (Sint-Joost-ten-Node)	€ 32,275
 non-Belgian nationality (2015)	33.93%	7.82%

It is against the backdrop of this population analysis that the researchers examined the Dutch-speaking services for young parents and their children. They scrutinised three important sectors: preventive family support, childcare for babies and toddlers and out-of-school childcare.





# PREVENTIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

The sector of preventive family support caters for parents, children and young people struggling with issues relating to parenting and physical and psychosocial health.

## Infant welfare clinics: free preventive health examinations

Infant welfare clinics offer children under the age of three free preventive health examinations. Doctors do not only examine but also vaccinate children. Volunteers measure and weigh the children. Kind en Gezin provides the clinic with a district nurse and family counsellor.

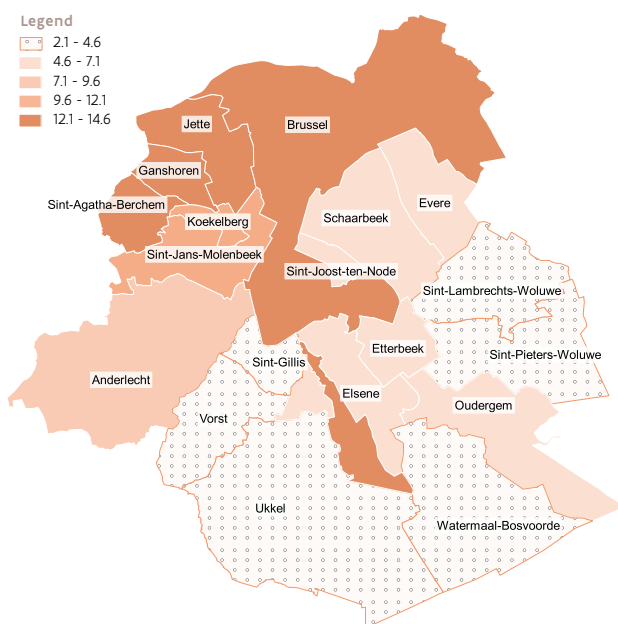
The Brussels-Capital Region numbers 22 Dutch-speaking infant welfare clinics and one antenatal advice centre, managed by six organising bodies. By way of comparison: Flanders has 342 infant welfare clinics and seven antenatal advice centres recognised by Kind en Gezin.

Even though, purely from a birth rate perspective, there are relatively more infant welfare clinics than in Flanders, the Kind en Gezin figures show that all the Brussels infant welfare clinics combined only reach 8.32% of the overall number of children under the age of three (see Figure 4).

If, on the basis of the Brussels Targets (Brusselnorm)<sup>2</sup>, we convert this cover ratio<sup>3</sup> into 30% of the total number of children under the age of three, every municipality falls short of that target.

What is striking though is that the level of education of mothers who visit the Dutch-speaking infant welfare clinics tends to be higher than the effective level of education of the Brussels female population. The Brussels infant welfare clinics operate on a far smaller scale than their counterparts in Flanders. In Flanders, each welfare clinic operates some 153 times on average. In Brussels, even the largest welfare clinic falls far short of the Flemish average. Because the reach of the infant welfare clinics in Brussels is not centrally logged and the various authorities do not engage in data exchange, we remain in the dark about the overall reach of this service.

Figure 4 : Reach of the infant welfare clinics recognised by Kind en Gezin by municipality user (2014) - Source: Kind en Gezin, ADSEI



**The infant welfare clinic services are extremely limited and fragmented. The problem is not only that the infant welfare clinics in Brussels are tiny but also that there isn't a single large one. This leads to a fragmentation of know-how, of infrastructure and of the support that is needed to recruit, train and follow up volunteers, all essential quality requirements.**

<sup>2</sup> The Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Flemish Community) uses the Brussels Targets as a guideline for its Brussels-Capital Region policy. The bottom line is that the Vlaamse Gemeenschap provides services for 30 per cent of the Brussels target group.

<sup>3</sup> The cover ratio shows the relationship between the total number of children aged between 0 and 2 years and the overall childcare capacity.



# Evolution of the Huis van het Kind Brussel

Kind en Gezin is currently working on a project to bolster preventive family support via a multidisciplinary offer of services with nurses, doctors, pedagogues and midwives. To do so, the concept 'Huizen van het Kind' was enacted by decree in 2014. By definition, a 'Huis van het Kind' must guarantee both a basic offer and an integrated supplementary offer, tailored to the needs of vulnerable families. This is especially important in poor areas, because poverty is a multi-dimensional problem.

The seed for the 'Huis van het Kind Brussel' was sown long before the decree came into effect. Under the guidance of the centre for Vernieuwing in de Basisvoorzieningen voor Jonge Kinderen (VBJK) and by order of the VGC, a pilot project was launched in 2012. In 2014, the project steering group was transformed into a joint venture which led to the establishment of one Huis van het Kind that operates for the whole of Brussels.

The Huis van het Kind Brussel joint venture currently encompasses the organising bodies of the Brussels infant welfare clinics and other partners involved in preventive family support:

- vzw (non-profit association) Kind en Preventie (infant welfare clinics, antenatal advice centre, inloopteam zÎTa Dansaert)
- vzw de Weeg (infant welfare clinics)
- vzw de Weeg-Zuid Brussel (infant welfare clinics)
- the Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- childcare centre (infant welfare clinic)
- vzw Foyer (infant welfare clinic)
- Municipality of Anderlecht (infant welfare clinics)
- Kind en Gezin (the Brussels district team)
- CAW Brussel
- Expertisecentrum Kraamzorg Volle Maan
- vzw Solidariteit voor het Gezin (Centrum voor Kinderzorg en Gezinsondersteuning/HOPON)
- Opvoeden in Brussel vzw (BABOES/Opvoedingswinkel)
- Centrum voor Etnische Minderheden en Gezondheid vzw (inloopteam Huis der Gezinnen)
- vzw Samenwerken aan Kinderopvang Brussel<sup>4</sup> (Brussels childcare representative)

All the partners of the Huis van het Kind Brussel operate on the basis of their own identity and they each have their own core tasks. Most organisations focus on parents with young children. Some organisations work for a broader target audience and/or support professionals and intermediary partners like schools and welfare organisations. A number of organisations focus on the socially vulnerable (antenatal advice centre, inloopteams zÎTa Dansaert and Huis der Gezinnen, including the Centrum voor Kinderzorg en Gezinsondersteuning (CKG)) [see Table 1].

Together, they ensure the functions described in the decree: preventive medical examinations, meeting place, group work, accessible personal support and the organisation of a reception and information centre.



<sup>4</sup> In the Brussels Region, the VGC funded the organisation of a central registration system for childcare needs in Brussels which is run by the vzw Samenwerken aan Kinderopvang Brussel. 99 childcare initiatives are working to provide affordable childcare for everyone across the various umbrella organisations.



Table 1 : Target group of the partners of the Huis van het Kind (self-report)

In general	-9m	0y	3y	4y	6y	8y	9y	12y	15y	18y	24y	Target-group oriented services
												Antenatal advice centre
Expertisecentrum Kraamzorg Volle Maan												
K&G district nurses												
Infant welfare clinics												
Childcare												
Vzw Samenwerken aan Kinderopvang Brussel												
Baboes												
												Inloopteam zîTa Dansaert
												Inloopteam Huis der Gezinnen
HOPON												
												CKG
Opvoedingswinkel												
CAW Brussel <sup>5</sup>												

The Huizen van het Kind offer new opportunities and challenges in terms of expansion and integration of the services. We are on the eve of the third phase in their development. The first phase was an experiment in the field, which its share of ups and downs. The second phase saw a fresh start and renewed consultation which resulted in a support base and a common vision. This second phase has now been completed and the third phase, i.e. actual achievements in the field, is about to begin.

<sup>5</sup> CAW Brussel offers help with all kinds of issues and problems from raising a family to relationships. Within the context of the Huis van het Kind Brussel however, it focuses on (parents with) children from 12 up to and including 24 years of age.





# CHILDCARE FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

In the field of childcare for babies and toddlers, a great many policy efforts have been made in recent years. In spite of the banking crisis and budgetary problems, the Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Flemish Community) always continued to invest in the expansion of its childcare. With the new decree, the Vlaamse Gemeenschap also wants to further enhance accessibility to and the quality of childcare. To achieve this, the VGC joined forces with the sector. All the parties in charge are adamant that a sound social day care enrolment policy must be put in place.

## A new decree

Via the Childcare for Babies and Toddlers Decree, which came into effect on 1 April 2014, the Flemish Government wants to make childcare more accessible, professional and transparent.

All the recognised childcare facilities are licensed by Kind en Gezin. This licence implies that they meet the relevant starting and operational conditions (infrastructure, pedagogical policy, family participation, collaboration with Kind en Gezin, the Local Platform Childcare, the local authorities, etcetera).

The decree introduces a new and simplified subsidy system that covers all types of childcare - group day care (childcare centres) and family day care (childminders). The subsidy system is designed in a graduated fashion [see Table 2]. Each level comes with additional requirements. The higher the level attained, the greater the amount of subsidies that are disbursed. Facilities that qualify for the subsidies of a higher level, also receive the subsidies paid at the lower levels with the result that they are also obliged to meet the requirements of the various lower levels.

For Level 1, a basic subsidy is granted. This subsidy is paid to each licenced childcare facility that meets the basic subsidy requirements: 220 opening days and an active knowledge of Dutch by all childcare workers. Childcare facilities where families pay an income-based fee (IKT – inkomenstarief) and where children from the disadvantaged groups (one-parent families, households with no earnings, non-EU families) enjoy at least 20% priority receive an IKT subsidy and rise to Level 2. Level 3 childcare facilities receive an extra subsidy and allocate at least 30 % of their places to the most vulnerable families. There is also a starting Level zero for facilities that have been licensed but do not receive any subsidies.

The decree also introduces a new arrangement for parents: ‘childcare that has been booked must be paid for’. At the time of enrolment, a childcare plan is drawn up, specifying on which days the child will attend the childcare facility. Legitimate days of absence or ‘days of grace’ are days at which the child is booked to require childcare but does not avail of the service. Each child is entitled to a minimum of eighteen days’ grace. Organisers are free to set the total number of days’ grace and to decide what qualifies as a legitimate reason. Any other absences must be paid for by the parents.

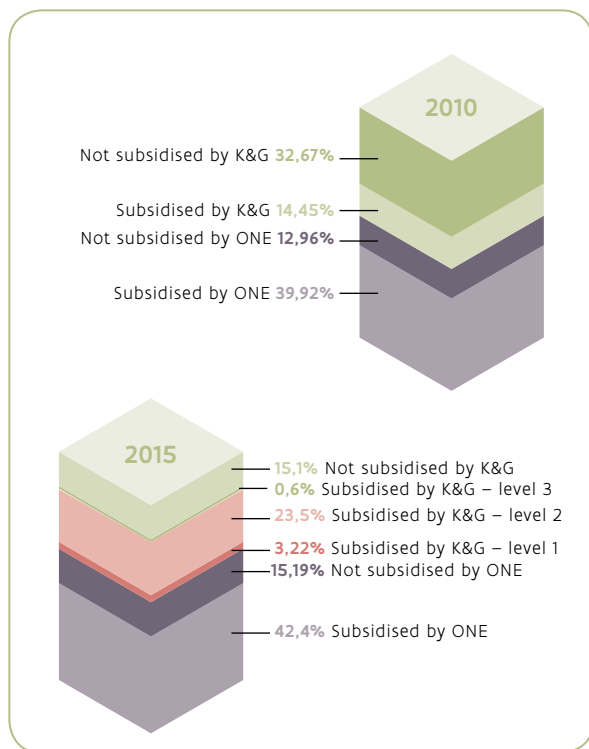
Table 2 : The new Kind en Gezin subsidy system

			Level 3	
		Level 2	<i>extra subsidy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vulnerable families</li> <li>• priority rules</li> <li>• income-based fee</li> <li>• priority rules</li> <li>• a minimum of 220 opening days</li> <li>• Dutch</li> </ul>
	Level 1	<i>Income-based system subsidy</i>	<i>Income-based system subsidy</i>	
Level 0	<i>Basic subsidy</i>	<i>Basic subsidy</i>	<i>Basic subsidy</i>	

# What objectives does Brussels attain?

In Brussels, childcare is organised by both the French-speaking Community (ONE – Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance) and the Vlaamse Gemeenschap (Kind en Gezin). In 2015, they jointly licensed 16,654 places within the Brussels childcare sector. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of Brussels childcare places regulated by ONE and by Kind en Gezin.

Figure 5 : Childcare services licensed by ONE and Kind en Gezin 2010 – 2015 - Source: BISA, Kind en Gezin, ONE

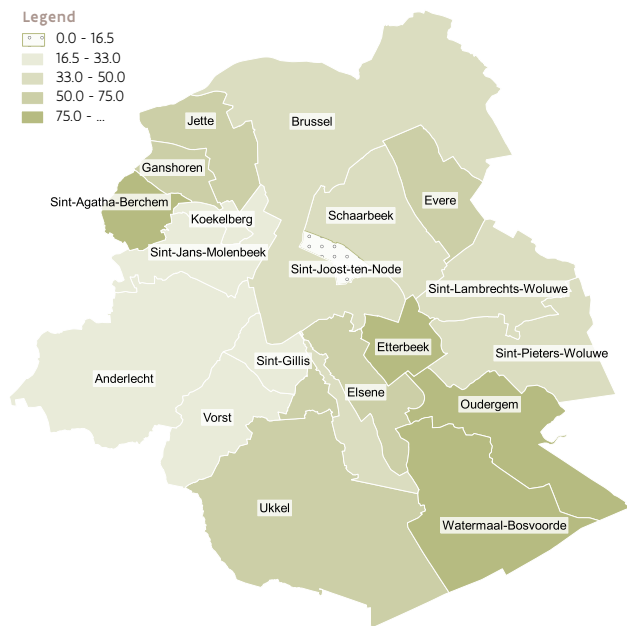


To calculate the coverage, we divide the number of childcare places by the number of children under the age of three (53,834) which gives us an overall cover ratio for Brussels of 30.94%, a decrease in comparison to the previous Cartography study conducted in 2010 (33.05%). This brings Brussels below the European Barcelona Targets which specify that every 33 in one hundred children must have access to childcare. By way of comparison: in Flanders, the 2015 cover ratio ensured by all licensed childcare facilities was 41.56 %.

Meanwhile, these Targets have become outdated and we now base ourselves on one of the objectives of the Childcare Decree, i.e. to have a childcare place for half of all under-three-year-olds by 2016. The aim is to provide each family in need of childcare with an affordable place within a reasonable period of time and within a reasonable radius as of 2020.

So, if we look at the childcare licensed by Kind en Gezin within the Brussels Region alone, we are talking 7,044 places for 16,150 children (Brussels Targets: 30% of the 0 up to and including 2-year-olds), which gives us a cover ratio of 46.67 % for Brussels as a whole. At municipal level, five municipalities do not attain the Barcelona Targets: Vorst, Sint-Gillis, Sint-Joost-ten-Node, Koekelberg and Anderlecht. On the other hand, ten of the nineteen municipalities do not attain the 50% target. Figure 6 shows the cover ratio at municipal level.

Figure 6 : Kind en Gezin childcare cover ratio (2015) - Source: Kind en Gezin, ADSEI



The average daily rate in a Level 0 and Level 1 childcare facility is € 27.88. For the average Brussels family, that fee is difficult if not impossible to afford. If we adjust the cover ratio in this light and only include the facilities that operate IKT rates - where parents pay an income-based fee (Level 2 and Level 3) - the picture changes again [see Figure 7]. Even though the Brussels offer at Level 2 and Level 3 expanded considerably between 2010 and 2015, the cover ratio for income-based childcare still dropped to 24.85%.





Figure 7 : Kind en Gezin IKT childcare places cover ratio (2015) - Source: Kind en Gezin, ADSEI

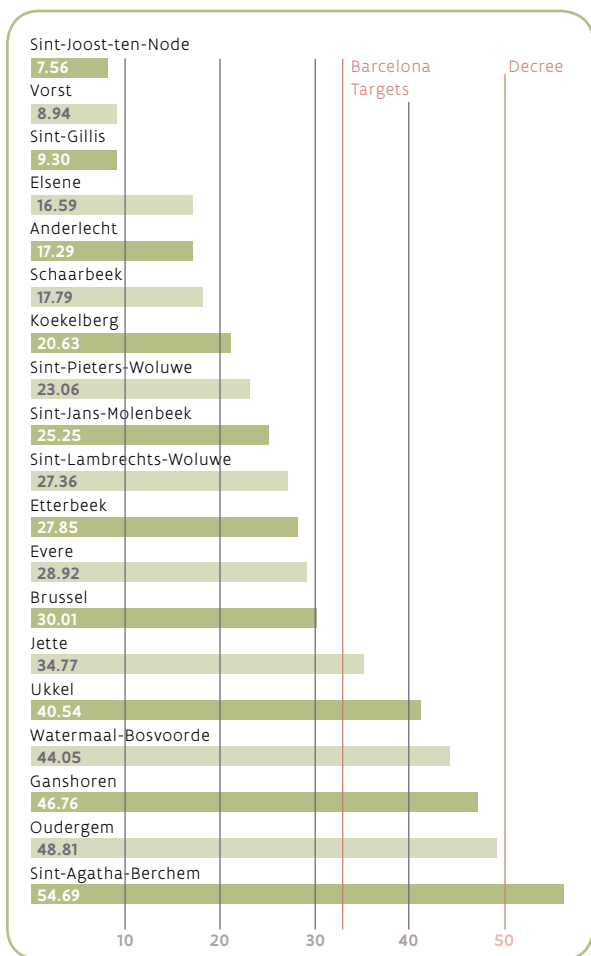
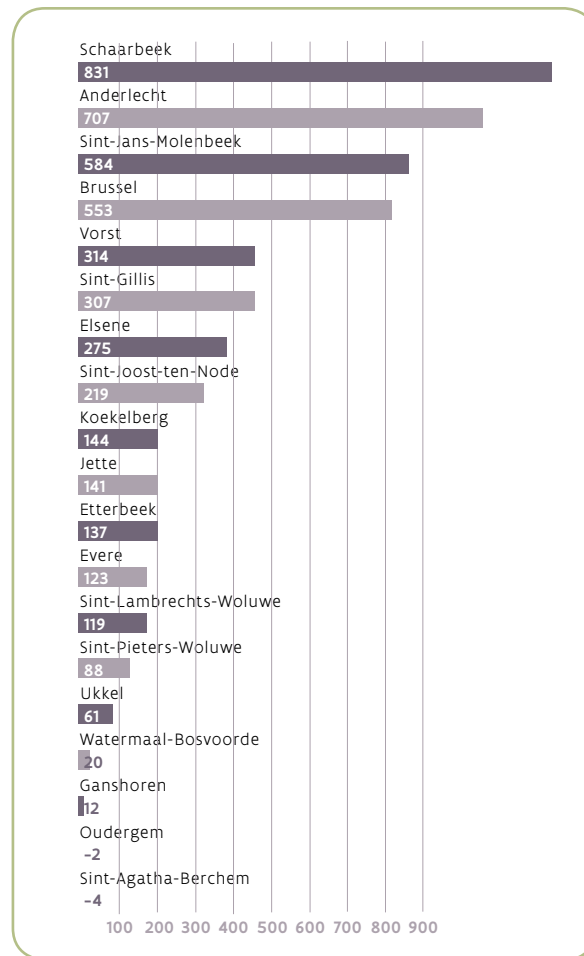


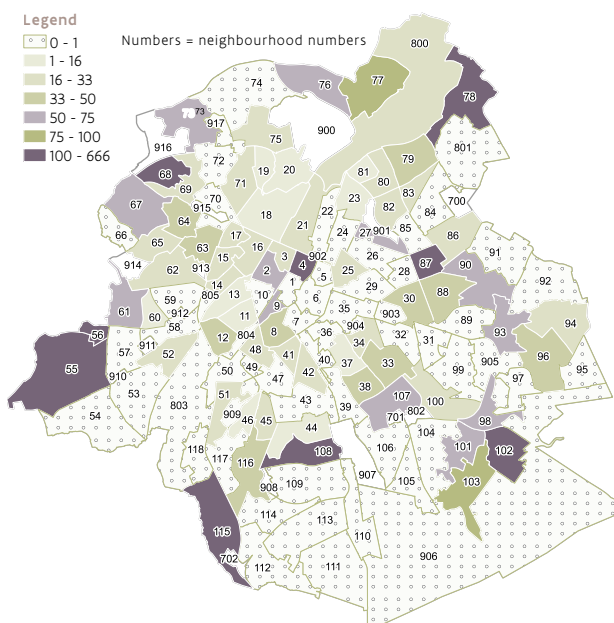
Figure 8 : Number of extra IKT childcare places required to attain the 50% target in 2020 - Source: BISA, Kind en Gezin



Thus, with a shortage of 1,317 in IKT places, we drop to well below the Barcelona Targets (5,330 childcare places). Now, if we were to apply the decretal target of 50 % to the available IKT places, we would end up with a general shortfall of 3,751 places in 2015. This means that, by 2020, an extra 4,100 extra IKT places would need to be created.<sup>6</sup> These shortfalls are not evenly distributed between the municipalities [see Figure 8].

To get a more detailed view of where the shortages are greatest, cover ratios at neighbourhood level have been calculated for the very first time [see Figure 9].

Figure 9 : Cover ratio Kind en Gezin IKT childcare places at neighbourhood level (2015) - Source: BISA, Kind en Gezin



<sup>6</sup> The shortfall in places depends on the population projections used (BISA 2014 vs. FP & ADSEI 2014 vs. FP & ADSEI 2015), but can, at municipal level, only be calculated on the basis of the 2014 BISA projections. The computation of this shortage is based on the BISA population projections published in 2014 which are slightly higher than those the FP & ADSEI published in that same year. Going by the BISA projections, the shortfall in places will exceed the shortages calculated by the FP & ADSEI. BISA publishes projections at municipal level while the FP & ADSEI only publishes regional (and also administrative-district-related) ones. Furthermore, the FP & ADSEI updated its population projections in 2015 (and also in 2016). According to these latest projections, the number of 0 to 2-year-olds will be lower than was projected in 2014.

There are various factors that can explain the shortage of Dutch-speaking childcare places, and their uneven distribution, within the Brussels-Capital Region.

A first major factor is that the population of young children is increasing at the same pace as places are being created, with the result that the gap shows no signs of narrowing.

Secondly, most of the new places that are created in Brussels are allocated at Level 1. These are places that cost the government very little because the facilities in question do not operate an income-based rate. In practice, these places often never actually materialise with the result that they are basically an expansion on paper rather than a reality for Brussels families. And those that do come on stream are affordable for higher-income families only. There is no or very little pressure on organisers providing childcare at Level 0 or Level 1 to switch to IKT, where more stringent rules, such as language requirements and priority rules, apply.

Thirdly, expansions at Level 2 and Level 3 - where rates are calculated on the basis of income - often tend to be expansions that need to be realisable in the short term. On that account, there is a tendency (or no option but) to expand the existing facilities, which means that increasingly more places are created where there are plenty already. This can in part explain the significant link between the average income and the number of IKT places at municipal level: the higher the income, the greater the number of IKT places.

## Language requirements

The new decree also sets a number of language requirements. The minimum language requirement to be licensed by Kind en Gezin is that the manager and at least one childcare worker must have an active knowledge of the Dutch language. To qualify for subsidies, as of Level 1 in other words, all the childcare workers must meet that requirement. To facilitate these changes, a transition period has been introduced. By 2024, all managers and childcare workers must have the relevant qualifications. The language requirements have put the childcare facilities in the former independent sector before the choice: move to ONE or stay with Kind en Gezin and possibly learn Dutch.

A telephone survey on these requirements was conducted among 119<sup>7</sup> Level 0 and Level 1 licensed childcare facilities. Almost three quarters of the managers considered themselves to be able to get by in Dutch (just under 40% are native Dutch-speakers while 33.04% are not fluent in Dutch). Less than one childcare worker in every two childcare facilities is proficient in Dutch, which is much less than the minimum requirement of one childcare worker per facility. Sixteen childcare centres

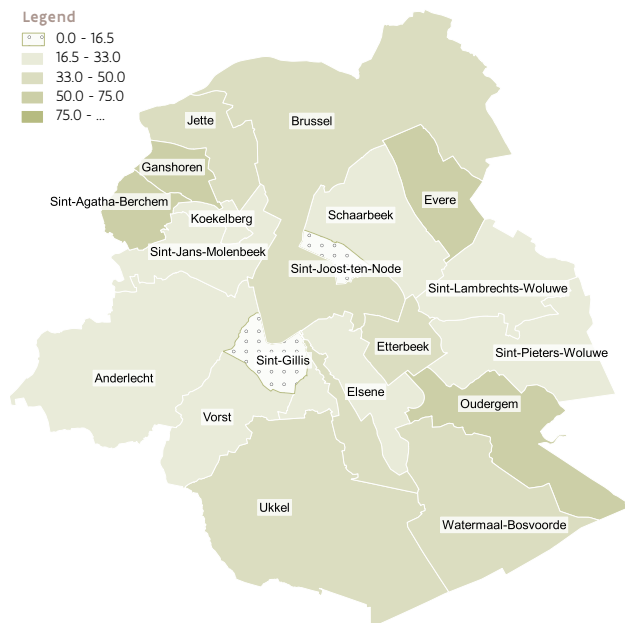
and three childminders are currently availing of pedagogical and language support. Nineteen managers and six childcare workers are following Dutch.

Even though the decree does not set any requirements in terms of the spoken language, the number of unilingual French-speaking childcare facilities has decreased significantly from 81 in 2010 to 52 in 2015. But that does not mean that the number of childcare facilities where only Dutch is spoken has increased because that still stands at three. However Dutch is commonly spoken in 42 childcare facilities, accounting for a total of 962 childcare places. The purely French-speaking childcare facilities Kind & Gezin licensed in 2015 has dropped to 1,080 childcare places, representing a close on 50% reduction in comparison to the previous Cartography of 2010 (1,884 childcare places). This declining trend in unilingual French-speaking childcare is likely to continue in favour of a context where functional multilingualism is embraced.

Respondents were also asked about the reasons why they chose to affiliate to Kind en Gezin. The main reason given was the more favourable ratio of nine children per childcare worker (ONE imposes a maximum ratio of one childcare worker for every seven children).

Figure 10 shows the cover ratio of childcare facilities that are de facto Dutch-speaking (Level 0, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3).

Figure 10 : Cover ratio of Dutch-speaking Kind en Gezin childcare based on lingua franca



<sup>7</sup> Number of childcare facilities contacted in a total of 130 licensed facilities.



## Freely accessible?








In the Brussels Region, all enquiries about Dutch-speaking childcare are logged centrally via an online registration system, the Lokaal Loket Kinderopvang (Local Platform Childcare - [www.kinderopvanginbrussel.be](http://www.kinderopvanginbrussel.be)). The VGC provided the funding for the preparations, operationalization, roll-out, current offer and is also funding its further expansion. Together with the vzw Samenwerken aan Kinderopvang Brussel, Trojan work was done with regard to the enrolment policy within a relatively short period of time. So far, 99 childcare facilities are working across the various umbrella organisations to make childcare affordable for everyone. An example to many Flemish cities and municipalities!

Since the official launch of the Lokaal Loket in February 2015, 1,786 childcare enquiries with a desired start date between 1 September 2015 and 30 September 2016 received a positive reply. However, during that same period another 1,178 applications could not be suitably accommodated. The main reason for this is the tremendous shortage of Dutch-speaking childcare places that operate the income-based system. Striking though is that at least half of the applications were logged via a third party or manager of a participating childcare facility.

All the managers of the Brussels childcare facilities that operate IKT were surveyed online about the registrations in 2015. 93 of the 104 managers completed the survey.

- **Urgent childcare needs:** only fifteen facilities (16.13%) systematically keep some space available.
- **'Childcare that has been booked must be paid for':** 62.40% apply the statutory minimum of eighteen days' grace. Other facilities exceed this (eight facilities even allow for 220 or more days' grace). The reasons that qualify for a day's grace vary from facility to facility. Also the amount parents have to pay for unauthorised absences varies (from waiver to € 27.72, which is the maximum fee under the income-based system).
- **Enrolment and priority policy:** priority for brothers and sisters remains the main priority criterion. Furthermore, also criteria such as social/pedagogical desirability, one-parent family and the link with Dutch come into play in the enrolment policy.

### PROFILE OF BABIES AND TODDLERS REGISTERED IN LEVEL 2 AND LEVEL 3

	Place of residence	Brussels Capital Region 77.36%	Flemish Region 20.48%	Walloon Region 2.16%
	Language spoken at home	Dutch (at least 1 parent) 59.07%	French (both parents) 29.42%	Other language (both parents) 11.52%
	Employment situation	Working parents 70.63%	Unemployed (at least 1 parent) 16.64%	Studying (at least 1 parent) 12.72%
	Rate	Minimum rate +/- 16.67%	Individually reduced rate +/- 6.67%	
	One-parent family	12%		
	Foreign nationality mother (at birth)	23.53%		
	Non-EU nationality mother (at birth)	13.77%		



The uniform enrolment and priority policy and the sustained collaboration with the vzw Samenwerken aan Kinderopvang Brussel also make that there is an excellent social mix within the Brussels childcare centre populations. The change in mentality favouring a more social priority policy that came about between 2005 and 2010 has very much taken root in 2015. Two of the three disadvantaged groups enjoy even better access to Dutch-speaking childcare facilities: one-parent families and unemployed parents. The fact that the third disadvantaged group (families of non-European nationality) does not, is becoming a cause for concern. However, it needs to be examined whether the language requirements as one of the priority criteria (55% priority for children with at least one Dutch-speaking parent) discriminates against these families.

By analogy with the previous Cartography study, the managers were surveyed about their priority and enrolment policy.

- **Priority rules:** Support for the 20% priority rule for disadvantaged groups is great. There is less of a consensus about the 30% rule for disadvantaged groups (which does result in an additional subsidy). Two thirds of the managers welcome the 55% priority rule in spite of the threat it poses to the social function of childcare.
  - **The new decree:** Opinion about the “childcare that has been booked must be paid for” rule is divided. Two thirds believe that the administration that comes with it is far too time-consuming.
  - **Work pressure:** The majority are concerned about the increasing work and time pressures.
- **Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie (VGC):** 70% believe that the VGC must continue to put in at least the same amount of effort while 29% believe that the VGC should step up its efforts in terms of accessibility. The managers advocate increasing the number of places so as to allow them to effectively accommodate more children. Enhancing accessibility remains a must.
  - **Vlaamse Gemeenschap:** More than half (53%) of the managers believe that the Flemish Government should do more to guarantee accessibility for everyone. There has been no shortage of criticism of the measures introduced under the new decree: the price increase for the lowest incomes, the requirement to apply for the income-based system certificate online, the new days’ grace arrangement and the 55 % priority rule (for children with at least one Dutch-speaking parent) have all been listed as the main obstacles and threat to the social function of childcare.
  - **Lokaal Loket Kinderopvang:** The collaboration with the Lokaal Loket, which contributes to a better overview of the childcare needs, is widely supported. Also the regional groups are seen as an excellent development by the majority of childcare facilities.



In spite of all the efforts, the childcare-place deficit has not reduced. Fact is that one in two families looking for a place in Dutch-speaking childcare today cannot be facilitated. The targets the Flemish policy has set for itself are unlikely to be reached any time soon. To meet the 50% target the Flemish Government has set, an extra 720 places will have to come on stream in Brussels this year. If we merely consider the places also ordinary Brussels residents can afford and which are de facto Dutch-speaking (Levels 2 and 3), an extra 3,751 places will need to be created this year if we want to end up with no less than 4,100 extra places by 2020. And even though geographical inequality has reduced somewhat, fact is that it still remains unacceptably glaring.





# OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDCARE

Childcare for school-age children is going through a period of significant change. The Vlaamse Gemeenschap wants to do something about both the shortage and the fragmentation of the offer. In the wake of the *'Staten-Generaal Opvang en Vrije Tijd van Schoolkinderen'*, Kind en Gezin drew up the draft proposal *'Krachtlijnen voor een nieuwe organisatie voor de opvang- en vrije tijd van kinderen'* which presses for collaboration and local control. Even though this has as yet not been backed by any budgetary efforts, it does open a number of perspectives. Charting care for schoolchildren is no easy matter because the offer is spread across various sectors and there is no central registration system.

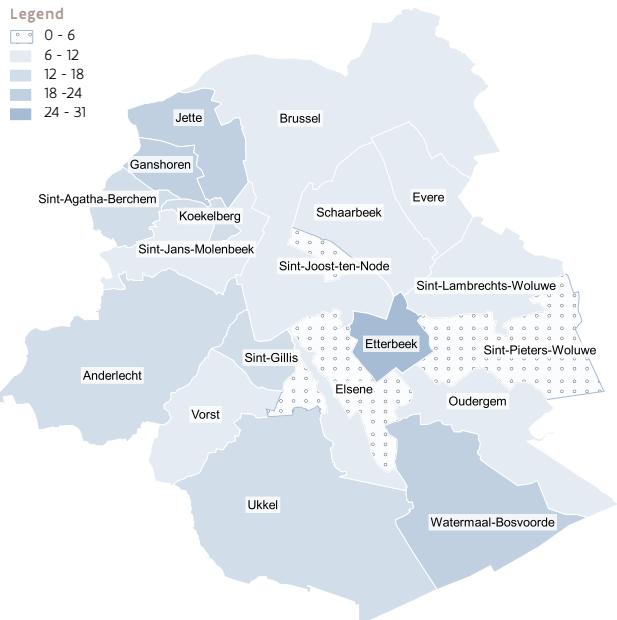
The researchers analysed three types of initiatives: care at and by schools, the Out-of-school Childcare Initiatives and the playgrounds organised by the VGC.



## Childcare at and by schools

Going by the 'brede opvang' subsidy applications<sup>8</sup> (school year 2014-2015), 5,584 individual pupils availed of childcare at and provided by schools. At that moment in time, its reach amounted to 12.24% (Brussels Targets = 45,611 pupils). The difference in cover ratio between the various Brussels municipalities is tremendous [see Figure 11]. However, no single municipality even comes close to the Brussels Targets. As a result, the cover ratio is lower than in the Flemish Region where almost 30% of all families avail of care provided at and by the schools at least once a week.

Figure 11 : School care cover ratio (2014-2015 school year)



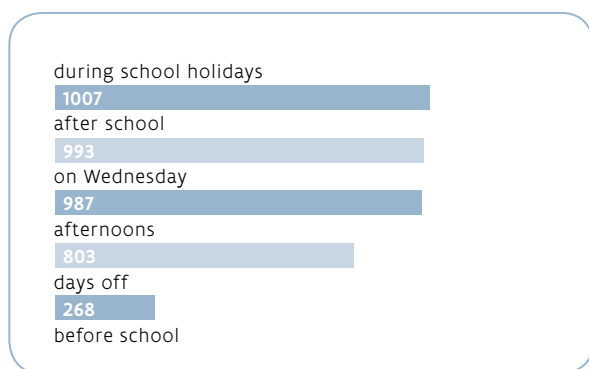
For the 2014-2015 school year, there are major differences in child/supervisor ratios. That ratio varies from one supervisor for every three children (minimum) to one supervisor for 65 children (maximum). That ratio is comparable to the situation in schools in Flanders.

<sup>8</sup> Dutch-speaking schools can apply for 'brede opvang' subsidies to the VGS's Algemene Directie Onderwijs en Vorming (Directorate-General Education and Training). 'Brede opvang' stands for childcare schools organise for their own pupils, under their own responsibility, and is more often than not provided within the schools' own infrastructure.

# Out-of-school Childcare Initiatives

In 2015, the Brussels-Capital Region officially numbered 21 out-of-school childcare initiatives (IBO). They are managed by seven organising bodies. IBOs provide before and/or after-school care, childcare on Wednesday afternoons, on free days and during school holidays. The capacity of individual IBOs, as reported by the IBO coordinators, varies according to the type of childcare they offer [see Figure 12].

Figure 12 : Capacity of IBO services per type of childcare (2015)



IBO coordinators were surveyed on the following topics:

- Reach and profile of children:** During operating year 2014, 4,398 individual children between the ages of 3 up to and including 12 years were registered, which results in a cover ratio of 9.64% (Brussels Targets). This form of childcare is available in nine Brussels municipalities. The reach of the IBO services that provide after-school care varies but is by no means high anywhere. Both the reach and the profile of the population very much hinges on the schools the IBOs work with. Also the municipality, area and/or neighbourhood where the care facility is located are determining factors. As a group, preschool children are overrepresented. That is also the case in the Flemish Region.
- Occupancy:** The IBO occupancy rate for operating year 2014 ranged between 80% and 100%.
- Enrolment policy:** IBOs operate a highly diverse enrolment policy. Some IBOs use priority periods for instance while another IBO gives priority to its partner schools. Fifteen IBO services prioritise children of working and/or studying parents as a general rule. To create an offer that is accessible to all children, the coordinators want to further fine-tune their social care and priority policy. As things stand, demand for childcare in any case exceeds supply.

- Parental contributions:** For after-school care, parents pay on average € 0.82 per half an hour commenced. All the IBOs operate social rates. The daily rate for childcare during the school holidays is € 11.32 on average (minimum = € 7.00; maximum = € 13.99). The coordinators report major differences between the rates the various IBOs apply.
- Employment:** The employment statuses of IBO staff are a source of frustration. Two thirds of IBO staff have a GE(S)CO status<sup>9</sup>.
- Collaboration:** The Brussels IBOs have a long tradition in networking and collaboration across various sectors. Together with partners in the area, they create a varied offer of leisure-time activities for children (web function). This makes that children are introduced to other organisations and become an active part of the neighbourhood. The coordinators also refer parents to the offer organised by partners.

<sup>9</sup> GE(S)CO stands for gesubsidieerd contractueel, i.e. subsidised contract worker.



# Playgrounds

In 2015, the Algemene Directie Onderwijs en Vorming (Directorate-General Education and Training) of the VGC organised playgrounds in eighteen different locations. These playgrounds cater for children between the ages of three up to and including 14 years who attend Dutch-speaking education in the Brussels Region. On average, each playground organises five weeks of activities per year. The total number of places varies greatly from municipality to municipality (see Figure 13). In 2016, another eight playgrounds will be added, spread across six Brussels municipalities.

Figure 13 : Number VGC playground places (2015)



In 2015, the average occupancy rate of the playgrounds was 95%. By age group, the occupancy rate for preschool children was 99%, for primary-school children 94% and for teenagers 18.5%. Over the various periods a total of 2,427 individual children were registered (1,228 preschoolers, 1,190 primary-school children and nine teenagers). Bearing the 30% Brussels Targets in mind, this gives us a cover ratio for the Brussels-Capital Region of 4.56%.

In 2015, parents were charged € 20 per week for a first child, € 15 per week for a second child and € 10 per week as of the third child. Children from families with limited means pay a reduced rate.

It is impossible to gain an accurate picture of the reach of out-of-school childcare organised by the schools, IBOs and playgrounds as there is no central registration system. It is safe to say however that not one municipality even comes within reach of the Brussels Targets. Not even if we add up all the various types of childcare. Another problem associated with these poor records is that we have no or very little idea which children are actually reached. In other words, we have no clear insight into the social function of out-of-school childcare. While supply seems to fall short of demand in terms of quantity, there are no signs to indicate that this is also the case as far as the quality is concerned. Brussels out-of-school childcare performs remarkably well on two structural quality criteria: the number of supervisors and their qualifications.

Local collaboration across the various sectors remains essential however. As the Brussels IBOs have gained considerable expertise in this particular field, they are very much aware of the problems and barriers that need to be overcome to further that collaboration.





# CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The Vlaamse Gemeenschap has set the bar high and rightly so. It wants to develop services for one third of the children in Brussels (in line with the Brussels Targets). This objective among other matters applies to preventive family support, childcare for babies and toddlers and out-of-school childcare.

The Vlaamse Gemeenschap wants to provide childcare for at least 50% of all babies and toddlers. Combine this with the Brussels Targets and we are looking at childcare for one sixth of all under-three-year-olds living in Brussels. The following table summarises the shortfalls.

It is vital to focus on families with young children, in preventive family support and childcare alike. This is important for pedagogical reasons: the long-term positive impact of proper childcare and high-quality early childhood education have long since been demonstrated.

But is also makes sense from an economic perspective: childcare (for babies, toddlers and schoolchildren) is a prerequisite for social participation, labour-market participation and education/training. And because there are few things that have such a unifying effect as the common use of public services for young children, as recent research has demonstrated, these targets are also essential if we want to foster social cohesion.

There's no getting around the global conclusion: in Brussels, the Vlaamse Gemeenschap does not attain the objectives it has set for itself. Tremendous effort is required in the areas of preventive family support, childcare for babies and toddlers and out-of-school childcare. To that effect, the researchers have formulated a number of recommendations for the various sectors.

Table 3 : Number of places required to meet the 50% target

	2016	2020
Childcare places licensed by Kind en Gezin	720	1,151
Formally Dutch-speaking childcare places (manager is Dutch-speaking)	1,472	1,903
De facto Dutch-speaking childcare places (Dutch as a spoken language)	2,399	2,803
IKT childcare places	3,751	4,182

## Researchers' recommendations

### PREVENTIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

#### 1. Expansion and integration

There is no absolute need for infant welfare clinics to merge or amalgamate. The researchers do believe however that they should become part of larger entities which would allow them to cooperate intensively with other services that cater for an overlap in target audience. That collaboration can come about at various levels: management, infrastructure, training and support, awareness-raising, etc. In that light, the third phase in the development of the Huis van het Kind, the phase of achievements in the field, should coincide with a move towards infant welfare clinics working together as larger entities. This would help overcome the disadvantages associated with the current limitations ensuing from a small-scale offer. Where the working areas do not coincide, other methods will be required to align expansion with a local support base.

#### 2. Referral and promotion by the childcare sector

Parents start looking for a childcare place six months to one year before that place is actually required and often well

before their baby is born. This makes the Dutch-speaking childcare an excellent partner when it comes to informing parents about and referring them to infant welfare clinics. These opportunities are not being exploited as optimally as they might at the moment.

#### 3. Leadership in the development of the Huis van het Kind Brussel

As history teaches us, the successful conclusion of the third and crucial phase in the development of the Huis van het Kind Brussel will largely depend on the leadership that will evolve and on the experiences gained elsewhere. This, for one, entails leadership in the field: people and organisations that can assume an inspiring pioneering role and who, more than anything, have an eye for the process the various partners are going through. But it also involves leadership at policy level. There is no need for the VGC to lay down the rules (cf. phase 1) or to take a backseat (cf. phase 2), but it does have to define the policy framework, one that leaves room for complementary measures at local level. It must be a partner pioneers in the field can enter into dialogue with. And in cases where conflicts

of interest between these partners are too great to be sorted at field level (such as the setting of investment priorities for instance), the VGC must intervene to settle matters.

## CHILDCARE FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

### 4. Consultation between Kind en Gezin and ONE

These two competent authorities could confer with one another so as to set uniform standards, at least as regards the ratio of children to childcare worker and parental contributions.

### 5. Expansion of the IKT where it is needed most

To break the vicious circle of shortages and inequalities it will be essential to, over the next five years:

- in comparison to the past five years, at least double the speed at which Dutch-speaking childcare in Brussels is expanded
- only approve new places at Levels 2 and 3
- plan expansions over the longer term instead of from year to year
- give more priority to municipalities or neighbourhoods with less childcare places, more social indicators and a higher expected birth rate.

This type of policy will unquestionably get the necessary support in the field. The vzw Samenwerken aan Kinderopvang Brussel makes for a perfect partner when it comes to establishing the link between policy and practice and identifying places where needs are greatest. At that, it can also play an important role in terms of removing the other stings from the new regulations (childcare plans, days of grace and suchlike). But as long as there is no increase in IKT places where they are needed most, the tinkering at the edges will continue.

## OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDCARE

### 6. Cross-sector collaboration

The problems and barriers that prevent further collaboration are well understood:

- Parental contributions: major discrepancies between parental contributions seem to have an adverse effect on collaboration.
- Responsibilities: clear arrangements must be made about who is responsible for which children and how transitions (from one level to the next) are catered for.
- Enrolment policy: there are no clear arrangements about an enrolment policy or the manner in which shortfalls are absorbed, with the result that some feel that working parents should be prioritised while others feel they do not.
- Policy: some aspects of out-of-school childcare come within the remit of the sector Onderwijs (Education)

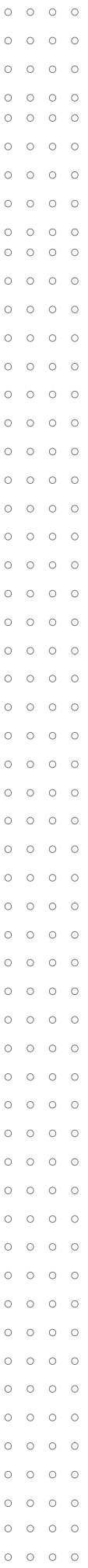
(childcare by and at schools and playgrounds) while others fall to the sector Gezin (Family) (IBO). The lack of dialogue between these two policy sectors complicates cooperation in the field. Also in Flanders it is clear that the issues with regard to the childcare offer for school-children cannot be resolved until the various policy areas currently known as 'education', 'family', 'youth' and 'culture' collaborate both in the field and at policy level. Even though these different sectors, each with their own policy logic, developed over time, that distinction is of very little consequence to the people, and especially the children, in need of childcare.

## MONITORING

This is the third Cartography study that tries to supply the quantitative and qualitative data that can help the childcare policy. But each study is limited in terms of time and resources and this study is no different. As a result, there are plenty of data the researchers were unable to obtain. For that reason, this report concludes with some advice on how to, with a minimum of effort, generate a maximum of data that can help drive policy and monitor the impact of policy measures:

- At this moment in time, we have no way of knowing whether a family that is not looked after by a Dutch-speaking infant welfare clinic is taken care of by a French-speaking infant welfare clinic and vice versa. An exchange of data is urgently needed if we want to identify these gaps.
- Also as regards the 'choice' process of parents we remain in the dark. The researchers recommend that the VGC's Onderwijs en Gezin (Education and Family), perhaps with the collaboration of the Meet- en Weetcel (Research Department), work together to have parents who register their children in Dutch-speaking education fill out a short retrospective questionnaire on their use (and experience) of the services and their expectations for the future.

With relatively limited effort this would generate far more data and hence paint a more accurate picture of the needs and requirements than this study was able to provide.





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## Further information

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