



**Office of the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public
Health and Family Affairs, Jo Vandeurzen**

Koolstraat 35, 1000 BRUSSELS
Tel. 02 552 64 00 - Fax 02 552 64 01
Email: communicatie.vandeurzen@vlaanderen.be

CONCEPTUAL PAPER CHILD CARE DECREE

Introduction

The first children's day nursery in Belgium was opened in Brussels in 1845, and it was followed by similar charitable institutions founded by local industrialists. Labourers at the time lived in miserable conditions and child mortality was high. There were no state welfare services in the nineteenth century.

The ban on child labour was passed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Wealthy citizens took the initiative to give relief to the poor in greatest need. High infant mortality was not attributed to the conditions in which the poor had to try to survive, but to their ignorance. Bourgeois women sought to 'educate' the labouring class through charitable deeds such as giving advice to young mothers on home cooking and running baby clinics. The first crèches were also charitable initiatives at first, but then the government started to support them and subsidised them in some cases.

An Act of Parliament in 1919 founded the NWK ('National Work for Child Welfare'), a kind of umbrella organisation for private initiatives. The state's role was confined to providing subsidies; it could not intervene directly. Child care was branded a necessary evil. The focus was on feeding and hygiene. After all, children ought to be at home with their mothers. By the end of World War II, there were still only 62 children's day care centres in Belgium catering for a paltry 2 700 children. They received only a small government subsidy for parents who were living below the poverty line.

There was a huge leap in prosperity in the 1950s and '60s. Wages increased substantially. The government had surplus income and invested heavily in what came to be known as the

welfare state. Child care continued to be seen as a necessary evil during these years. In the late 1960s crèches started to spring up in Flemish towns and cities, due to the increasing number of women going out to work.

A new law was passed in 1970 subsidising day care centres regardless of the socio-economic circumstances of the users. Although the number of working mothers with young children increased from eight percent in 1971 to sixteen percent in 1980, there was scarcely any increase in child care facilities.

From the 1970s services for family day care became legally embedded in the child care landscape and they began to be subsidised. By 1978 more than 20 services had already been accredited. They were especially popular with well-educated mothers. Care with a family day carer reconciled the need for child care with the ideal of raising children within the warmth of a family.

The developmental psychology of the time left a clear mark on thinking about child care. There was a great deal of emphasis on the unique emotional bond between mother and child. Because of this child care started to place more emphasis on the emotional welfare of the child and how adults treat the child. Some researchers argued, however, that developmental psychology did not take sufficient account of the social context. Child care is a supplementary educational environment. The responsibility for bringing up children does not rest on the parents alone, but is partly borne by the community.

The recession of the late seventies necessitated cuts in public spending, which also put a stop to the expansion of child care capacity for ten years (1979 – 1989). Since 1980 welfare policy has been devolved to the Communities and that led in 1984 to the splitting of the NWK into Child and Family (Kind en Gezin) in Flanders and Office de la Naissance et de l'Enfance in Wallonia. The recession had created massive unemployment among those with only a low level of education. Child care provision had stopped expanding and so the higher income groups had gradually taken up all the places for themselves. The more vulnerable groups were unintentionally being excluded (the Matthew effect). Subsidised child care was increasingly becoming the preserve of the higher income groups. Employment and the economy were high on the political agenda, so it is not difficult to understand how the function of child care was increasingly narrowed down to an economic function.

The post-1989 expansion was driven in the first instance by the services for family day care. This was an attractive form of child care because it met the ideal of upbringing in a family environment and furthermore it was less costly for the government. Family day carers received a small allowance for expenses but no wage or social security. Finally the services recruited many poorly educated women who found it difficult to get a permanent job.

From the beginning of the 1990s there was a big expansion of child care in the independent sector. Small, private, unsubsidised child care facilities, known as 'mini crèches', could apply for an inspection certificate.

In addition, the emergence of out-of-school child care initiatives for nursery school and primary school children broadened the child care landscape further in the 1990s. In 2003 a social insurance regime was introduced for family day carers affiliated to a service for family day care giving them better social protection.

The first decade of the 21st century has seen a new social debate on extending the functions of child care.

Until now child care has scarcely gone beyond its economic function: making it possible for parents to work or participate in education or training. Creating and retaining sufficient child care places is essential for this economic function to continue to be fulfilled. In addition to this economic function, child care also has important educational and social functions. The educational function includes ensuring that children learn to treat other people from diverse backgrounds with respect. This function also stems from its role in complementing parental upbringing and supporting parents. The social function is important because child care can contribute to a just society, by practising social integration and combating exclusion mechanisms.

A number of initiatives are being taken, for example, to respond to the diversity of child care needs and target groups, both on a provisional basis (child care provided by local neighbourhood child care services, pilot projects for local and regional cooperation of child care facilities, vouchers for parents to purchase child care in their own homes) and on a regular basis (action plan for flexible and occasional child care, child care as a regular part of local neighbourhood child care services, introduction of means-tested fees in independent child care). The government also sees child care as a field that offers employment opportunities to job-seekers who lack high-level qualifications, and this of course accentuates the debate about a policy on necessary competences in the interests of improving quality.

We aim to develop child care services in which the economic, educational and social functions each continue to play their significant role. This will also guarantee that child care remains a crucial element in labour market policy, while at the same time being responsive to social change which has meant that the function of child care now extends beyond a purely economic function.

In view of socio-economic trends (the pursuit of higher rates of economic activity, more one-parent families and more double-income families, the need for labour, etc.) child care has become even more important. For families, the question of whether or not to work is often also a question of what child care options there are for the children. In this context more and more consideration will have to be given in the future to flexible working arrangements (part time, shifts, etc.) and flexible child care arrangements.

The increasing diversity and complexity of the whole business of child care and the regulations governing it compels us to consider how to streamline the organisation of the child care landscape and the conditions for basic quality and government funding in child

care. This requires a coherent vision of what Flanders wants to achieve with its child care services. Nor should we lose sight of the specific situation of Brussels. We are taking on this challenge in developing a child care decree.

This vision is compressed into this policy document, which describes those elements that should be included in the framework decree and indicates the direction in which they should be developed.

Situation

The development of a framework decree for pre-school child care is a policy priority in the 2009-2014 coalition agreement of the Flemish government:

'We are drawing up a child care framework decree that will lay down the social role, the organisation, the landscape and the legal basis for pre-school child care in Flanders in a coherent and simplified whole. Realising sufficient high-quality, accessible and affordable child care is one criterion underlying the process, another is attention to cost-efficiency in the organisation. With regard to the additional places that will be created in the independent child care sector, these private initiators will be encouraged to join the system of means-tested contributions.

We couple the provision of child care systematically to the trend in the birth rate.

We are carrying through a process of growth in child care provision which over time will result in every family being able to exercise a right to child care. When allocating resources we currently give priority to those areas which have not yet achieved the Barcelona norm of 33 child care places per 100 children. An advance from the Flemish government for the additional places in the major urban centres must remain an option.

In the context of the social negotiations we continue to work on the social insurance regime for family day carers who are affiliated to a service for family day care . Attention will be paid to the federal aspects of this.

We are improving the quality of child care by developing a well-thought-out and coordinated policy on competences. The Flemish government is working to standardize and control the licensing conditions for all child care.'

This will be laid down in more detail in the 2009-2014 policy document and priorities for the child care decree will include the following:

- creating more coherence and transparency within the broad range of services;
- coupling provision to the birth rate and consequent need for child care, by analogy with the education system;
- laying the foundation for the required licensing conditions for every child care provider;
- ensuring that in the future everyone can exercise their right to child care;
- giving every child the right to the same basic quality;
- laying down the social role of child care;
- laying down the concrete organisation of child care;
- contributing to the quality of care specifically by laying down the policy on competences in child care.

This position paper is an instrument that will be used in the broad consultation process with users and the sector for the preparation of the child care decree.

For such an important social service as child care, it is essential that the decree has as much support in society as possible.

We plan to proceed quickly along the route to a child care decree.

The framework decree on child care will be debated in the Flemish parliament at the same time as the section on child benefit of the decree on Flemish social security and welfare services which is being debated in tranches.

This means that that within a relatively short period of time after the vote in the Flemish parliament and the ratification by the Flemish government, the implementation decrees will have to be developed to make clear how the reform of child care in Flanders will be implemented. This is necessary so that all parties involved can make preparations for the future in good time, on the understanding that there will be the usual transition period.

This policy document describes the essential elements of the new child care decree. They are the springboard for a new, coherent and streamlined child care landscape.

For information we attach to the document a thorough analysis of the context of child care in Flanders, including a number of essential key figures (see appendix 2).

I. BASIC CRITERIA FOR A DECREE ON PRE-SCHOOL CHILD CARE

We have already outlined the general purpose of this decree: to work towards a well-regulated and transparent child care landscape based on a coherent vision, both at the organisational and regulatory levels.

For the users, the decree must guarantee sufficient, accessible, high-quality child care.

For the child care service providers, the main concerns are viability and having a clear organisational framework.

In the detailed specifications of these broad criteria, the decree aims to put the following basic principles into practice:

Sufficient viable child care

- To provide child care places that are affordable for families and economically viable for service providers;
- To base supply on a realistic estimate of demand¹
- To facilitate a sustainable and stable supply of child care with sufficient scope for entrepreneurship;
- To create a level playing field when awarding grants so that all license providers have equal access to funding;
- To achieve all this within a system that is affordable for the Flemish government, which means planning for an increase in financial resources over the next few years.

Quality

- The point of departure is always concern for the interests of the child and the family's ability to pay;
- To guarantee that all child care is high quality;
- To offer every child and every family equal opportunities to high quality child care;
- This means that it will no longer be possible for unregistered suppliers to provide child care simply by notifying the authorities;

¹ Child and Family will work out a proposal defining what this demand is. Factors which will be taken into consideration include the birth rate, level of employment, actual demand, anticipated use etc.

- To realise child care services that tap into and support the development potential of each child;
- To promote certified staff competences and qualified staffing at different levels of the child care facilities, to introduce recognition of previously developed competences as a fully fledged instrument and to provide sufficient training and educational opportunities to enable all child care workers to constantly improve their level of competences;
- Responsible group size and staff-child ratio;

Accessibility and affordability for families

- To give all children and their families equal access to high quality child care;
- To inform every family about currently available child care options and steer them towards vacancies;
- To make child care in the future affordable for as many families as possible based on their ability to pay and the family circumstances;
- All child care facilities to offer a high quality service that caters for diversity, so that all children and their parents are actively involved in their child care.

Regulations

- The new regulatory framework simplifies and harmonises the previous regulations and the organisation of child care in Flanders and also makes it more transparent;
- All child care has to be licensed from now on. This guarantees that all child care for pre-school children is authorised on the basis of the same conditions. Organising child care without a license becomes a punishable offence;
- To formulate unambiguous licensing conditions which are necessary, proportionate and the same for everyone;
- The decree is harmonised with European regulations (European Services Directive, etc.).

II. DEFINITION OF CHILD CARE

II.1 What is child care: how should we define it?

Formal pre-school child care is a professional service which shares the care and upbringing of the young child with its parents when they – or other adults acting in loco parentis – are for any reason not there.

There is no obviously conclusive definition of ‘child care’, however, because it always remains rather vague, and because of this ambiguity certain situations can be misinterpreted or elude the definition altogether.

This is why it is important to define the **purpose** of formal pre-school child care and to delineate its **scope of application** using a number of criteria that have to be present at the same time. This makes pre-school child care amenable to testing.

II.2 Delineating the scope of application

The distinguishing features of formal pre-school child care² are:

- Care of at least one child who does not attend nursery school full time for a defined fee. ‘Full time’ is relevant here because a child in the process of transferring to nursery school may still go back to pre-school child care temporarily.
- Regular child care: at least 10 hours per week for at least 10 weeks per year.
- The child care facility does not only take children belonging to the natural family or a blended family up to four times removed.

It should be clear from this that what we mean by professional child care is care provided for a defined payment.

What then do we not consider to be ‘formal pre-school child care’?:

- Initiatives that meet the 3 criteria above but which are already covered by other Flemish regulations such as: educational activities, integrated youth services, care for disabled children provided by privatised agencies, health care, sports camps/sports initiatives to foster physical development, youth work initiatives;
- Child care provided only for children belonging to the family up to four times removed, including blended families;
- Families who make informal arrangements to care for each other's children, without the involvement of third parties.

In these situations those involved are consequently not required to obtain a pre-school child care license.

² Formal pre-school child care will from now on simply be referred to as ‘child care’.

The decree provides that every type of formal child care must comply with the formulated licensing requirements. We emphasise once more that this means that it will no longer be possible to provide child care simply by notifying the authorities. After all, one of the fundamental aims is to guarantee that child care is of high quality. The assumption that every formal child care facility meets the licensing conditions means therefore that organising child care without a license will no longer be permitted and so will be punishable in law. The decree also has to create the necessary basis for this.

II.3 Objectives for formal pre-school child care

There are 5 broad objectives for pre-school child care in Flanders. These objectives make up the basic principles that every licensed pre-school child care facility should be able to demonstrate. It is therefore right and fitting that they be incorporated into the forthcoming child care decree and/or the formal notes to that decree.

- The child care facility stimulates the emotional, physical, intellectual, creative, social and moral potential of every child and takes measures to secure the wellbeing and engagement of every child.
(refers to the broad educational function of child care)
- The child care facility takes measures to guarantee the physical and psychological safety of every child.
(refers to a safe 'child care environment' in a broad sense)
- The child care facility takes measures to safeguard the health of every child.
(refers to all aspects of care, including provision of food and rest)
- The child care facility takes account of the opinions and feelings of every child and does this in a way that is appropriate for each child's capabilities.
(refers to the child's right to be actively involved)
- The child care facility consults the parents about the substance of these objectives out of respect for the child and its home environment.
(refers to the partnership with parents and consulting parents; information about the child is shared)

III. RIGHT TO CHILD CARE

III.1 Policy framework

The Flemish coalition agreement 2009-2014 states: “in future all families must be able to exercise a right to child care”.

This new decree sets a goal that every family that needs child care should be offered it. This objective will be met after a period of time needed to expand the services available. In the decree we systematically couple the trend in publicly funded child care to the trend in the birth rate.

In working out the details of how to fulfil this aim, we need to find a balance between our ambitions and what can realistically be achieved.

III.2 How do we put this right into practice:

Realising sufficient high quality, accessible and affordable child care

The ‘right to child care’ is a right exercised at the level of the family. It is a consequence of a necessary increase in the number of child care places.

For all families that need formal child care there should, therefore, be **a child care place in the future** on the understanding that there will have to be a process of growth until enough places are available (also growth in the budget). We also aim to have 'sufficient' places for children with special needs as part of a policy of inclusion.

The aim is to reach the Pact 2020 target by 2016 and finally to achieve full coverage by 2020 within an agreed budgetary framework.

The determination of the level of need, and therefore of what constitutes sufficient provision, will be based as far as possible on research findings. Elements that will certainly be taken into account include the coupling with the birth rate, the promotion of employment, actual use, family and employment situation (such as one-parent families and double-income families, etc.). Child and Family will work out a proposal to put this into operation.

As the coalition agreement states, if we are to have sufficient high quality, accessible and affordable child care, an important precondition is sufficient means-tested places across the region.

When we have achieved full coverage we will have provided a framework in which a family that needs child care can find a place within a reasonable period of time that meets that family's expressed needs and preferences as far as possible.

By specifying what is a reasonable period (e.g. three months) we aim to guarantee that parents will have a good idea of what is available within that time. Child and Family is still working on the question of when and how this period will become operational. We will certainly take into consideration when parents' real need for child care arises.

It is important that even in a context where there is a 'right to child care' parents still retain the freedom to choose whether or not to let their child go to child care.

At the same time we want to continue to guarantee parents' freedom of choice when it comes to the type of child care, the organisation and the facility.

We also see child care as one of the instruments within a **total family policy** that should among its other benefits enable parents to find the best way to combine bringing up their children with their work and other family commitments.

The pursuit of a family-friendly policy (that for instance promotes measures such as maternity leave and parental leave) will certainly have an effect on the demand for formal child care if parents have more opportunities to choose to look after their children at home during their early years, if they wish to do so.

Responsibility for these policies rests mainly with the federal government. Policies such as extending maternity leave and parental leave certainly help parents to take care of their children themselves. The Flemish government can also look into how it could encourage this. As well as expanding these opportunities, specific measures can also be taken to help parents who take up the opportunities to stay at home but who then want to start using child care at a later date, effectively facilitating a multi-track policy.

Likewise it is important to work on **optimising the transition** of children from **child care to nursery school**. Children go to the nursery class as soon as it is possible and sensible for them to do so, while respecting the parents' wishes and giving due consideration to whether the child is mature enough for school. This facilitates a seamless transition from child care to school.

In implementing the 'right to child care' we must consider **vulnerable families**. We know that the services are not reaching enough of them at present. Factors such as affordability are important but so also is support to steer them towards available services.

For these families access to child care is one of the main factors. It is not the case that they 'have a right to child care' because they belong to a specific target group. The government needs to make greater efforts with extra measures to encourage them (e.g. active steering, local contact points, etc.), so that they know what is available and the services become accessible, in order to counteract the Matthew effect.

These measures should help to ensure that vulnerable families get the same guarantee to child care as average families.

Another aspect of accessibility concerns the provision of sufficient occasional and flexible child care. Child care facilities must be open for enough hours to fit in with parents' work arrangements.

Finally, by providing appropriate support to help **independent child care providers to become more viable** we will reinforce continuity of supply (and therefore optimise its use).

Optimising use of the available capacity

Another factor in helping to realise the 'right to child care' is to make the best possible use of current capacity.

Centralising as much of the available information as possible will be an important driving force in this respect. We look at this in more detail in section V of this document.

The idea that we develop there is that available capacity be organised from a local child care enquiry point that will advertise free places and help families with any questions they may have. This approach should allow maximum efforts to be made to offer each family a place within a set period after they make a request.

The family's preferences will be taken into consideration as far as possible, but no guarantee can be given that they will be offered their first choice of child care place.

The parents still have the final choice as to whether to accept the place they are offered or not.

Managing the list of available places in a particular municipality or region centrally in this way will result in better use of the available capacity.

This means that both parents and service providers will need to plan for demand as well as possible and communicate with each other at an early stage.

In order to make maximum use of the capacity available, parents will also have to **pay for reserved child care sessions**. This is not an obligation at present. Every day a certain proportion of places are not used because children do not turn up. The objective is to make optimum use of available capacity and also to guarantee the service providers a steady income.

Parents need to realise that child care is a scarce resource and should be treated as such. We are working out a system that will make clear to parents how they should fulfil this obligation (how much notice they need to give in advance, exceptions for sick children, etc.). Families have to be made responsible for what they reserve, provided they are given reasonable opportunities to change their child care plan.

A reserved place must therefore be paid for. There are still questions to be answered in connection with this: whether the charge should be a fixed amount or also means-tested, and whether it should be progressive (increasing if it happens more than once).

Cost efficiency

Finally, achieving the most efficient organisation of child care services possible will also contribute to realising sufficient places. Both the government and the organisations themselves need to pursue an effective policy. Steps that could be taken include reducing the administrative burden, optimising the organisational set-up, making the most efficient use of all available resources, etc. Organisations should try to communicate information

electronically as much as possible. The MASDA principle (maximum sharing of data between administrations) will be applied.

DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

IV. LICENSING POLICY

A crucial aspect of the new policy framework is that all formal child care must meet pre-determined conditions. It is a requirement to meet these conditions to become a licensed child care provider. We have already emphasised that this means that from now on unlicensed formal child care will cease to exist.

The conditions to be laid down for obtaining a license need to strike a balance. They should encourage high quality child care but they should not stand in the way of the organisation of child care.

The licensing policy forms the basis for realising high quality child care. The basic principles of the licensing policy are:

- in future every formal pre-school child care provider must have a license;
- standard licensing conditions will be developed for each type of child care. This means that there will be some differences between the licensing conditions for child care provided in a family environment and in a group environment;
- a competences policy will be designed for the purpose, coupled with real opportunities for various forms of education and training and accreditation of real competences acquired from prior learning;
- the child care facility will be able to rely on receiving support and guidance on educational and qualitative aspects;
- child care facilities will work on quality management;
- the quality of care will be monitored by the facility itself (method of quality control), by the families that use the service (evaluation of customer satisfaction), by uniform checks and inspections, and by a sanctions policy that backs up the quality policy and can enforce it if necessary;
- facilities will join a local child care contact point.

IV.1 What is a license?

It is formal confirmation that the child care facility meets the licensing conditions.

The license:

- is attached to a business location³ over which the initiator has control and for which he or she is responsible (except for child care provided in the child's own home where the family itself is responsible for the premises);
- states what capacity it is valid for: a maximum capacity is laid down which need not be utilised to the full;
- applies to child care away from the child's own home provided by one or more child care workers;
- applies to child care provided until a child goes to nursery school full time;
- takes account of the family's ability to pay;
- allows the child care provider to call on registered services/organisations of his or her own choice for support on educational and other matters;
- has no expiry date but is regularly monitored by the authorities and can be withdrawn.

IV.2 Why licensing?

- because of the importance and the right of families and children to high quality child care;
- to create uniform conditions for child care facilities of the same type: this gives both parents and child care businesses transparency.

IV.3 Who is required to obtain a license?

The obligation to obtain a license applies to everyone. It is no longer possible to provide child care simply by notifying the authorities. The obligation to obtain a license applies to anyone who offers formal child care to children before they finally start attending nursery school full time and it applies to individuals, companies and de facto partnerships.

All formal pre-school child care in the Flemish Community, both in the Region of Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region, must have a child care license from the Flemish authorities.

IV.4 Types of licensed child care

Type 1: child care in a group environment

What is child care in a group environment?

- care provided by a number of child care workers at a specific location;
- this is regardless of the status of the child care workers;
- the premises are licensed for at least 7 children, based on the available space;
- there are no more than 6 children per child care worker at any one time.
- the maximum number of children per worker may be increased under some circumstances. Child and Family is working out the details for this, taking into account factors such as the number of child care workers at the facility at any one time, the age and care needs of the children attending, facilities at the premises, etc.

³ a temporary business location that changes depending on the time of year (e.g. different premises during the summer holidays) or as needs change (e.g. child care organised in different premises depending on where a course is taking place) can also be licensed

Type 2: Child care in a family environment

What is child care in a family environment?

- care provided at a specific location by one, individual family day carer;
- regardless of the status of the family day carer;
- the maximum capacity that will be licensed for child care in a family environment is 6 places.
- the number of children specified in the license depends on an assessment of how many the individual family day carer has the capacity to care for;
- to cater for exceptional circumstances a family day carer may be licensed to take 1 or 2 extra children for a short period, provided there is enough space and taking account of both the family day carer's and the children's ability to cope with the situation. This is conditional upon an application for a change to the license being made and supervision by a support service (local enquiry point, service for family day care, etc.). However, the maximum number of children attending at the same time may never exceed 7.
- Child and Family is working out the details for capacity screening which will be linked to the modalities for developing competences. A proposal for the 'exceptional circumstances/for a short period' is also being developed.

Type 3: Care in the child's own home

A limited amount of child care is already being provided in children's own homes through the flexible and occasional child care action plan. In addition, some child care at home is provided by home care agencies, and public health insurance agencies provide care for sick children.

Child and Family is looking into how this care provided in the home can be incorporated into the decree.

IV.5 Who grants the license?

It is the Flemish government, specifically Child and Family, that grants the license. Child and Family also has the power to withdraw licenses if necessary. Child and Family is developing the procedure for this.

IV.6 To whom is the license granted?

-“Family day carers ”: the license is granted to the individual family day carer who operates as a sole trader.

Where a family day carer is working with a service for family day care, the license is granted to the service. It is the responsibility of the service to check that each family day carer meets the conditions of the license.

There are no restrictions upon individual family day carers with respect to the legal or organisational form under which they operate.

-“in-group child care”: the license is granted to the organisation or the person in charge who organises the child care services for the premises where care is provided by a number of child care workers.

There are no restrictions with respect to the legal or organisational form.

When ‘care in the child's own home’ is incorporated into the decree, the details for this modality will be worked out.

IV.7 What are the conditions for obtaining a license?

International research has shown that three factors are crucial for high quality child care, and so they make up the core of the licensing conditions. They are:

- competences (both formal qualifications and non-formal competences) of those taking care of the child;
- group size;
- ratio of children to child care workers.

To enable families needing child care to find suitable provision within a reasonable period of time, licenses also require facilities to work in conjunction with the local child care enquiry point.

Child and Family encourages child care workers to communicate with the children in Dutch and is looking into how this could be incorporated into the licensing conditions. We also call on child care providers to play an active role in combating language delay.

Our proposals for licensing conditions are set out in appendix 1. They are based in part on extensive consultations with representatives of the child care sector, representatives of organisations that work with families and scientific experts.

Most of the proposals are based on existing standards and regulations for the various types of child care which need to be streamlined. To translate these into the new regulations, we aim to define concepts as objectively as possible.

When a new child care facility opens it is not possible for it to fulfil all the conditions immediately and to be seen to be doing so. We need to indicate which requirements really must be met from the start for the facility to be granted a license, and which can be checked some time later in order for it to keep its license.

IV.8 Competences policy and licensing in the child care sector

The coalition agreement states that we 'are improving the quality of child care by developing a well-thought-out and coordinated policy on competences'.

The outcome of this policy on competences will be a future child care sector in Flanders in which three broad job groups can be distinguished each with its own set of competences. Further research should reveal which jobs are best for which type of child care:

-child care workers, with certified competences (which may and should be demonstrated through recognition of previously developed competences) whose job is to take care of the children on a daily basis, create a good environment for learning and child development and communicating with parents. They have had a suitable previous education, or they have certified competences, or they are currently being trained to gain these competences. A policy geared to strengthening competences supports workers to develop their skills to the maximum.

-staff with a degree or higher qualification in education whose job is to provide support and guidance on the educational and qualitative aspects of child care either as internal staff or external consultants.

-managers in charge of group child care facilities, with certified competences who have a leadership role both with respect to day-to-day educational matters and administration of the facility. If in the future child-minders were to become employees, their employers would also have to put people in charge of day-to-day educational and administrative management and coordination.

In order to achieve this we need to have a transitional period during which the details of the policy on competences will be worked out. Working out the details for proof of experience, formal recognition of competences that are peculiar to the individual, provision of courses to help staff acquire the necessary competences are examples of steps that could be taken to achieve this.

In the detailed proposals Child and Family will also make clear what the right level/content is for each of these competences and for awarding the various certificates.

IV.9 Inspection as part of the licensing system

The conditions for obtaining a license are the same for each child care facility depending on whether the care is provided in a group setting or in a family setting^[1]. Consequently, the compulsory inspections are organised in a similar manner, with the focus on checking the care provided at nursery floor level. The aim is that these checks should first of all have a preventive effect: they should encourage facilities to work in compliance with the licensing requirements, to reflect on their work and make adjustments where necessary. This approach should lead to a policy of continuous self-evaluation and improvement.

If a child care facility fails to meet the licensing conditions, measures have to be taken to bring it back into compliance. A number of measures can be developed, including the ultimate sanction of withdrawal of the license.

Inspecting all the child care facilities in Flanders is a huge undertaking. After all there are more than 12 000 premises providing child care in Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region. Family day carers form the largest group with almost 9 000 premises.

For this reason the possibility of organising different inspection scenarios is being investigated. Information on international benchmarking is also being gathered for this purpose.

The administration has been given the task of comparing the various options using a SWOT analysis and full cost analysis and putting a proposal before the Flemish government based on the results. The aim has to be to achieve maximum outcomes for minimum cost. The principle of equal and tiered inspections is also taken into account.

The inspection, regardless of which agency does it, is a control on the licensing conditions, performed in accordance with standards set by the Flemish government and using methods approved or laid down by the government.

Provided they are authorised inspection agencies, the child care facility can approach an agency of its own choice. Organisations which provide child care and child care support services cannot operate as authorised inspection agencies.

Inspections have to be carried out within set maximum intervals as laid down in advance by the authorities. (They are more frequent for starters and facilities about which there are specific concerns, whereas for those who have been in business a long time and achieving consistently high standards the inspection regime is less intense).

The Inspection Agency and any other authorised organisations advise Child and Family on whether facilities should be licensed or not.

^[1] A specific control mechanism also needs to be developed for child care in the child's own home, depending on how this is incorporated into the decree.

The role of the parents

In addition to the organised inspection regime, each child care facility will also work on its periodic (annual) parental evaluation/customer satisfaction survey (as part of its compulsory quality policy). Parents can contribute to the evaluation of those aspects of the service that they themselves get to see or experience. The parents' survey is one of the elements that child care facilities have to take into consideration as part of their self-assessment and optimisation of their work.

The facilities will also have an effective and explicit procedure for parents to take any complaints to them in the first instance where they will find a willing ear (complaints procedure).

Parents can also address a complaint direct to Child and Family, which will take it up with the parents and the child care provider.

In addition, parents can take their worries to the local child care enquiry point.

DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

V. STRENGTHENING CAPACITY THROUGH SUPPORT, COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

The new child care landscape that we have in mind is one which is efficient in all areas. One way for child care facilities to make efficiency gains is to cease working in isolation. Cooperation and networking create opportunities to make the most efficient use of resources and know-how and to strengthen the management of child care as a professional service catering for what families and their children need.

Cooperation and networking are also important if child care is to fulfil its social function. When child care facilities cooperate in networks they are able to make extra efforts to operate a joint coordinated admissions policy that can also target vulnerable groups proactively by applying the same priority rules. The local child care enquiry points can also play a role in this.

In our efforts to strengthen capacity, particular attention should be paid to child care provided in a family setting. After all, these providers are usually family day carers working on their own from home. It is essential to prevent them from becoming isolated. Family day carers affiliated to a service have their agency to fall back on. Independent family day carers should have the same opportunity for support. They have to demonstrate that they can call upon one of the approved organisations for support on educational and child-rearing issues. They are free to choose where to get this support.

VI. LOCAL CHILD CARE ENQUIRY POINT

Local child care enquiry points have been set up to bring the service as close to parents as possible. Ideally they are organised at a local level, but where necessary regional cooperation is possible between different local authorities and the child care providers in their areas.

Each child care provider registers with the local enquiry point, which keeps a record of all the capacity in its area and advertises vacancies. Its main role is to coordinate supply and demand within the local authority/region.

The local enquiry point provides an essential service in maintaining an overview over available places. It attempts to offer parents a place that matches their needs and preferences as formulated in their application as well as possible.

Aims:

- to advertise child care vacancies within a defined geographical area and help families to find a place;
- to allow families to make just one application in order to find out what child care facilities are available in their area within a set period after making their request;
- to produce a single clean coordinated waiting list for the zone from the participating providers' individual waiting lists;
- to speed up the process of finding a child care place for parents by enabling them to search as widely as possible. If necessary other local enquiry points can be contacted;
- to generate information that could be useful for policy-making (certainly for the Flemish government) about the real demand for child care and the type of demand in the zone.
- to operate as an information point for parents, providing them with the information they need about child care matters;
- This kind of local child care enquiry point will only work if someone has a mandate to organise and run it. The local authority is responsible for setting it up and appointing someone to run it, in consultation with all local child care providers (united in the Local Child Care Consultative Forum);
- The intention is that an initiator be appointed or a structure created for the local child care enquiry point. In the absence of a consensus about organising it, the local authority will undertake to do this itself

Child and Family is developing a central record system with a view to maximising electronic data exchange on vacancies. This system should enable families, facilities and enquiry points to handle information about supply and demand transparently and efficiently.

The main principles for running the enquiry points are:

- The zone is local or regional and its boundaries are based on the decree on care sector regions. There can be no overlap between the areas covered by one enquiry point and another.
- The local enquiry point is close-by and accessible to all families.
- The local enquiry point is efficient, transparent and neutral.
- The local enquiry point covers all child care facilities in the zone.
- Each business location of a child care initiative (including day care centres, services for family day care and independent family day carers) is affiliated to the local child care enquiry point.
- Affiliated family day carers do not join individually but through their service.
- Parents can only register with one enquiry point, to avoid having overlapping applications in several zones. The enquiry point can/should take the initiative to seek solutions in other zones if they cannot meet a parent's need within their own zone. Parents can also make enquiries at another enquiry point (e.g. one that is located on their route from home to work).

VII. FINANCING CHILD CARE AND AFFORDABILITY

Based on practical, administrative, content-related and budgetary considerations, it is not desirable in the first instance and it would be impossible within the budget available to impose an obligation on child care facilities to join the means-tested system.

However, it is essential that we have sufficient means-tested places evenly spread across the Region of Flanders.

All current independent businesses and all future licensed child care initiatives will be encouraged to join the system of means-tested parental contributions.

Tiered subsidies

A new tiered method of subsidising child care is necessary if we are to boost affordable child care. This also creates an opportunity to do away with the current fragmented system of subsidies.

Each licensed child care facility will receive, on request, a **basic payment** for each place offered. This is an inducement to meet the licensing conditions.

Whether the government continues to subsidise the facility or the family day carer largely depends on whether or not they join **the means-tested system**. If a service for family day carers, a day care centre⁴ or a independent family day carer adopts the means-tested system, they gain access to public subsidies within the available budget of the Flemish government.

This means that every licensed service for family day carers, every day care centre and every independent family day carer who offers a service where parents pay a means-tested contribution will receive a subsidy. There are two parts to the subsidy. The first part is a fixed amount based on licensed maximum capacity, provided a minimum capacity is utilised. The second part comprises performance-related payments based on the actual child care provided.

Child and Family is investigating how this can be developed in detail.

All child care facilities that employ staff, except in the public sector, have come under Joint Committee 331 since February 2010. When the operating costs of child care initiatives are calculated, the current salary and employment conditions etc. laid down by this committee will be used.

⁴ Day care centres includes local neighbourhood child care services and small-scale businesses.

The parental contribution comes to the government and is included in the funding system. There are three options with regard to how this can be organised in practice:

- either the government collects the money direct from the parents;
- or the child care initiative collects the parental contributions and sends them to the government;
- or the child care initiative collects the parental contributions and the government tops it up with the difference.

The final choice from these options will be made after investigations to find out which method places the least administrative and financial burdens on the parents, the facilities and the government.

If facilities want to join the means-tested system, this then applies to their full capacity. Means-testing is then applied to all the families that use that facility for their child. Facilities are required to operate a priorities system as laid down by the Flemish government, which is intended to seek a balance between the economic and social functions of child care.

For budgetary reasons it will be necessary to programme the allocation of resources for the means-tested subsidies, with a view to achieving the best possible distribution of means-tested places. Child and Family is developing a planning instrument for this.

To keep the system affordable, we need to consider changing the parental contributions scheme.

Child and Family will come up with a number of proposals and is looking into the effects of streamlining the current calculation method into an identical system for all income groups

The means-tested subsidy can be topped up. Child care can be used for a number of different purposes, which may require extra resources.

This additional subsidy can be provided in the **form of modules**. Each module will have clearly defined content-related terms of reference, and require minimum performances in terms of frequency, duration, intensity, task-specific quality requirements, etc. Funding is pre-set for each module. This can be performance-related or a fixed sum.

Modules could include:

1. inclusive child care
2. flexible child care
3. working with specific target groups and/or employees from specific target groups (such as local neighbourhood child care services today).

We will have to consider to what extent these modular subsidies should be supply-led (= programming) or demand-led (not able to be programmed).

A facility that has not joined the means-tested system may also be eligible for performance-related subsidies if it is catering for parents' special social needs, for instance by providing inclusive care for a child with special needs.

Facilities that are not in the means-tested system are completely free to set their own prices and provide whatever services they wish, provided they meet the licensing conditions.

By joining the means-tested system, child care facilities are guaranteeing affordable child care for families. As long as some providers remain outside the means-tested system, the

Flemish government believes that families whose children are not in means-tested places, but receiving independent child care where providers are free to set their own prices, should also pay reasonable and affordable maximum fees. Child and Family will investigate whether it is necessary and would be possible to impose maximum prices for providing a basic child care service and/or price conditions on the full child care service upon providers who have not joined the means-tested system. (For example, a daily charge that is no more than 20% higher than the daily charge set by the government for a basic child care service.)

If research shows that the 20% maximum increase is adhered to, then the provider would be allowed to charge parents for extra services at its own rates on top of the limited daily fee for the basic provision, as long as these were agreed with the parents beforehand and set out in their contract.

The actual system we develop once these conceptual issues have been decided must comply with European regulations on public financing, in particular the principles: equal and consistent, proportionate and necessary.

Support for infrastructural work

The Flemish government uses two different instruments to support infrastructural work:

VIPA (a government agency that gives grants for infrastructural work in the health and welfare sector): for initiatives offering means-tested child care which have a minimum capacity and are legal entities operating on a non-profit basis. The VIPA decree will have to lay down new standards and conditions to ensure that these funds are used properly.

Kidsinvest: for all licensed initiatives with a smaller capacity and/or legal entities operating for profit. The operation of Kidsinvest will be further differentiated.

DECISION

This position paper describes an ambitious framework for child care in Flanders looking forward. It aims to offer a solution to the demand for streamlining and transparency. Each of the elements above makes a contribution to fulfilling this aim.

The task facing us now is to generate sufficient support for these policy priorities, so that everyone can be motivated by the reforms. Support and commitment from all actors is essential if we are to bring these ambitions to fruition.

The coming consultations will contribute to the detailed development of these policy priorities.

DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PROPOSALS FOR LICENSING CONDITIONS

The proposed licensing conditions relate to 12 clusters of requirements. The requirements that entail a reform of current regulations are shown in the grey field. Reform may mean a completely new requirement, or a requirement that currently applies to some but not all facilities (e.g. currently applicable to subsidised child care but not independent child care).

CLUSTER 1: Requirements for child care workers (initial requirements)

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- The minimum age for a child care worker is 18 years.⁵
- A medical certificate stating that the child care worker is medically fit for the job, renewable every five years.
- Every new child care worker has an official certificate showing their qualifications (including evidence of previously developed competences) or proof that they are currently undergoing training to obtain a qualification.⁶
- Every child care worker develops his or her competences in child care by participating in educational and training activities each year.
- An extract from the criminal records, model 2, for all persons over the age of 18 who have regular contact with the children being cared for, renewable every five years.
- A recognised certificate from a basic course in life-saving for children and a first aid certificate.
- The child care worker has active knowledge of the Dutch language. Evidence of this knowledge is provided in the form of a qualification certificate in Dutch or a language test (level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

⁵ Recent data from Child and Family shows that 0.6 % of family day carers are under 21.

⁶ Independent family day carers must have a qualification certificate before they can set up in business as a family day carer. They do not have the option of taking a course while they are operating as a family day carer.

- The child care worker uses Dutch to communicate with the children.
- The child care worker is able to interpret the applicable regulations, guidelines, recommendations and the instruments used correctly and to apply them in his/her work.
- The child care worker can meet the needs of individual children working independently.
- When a substitute has to be found for a member of staff and this can be planned in advance (i.e. not in an emergency) the person brought in should also fulfil all the requirements for a child care worker.

CLUSTER 2: Requirements for persons in charge of child care facilities (initial requirements)

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

The person in charge of the child care facility produces a brief plan and report on the child care activities every year and sends this to Child and Family. This is to include the risk assessment, customer satisfaction survey, the pedagogic approach, the inspection report and a statement of areas and actions for improvement.

For child care in a family setting – location with a sole child care worker

The person in charge is the child care worker working alone who must meet the conditions set out in cluster 1, requirements for child care workers in family and group settings.

For child care in a group setting – location with more than 1 child care worker

- The person in charge has an official certificate showing their qualifications.
- The person in charge is at least 21.
- The person in charge has active knowledge of the Dutch language. Evidence of this knowledge is provided in the form of a qualification certificate in Dutch or a language test (level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).
- The person in charge is able to interpret the applicable regulations, guidelines, recommendations and the instruments used correctly and apply them in his/her work.
- When a substitute has to be found for the person in charge and this can be planned in advance (i.e. not in an

emergency) the person brought in should also fulfil all the requirements for a person in charge of a child care facility.

CLUSTER 3: Conditions pertaining to the organisation of responsibilities and the framework for educational activities (initial requirements)

For child care in a group setting – location with more than 1 child care worker

Responsibilities for communicating and interacting with the children, parents and other staff, management of infrastructure and finances, and dealing with third parties on matters relating to the service are allocated to members of staff and people in the organisation who is responsible for these matters.

CLUSTER 4: Ratio of children to child care workers (initial requirements)

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- All children (including workers' own children) up to the age of 6 count if they are present.

For child care in a family setting – location with a sole child care worker

- the maximum capacity for a family day carer license is 6 places;
- the number of children specified in the license depends on an assessment of how many the individual family day carer can cope with;
- to cater for exceptional circumstances a family day carer may be licensed to take 1 or 2 extra children for a short period, provided there is enough space and taking account of both the family day carer's and the children's ability to cope with the situation. This is conditional upon an application for a change of license being made and monitoring by a support service. However, the maximum number of children attending at the same time may never exceed 7;
- Child and Family is working out the details for capacity screening which will be linked to the modalities for developing competences. A proposal for the 'exceptional circumstances/for a short period' is also being developed.

For child care in a group setting – location with more than 1 child care worker

- There are a maximum of 6 children per child care worker at any one time.
- the maximum number of children per worker may be increased under some circumstances. Child and Family is working out the details for this, taking into account factors such as the number of child care workers at the facility at any one time, the age and care needs of the children attending, facilities at the premises, etc.

CLUSTER 5: Infrastructural requirements (initial requirement)

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- The indoor floor area is at least 3m² per child
- The premises have the following rooms and services:
 - a separate room for the children to rest.
 - a safe bed for every child.
 - a kitchen (at least a fridge, facility for heating food, sink, water tap)
 - a washroom with a toilet and wash basin and the space and equipment to take care of the children
 - for child care at night: a suitable room to sleep in
- The rooms are adequately ventilated and lit (natural light at least in the main rooms used for activities and rest)
- The rooms are at a suitable temperature.
- The rooms are laid out and equipped to be suitable for child care.

For child care in a family setting – location with a sole child care worker

- The rooms where the children are looked after are fire-resistant.
- Children can play outside: there is suitable outdoor space or another option (in an urban context the alternatives will have to be viewed realistically)

For child care in a group setting – location with more than 1 child care worker

- The rooms where the children are looked after are fire-resistant, evidence must be provided in the form of a report from the fire brigade.
- Children can play outside: there is a suitable, fenced-off outdoor space with a minimum of 3m² per child. In an urban context alternatives will have to be viewed realistically.

CLUSTER 6: Requirements on managing each child

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- The child care facility promotes the wellbeing and engagement of each child. The facility uses a suitable method to monitor whether this is really taking place and takes action to improve.
- The day-to-day management of the children, the play and the activities on offer, tap into each child's abilities and stimulate their emotional, physical, intellectual, creative, social and moral development.
- The child care facility provides a daily routine paying regard to each child's individual character and own rhythms.
- The children are offered varied play opportunities and activities. There are enough play materials available for the number of children and they are appropriate for the developmental stages and interests of each child.
- The child care facility promotes a respectful attitude toward others.

For child care in a group setting – location with more than 1 child care worker

- The child care facility has a view on the deployment of personnel and continuity of care in order to create a bond of trust between the child care workers and the children and between the child care workers and the parents and it has a method to achieve this.
- A group consisting of babies and toddlers may not consist of more than 14 children.
See also the observation under Cluster 4: Ratio of children to child care workers

CLUSTER 7: Requirements for physical safety and psychological wellbeing

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- The child care facility ensures that each child is safe and takes preventive measures to this end.
- No child is subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- constantly. The children are supervised
- the immediate vicinity of the children. Pets are not permitted to be in
- covering physical injury to children. There is public liability insurance
- each child. There is an information form for
- arrival and departure of each child is recorded every day. A register is kept on which the
- least once a year covering:
 - safety of the premises and
 - equipment and how the child care worker manages safety;
 - hygiene;
 - health;
 - food if provided;
 - fire safety.Improvements are carried out based on the risk assessment.

CLUSTER 8: health requirements

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- Sufficient healthy and varied food is offered which is suitable for the age of the children.
- The child care facility is responsible for the health of each child on its premises and takes preventive measures.

CLUSTER 9: Emergencies (initial requirements)

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- There is an emergency procedure setting out the consecutive steps and means of communication that a licensed facility must follow if a dangerous situation arises in the facility.
- A dangerous situation is one where the physical or psychological integrity of a child that uses the facility is or could be at risk.

- Each dangerous situation that occurs at the child care facility must be reported to Child and Family as soon as possible.
- There is at least 1 back-up person that the child care worker can call upon in case of an emergency.

DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

CLUSTER 10: Requirements on cooperating with parents

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- A written contract is drawn up between the parents and the child care facility that cannot be changed by one party.
- There is a set of internal rules that both the parents and the child care facility sign.
- Parents have the right to a familiarisation period before their child starts attending the facility on a regular basis.
- Parents are allowed access to all the rooms used for the children during the hours that their child is at the facility.
- The child care facility informs the parents about the role and operation of the local child care enquiry point.
- The child care facility consults parents about its approach to child care and their child's progress.
- The child care facility respects the personal privacy of the child and its parents.

CLUSTER 11: Requirements on cooperating with Child and Family

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

- The child care worker provides Child and Family on request with the documents it is required to provide under the licensing conditions.
- The child care facility provides Child and Family with data on its service, such as data from the registers of the number of children attending, parents' addresses when necessary, etc.
- The public servant supervising the facility has a right of access.

For child care in a group setting – location with more than 1 child care worker

- Information is provided on the person who is in charge of the child care facility.

CLUSTER 12: Requirement on cooperation with other licensed child care initiatives

For child care in family and group settings – 1 or more child care workers

Each child care facility cooperates with a child care enquiry point.

Licensed child care facilities attend to every request for child care that they receive and, if necessary, refer them on to the child care enquiry point.

DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

APPENDIX 2: ANALYSIS OF THE CHILD CARE CONTEXT⁷

1. Prominent policy measures on child care in the past thirteen years

Consecutive Flemish governments over the past thirteen years have launched policy measure after policy measure in an attempt to expand child care in Flanders. The most prominent measures are briefly touched on.

Expansion policy

New recurrent funding has been made available in consecutive years to allow the number of places in the child care sector to grow.

- For the accredited child care sector (pre-school) expansion rounds occurred in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006-2007, 2008 and 2009. The expansions were programmed based on a planning exercise since 2000, and since 2001 also with the aid of league tables of local authorities within a district.
- The out-of-school child care sector (IBO) was expanded between 2001-2003 (chronological file handling), followed by programmatic expansion based on the planning exercise and IBO league tables in 2003-2004 and 2006-2007 (incl. BO-KDV qualification)
- For the independent child care sector, financial support per child care place has been available since 2003, which gave a significant boost to the number of new independent child care initiatives, especially mini-crèches.

Specific policy measures

- Since **1997**: establishment, registration and granting of subsidies to specific **out-of-school child care initiatives**, and linked to that the establishment of **Local Child Care Consultative Forums** in all Flemish municipalities
- Until 2003 family day carers affiliated to a service for family day care had no **social insurance regime of their own with a legal basis**. They received a tax-deductible allowance for expenses and could only enjoy derived social security rights. Since **1**

⁷ From 'Green paper on Child Care', discussed in the Child and Family Advisory Committee

April 2003 all family day carers have been entitled to tax-deductible expenses and their own social security rights, adapted to the specific way they work.

- Since **2004** Child and Family has also been subsidising small-scale local neighbourhood child care services as an experiment. In view of the positive evaluation of this new type of service '**local neighbourhood child care services**' were given a legal basis in 2008.
- **2007: Action Plan for Flexible and Occasional Child Care:** a whole range of measures to boost provision catering for flexible and occasional child care in the various subsectors of child care.
- **2009:** The opportunity was created for parents to pay means-tested contributions to independent child care providers (**the IKG system in Dutch**), through a system of financial compensation paid to the child care facility by the Flemish government.

DRAFT POLICY DOCUMENT

2. CHILD CARE IN FACTS AND FIGURES

2.1 Current pre-school child care landscape

-Accredited and subsidised:

Accredited day care centres (KDV)

Services for family day care with affiliated family day carers (DVO)

-Permitted and subsidised:

Local neighbourhood pre-school child care services (Lo Di VO)

-Independent child care facilities:

Independent day care centres (ZKDV) with a license of Child and Family :

-not offering means-tested fees

-with financial support to offer means-tested fees

Independent family day carers (ZOO) with a license of Child and Family:

-not offering means-tested fees

-with financial support to offer means-tested fees

-Registered pre-school child care

2.2 Current out-of-school child care landscape

-Accredited and subsidised:

Out-of-school child care initiatives (IBO)

Out-of-school child care in separate rooms at day care centres (BO-KDV)

Out-of school care provided by family day carers affiliated to a service for family day care

-Permitted and subsidised:

Local neighbourhood out-of-school child care services

-Independent child care facilities:

-Independent out-of-school child care facilities with a license of Child and Family (ZBO)

-Out-of-school child care provided by independent family day carers with a license of Child and Family

-Registered out-of-school child care

-in schools

-other

2.3 Key figures

2.3.1 Current provision (on 30.04.2009)

➤ Basic formal child care services

NUMBER OF PLACES AND NUMBER OF FACILITIES (FORMAL CHILD CARE)

Aantal opvangplaatsen per voorzieningstype op 30/04/2009

	DVO	KDV	ZKDV	ZOO	BOKDV	IBO	ZBO	Totaal
Antwerpen	7.906	3.854	5.429	1.003	77	6.624	396	25.289
Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	34	2.101	4.851	230	0	396	791	8.403
Limburg	5.065	1.400	800	260	283	5.229	398	13.435
Oost-Vlaanderen	7.758	3.230	5.228	1.750	286	5.972	207	24.431
Vlaams-Brabant	4.253	3.533	4.704	1.334	151	3.771	1.114	18.860
West-Vlaanderen	6.242	1.967	4.615	2.699	279	4.804	716	21.322
Algemeen Totaal	31.258	16.085	25.627	7.276	1.076	26.796	3.622	111.740

Number of child care places per type of child care on 30/04/2009.

In addition, there are more places in the process of applying for accreditation and subsidies (with agreements in principle):

-from the expansion rounds up to 2008: 1 061 places in accredited day care centres, 64 places with affiliated family day carers (on 30.04.09)

-from the 2009 expansion round: 642 places in accredited day care centres, 571 places with affiliated family day carers (decision on 10.07.09)

Between 2000 and 2009 there was a clear upward trend both in the number of child care facilities and in the number of accredited places and places with a license of Child and Family:

	2000	2009	% increase
child care facilities*	2 977	3 409	+ 13%
child care places	77 573	111 740	+ 31%

The increase in the number of child care facilities between 2000 and 2009 was pulled back by the decrease in the number of independent family day carers (from 1 551 in 2000 to 1 190 in 2009, or -30%).

DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF PUBLICLY-RUN AND PRIVATELY-RUN CHILD CARE PLACES

**Capaciteit openbare besturen per voorzieningstype in absolute cijfers (situatie op 30/04/2009)
mét opsplitsing zelfstandige buitenschoolse opvangvoorzieningen (ZBO)**

Voorzieningstype	Openbaar Bestuur	Privé Bestuur	Totaal
KDV	5.275	10.891	16.166
DVO	9.049	22.213	31.262
IBO	18.206	8.628	26.834
BOKDV	229	847	1.076
ZOO	4	7.253	7.257
ZKDV	1.540	24.131	25.671
ZBO	1.795	1.827	3.622
Totaal	36.098	75.790	111.888

Capacity of publicly-run child care by type of facility in absolute figures (on 30/04/2009) with independent out-of-school child care facilities (ZBO) as a separate category.

Registered child care

People running registered child care facilities on a regular basis without a license of Child and Family are supposed to notify Child and Family. Child and Family knows of 365 such facilities spread over the Region of Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region. However, this figure does not tell the whole story: some child care facilities that ought to notify do not actually do so. It is not possible to say, or even to give an approximation, of how many such facilities there could be. We can be certain that the figure for out-of-school child care does not include a considerable amount of out-of-school care being provided in schools which has not been notified. In the pre-school sector, there are a significant number of facilities that continue to operate as 'notified' facilities after their license has been withdrawn.

We cannot know the exact capacity of this group of registered child care facilities that have notified Child and Family of their existence. The duty to notify does not require the capacity to be notified.

Number of registered child care facilities notified by type of facility on 01/12/2009					
	PRE-SCHOOL		OUT-OF-SCHOOL		Total
	ZKDV	ZOO	ZBO	ZOO (out-of-school)	
ANTWERP	27	23	27	2	79
BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION	33	3	10	0	46
LIMBURG	3	6	21	4	34
EAST FLANDERS	14	15	21	3	53
FLEMISH BRABANT	24	13	49	7	93
WEST FLANDERS	6	26	23	5	60
Total	107	86	151	21	365

➤ **Barcelona norm**

In order to improve opportunities to achieve economic growth, employment of young parents, equal opportunities for women and social inclusion, for which available and accessible child care is an important back-up service, the EU has adopted the Barcelona norm as an important priority: 33% of all children under 3 should have access to some form of formal child care. The formal child care sector in Flanders (accredited or independent) amply meets this norm: 44.6% of all children under 3 are able to attend formal child care facilities (number of accredited or independent places on 31.12.2008).

➤ **Number of pre-school places per 1 000 children:**

Another way of expressing the level of provision is the number of formal child care places per 1 000 children. Where the Barcelona norm is based on the number of children for whom a place should be available, this is about the number of places. Because one place is often used by more than one child, this method gives a different result from the Barcelona norm.

On 30.04.2009 there were on average over Flanders 359.4 formal child care places per 1 000 children under 3. The table below shows how this figure varied across the different districts: from the lowest ranked districts (Tongeren 257.7; Turnhout 287.2; Antwerp 291.9) to the highest scoring districts (Roeselare 565.6; Kortrijk 521.4; Brugge 476.5).

Aantal voorschoolse plaatsen per 1000 kinderen per arrondissement (situatie op 30/04/09)

Arrondissement	Aantal kdn 0-3 jr op 1/1/2009*	Erkende Pls per 1000 kdn	Zelfst pls per 1000 kdn	IKG pls per 1000 kdn***	niet-IKG pls per 1000 kdn	Totaal
AALST	8.333	197,5	121,6	210,4	108,7	319,1
ANTWERPEN	35.816	178,5	113,4	192,8	99,1	291,9
BRUGGE	7.710	244,6	231,9	325,6	151,0	476,5
DENDERMONDE	6.104	208,2	85,8	208,2	85,8	294,1
DIKSMUIDE	1.525	249,2	122,0	288,5	82,6	371,1
EEKLO	2.503	155,8	166,6	210,5	111,9	322,4
GENT	17.961	283,4	182,7	298,1	168,0	466,1
HALLE-VILVOORDE	19.250	195,1	159,5	206,4	148,2	354,6
HASSELT	12.833	289,2	50,7	291,8	48,1	339,9
IEPER	3.493	179,8	166,6	210,7	135,7	346,4
KORTRIJK	8.830	274,1	247,3	305,1	216,3	521,4
LEUVEN	15.834	254,5	187,2	268,4	173,3	441,7
MAASEIK	7.036	201,7	33,8	201,7	33,8	235,5
MECHELEN	10.749	235,4	125,4	254,6	106,1	360,8
OOSTENDE	4.126	211,3	86,8	245,0	53,1	298,1
OUDENAARDE	4.024	219,4	133,7	228,9	124,3	353,1
ROESELARE	4.657	309,4	256,2	372,1	193,5	565,6
SINT-NIKLAAS	8.492	201,0	136,6	222,6	115,0	337,6
TIELT	2.913	66,9	272,2	71,7	267,4	339,2
TONGEREN	5.843	228,5	29,3	235,8	21,9	257,7
TURNHOUT	13.374	212,1	75,1	226,0	61,2	287,2
VEURNE	1.485	260,6	124,6	284,8	100,3	385,2
Totaal Vlaams Gewest	202.891	222,8	136,6	241,0	118,4	359,4
Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	49.496**					

* op basis Surkyn & Willaert (2008) Projectie van het aantal kinderen van 0 tot 3 jaar in het Vlaamse Gewest (2008-2013)

** op basis van bevolkingsvooruitzichten van het Federaal Planbureau, totale Brusselse bevolking

*** Inkomensgerelateerde plaatsen (IKG) zijn plaatsen bij KDV,DVO en bij ZKDV die op 30/04/09 actief waren in het IKG-systeem

Number of pre-school places 1 000 children by district (on 30/04/09)

➤ **Extra provision**

Flexible and occasional child care

Actieplan flexibele en occasionele opvang

situatie op 30/04/2009

Provincie	Uurpakketten (UP)		Ploegplaatsen	Occasionele plaatsen		GMV*	Lokale Diensten voorschoolse opvang		Lokale diensten buitenschoolse opvang	
	KDV	IBO		KDV	KDV		IBO	Aantal	Capaciteit	Aantal
Antwerpen	213	51		49	68		5	83	2	20
Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	186	7	6	23	3		1	28	1	10
Limburg	113	50		16	29		1	10	1	10
Oost-Vlaanderen	189	46		27	53		4	53	1	20
Vlaams-Brabant	110	34		17	49		0	0	1	35
West-Vlaanderen	145	47	4	19	38		5	54	3	66
Algemeen Totaal	956	235	10	151	240	75	16	228	9	161

* gemandateerde voorzieningen

Flexible and occasional child care action plan

situation on 30/04/2009

In a decision of October 2009, the following extra places were granted:

- 142 occasional places in day care centres
- 142 places in local pre-school services
- 93 places in local out-of-school services

Inclusive child care

Aantal plaatsen en aantal voorzieningen met aanbod aan opvang voor kinderen met een specifieke zorgbehoefte (2008)

	KDV			DVO	ZKDV*	ZOO	IBO			BOKDV	
	vz met structurele pls	aantal structurele pls	vz met individueel aanbod	vz met individueel aanbod	vz met individueel aanbod	vz met individueel aanbod	vz met structurele pls	aantal structurele pls	vz met individueel aanbod	vz met structurele pls	vz met individueel aanbod
Antwerpen	2	8	14	31	9	4	2	14	6	1	0
Brussels Hst. Gewest	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limburg	2	7	3	16	7	2	1	6	3	1	0
Oost-Vlaanderen	4	36	15	37	9	8	3	18	5	1	1
Vlaams-Brabant	0	0	12	17	6	2	3	21	5	0	2
West-Vlaanderen	5	36	10	33	19	11	1	3	6	1	2
Totaal	13	87	63	134	50	27	10	62	25	4	5

* inclusief ZBO

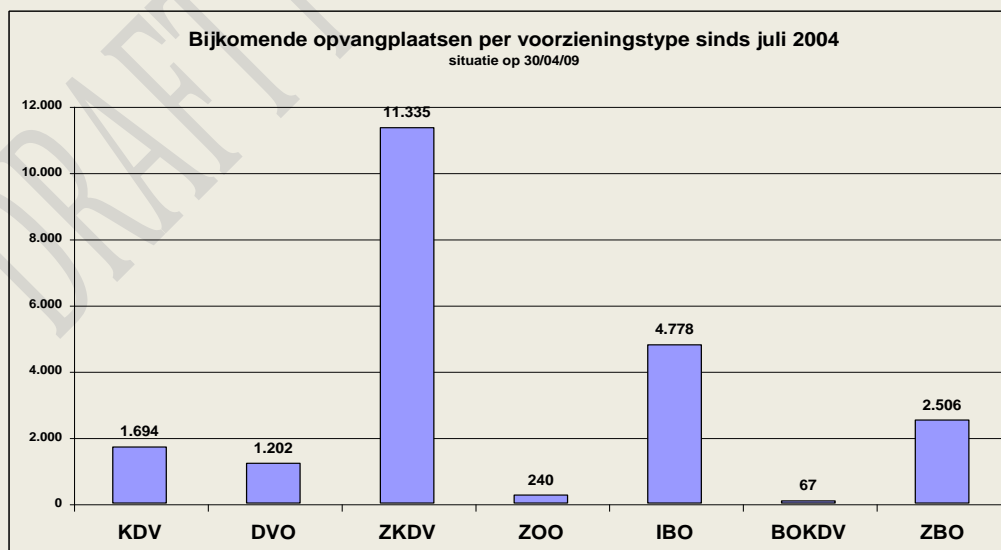
Number of child care places and facilities taking care of children with special needs (2008)

The end of 2009 saw the opportunity to grant 140 additional permanent places for inclusive child care with affiliated family day carers, in day care centres and in out-of school child care.

2.3.2 Growth in provision since 2004

Number of additional places (basic service) by child care type since July 2004 (since the start of the previous legislature).

Important: places in the process of applying for registration and subsidies are not included in this graph.

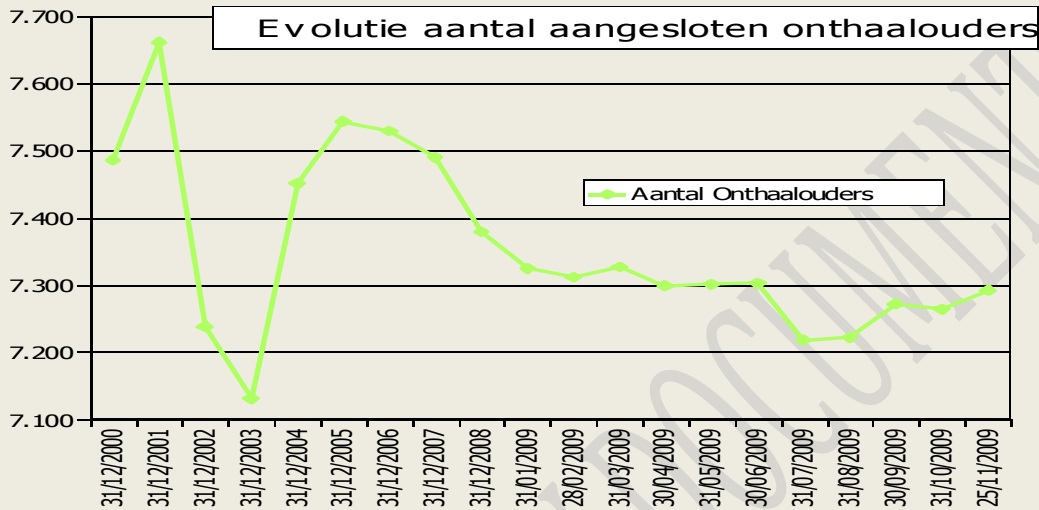


*Additional new child care places by type of facility since July 2004
situation on 30.04.09*

Note: of the 4 778 extra out-of-school places, 494 are subsidised by Child and Family. The other 4 284 out-of-school places are licensed but do not receive any subsidy.

2.3.3 Figures for family day carers affiliated to a service

➤ **Family day carers affiliated to a service**



Trend in the number of affiliated family day carers

Number of affiliated family day carers working on:

-31.12.2000: 7 486

-31.12.2005: 7 542

-31.12.2008: 7 401

-25.11.2009: 7 296

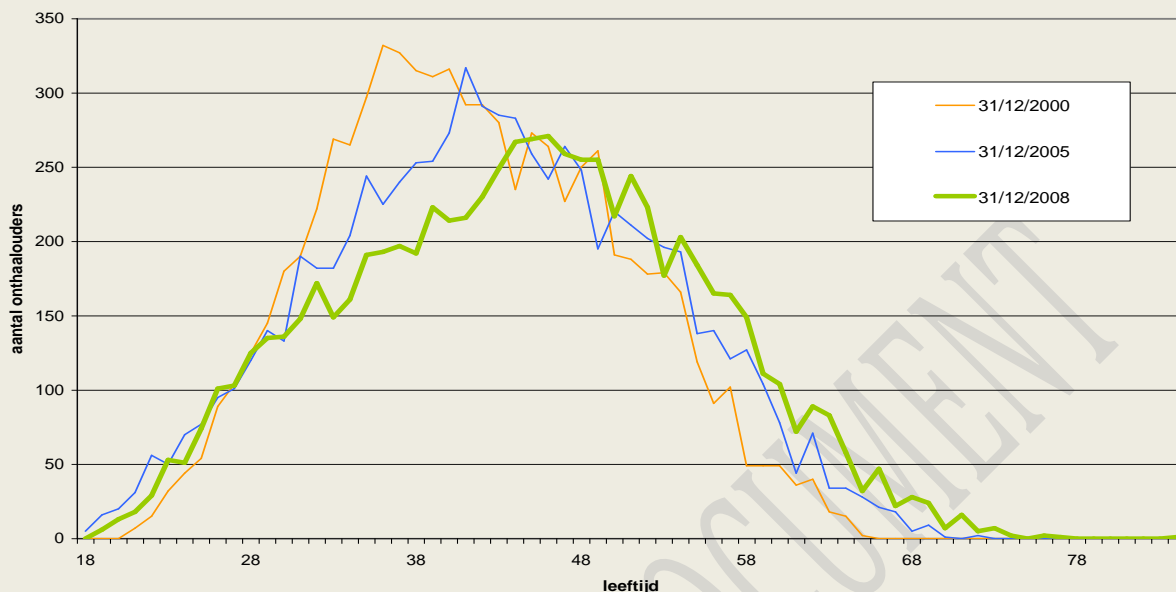
Number of affiliated family day carers working throughout the whole of 2008: 8 397

Starters and stoppers by year:

	2007	2008
Affiliated family day carers starting up	1 010	1 015
AFFILIATED FAMILY DAY CARERS STOPPING	1 041	1 111

Age data:

Evolutie leeftijdscurve aangesloten onthaalouders 2000 - 2005 - 2008



Age trend for affiliated family day carers 2000 - 2005 - 2008

Average age of starters (over the period 1995-2008): 34.1 years.

Average age on ceasing to work as a family day carer (1995-2008): 40 years.

Conclusions:

- there was little variation in the average age of starting and stopping over this period;
- affiliated family day carers are more widely spread over the age range than they used to be;
- affiliated family day carers as a group are getting older.

Duration of working as a childminder:

-The average duration of working as a family day carer is 6.34 years.

-Conclusion: there are two broad groups: affiliated family day carers who have already been working for a long time and so are not inclined to stop, and those with little experience who are inclined to stop quite quickly.

➤ **Independent family day carers**

Number of independent family day carers working on:

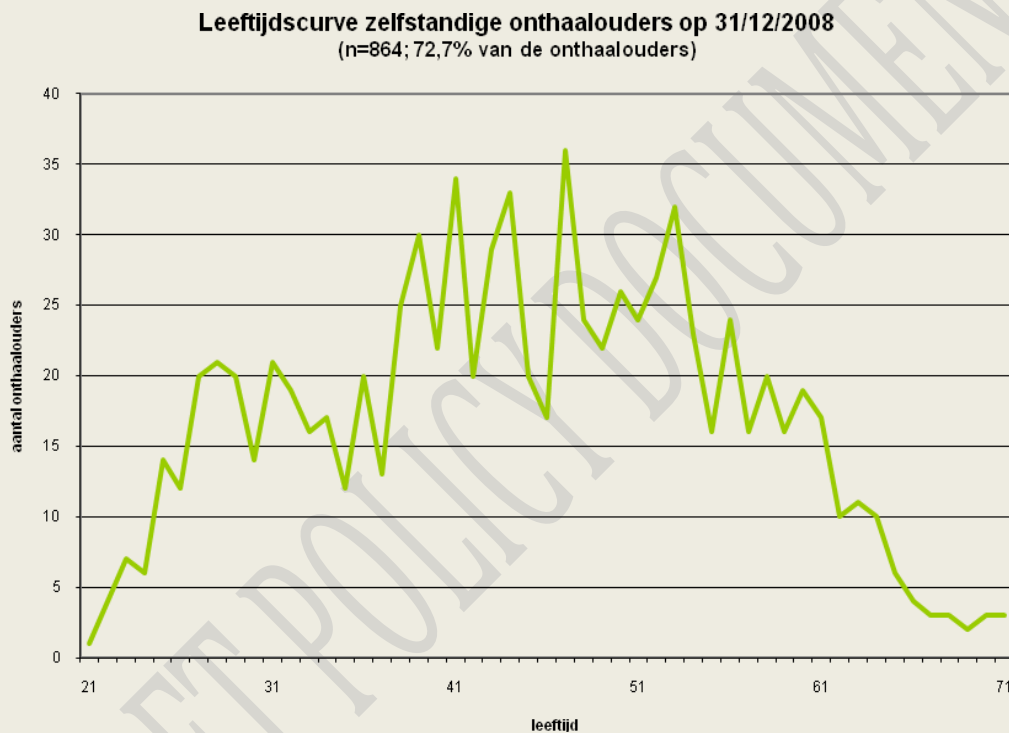
- 31.12.2000: 1 611
- 31.12.2005: 1 201
- 31.12.2008: 1 188
- 01.04.2009: 1 182
- 25.11.2009: 1 145

Number of affiliated family day carers working throughout the whole of 2008: 1 298

Starters and stoppers by year:

	2007	2008
Independent family day carers starting up	123	149
Independent family day carers stopping	109	116

Age data:



*Age distribution of independent family day carers on 31/12/2008
(n=864; 72.7% of the family day carers)*

Duration of working as a family day carer:

average duration of activity among independent family day carers who stopped working in 2008: 7.9 years

3. THE ROLE OF CHILD CARE IN SOCIETY

Child care provides a valuable service to society through its three functions.

The economic function, because child care can make it possible for parents to work or participate in education or training, but also because child care is an important pre-condition for getting less well-educated parents back into the labour market.

The educational function, because child care can be a place of social learning, where children learn to treat other people with a great diversity of ethnic backgrounds, religion, family composition, sexual preference and physical capacity with respect. The educational function of child care also stems from its role in complementing parental upbringing and supporting parents.

The social function, because child care can contribute to a just society, by practising social integration and combating exclusion mechanisms. It does this by among other things developing partnerships with parents based on equality and reciprocity, enabling all families to actively participate in child care, and providing local networks.

Research has shown that child care can play an important role in combating poverty and social exclusion. A recent Unicef publication compiled extensive scientific research showing that opening up the benefits of high quality services to all young children helps to reduce deprivation. Good quality child care can make a difference to children and give them a lift up thereby mitigating unequal opportunities⁸.

The American economist James Heckman calculated that investment at a very young age is far more efficient than taking remedial action and re-educating older children. Cost-benefit analyses of programmes for young children in diverse circumstances have shown that the

⁸ Unicef (2008). The child care transition. Innocenti Report Card 8. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Report card 8 can be consulted on the Child and Family website
http://www.kindengezin.be/Images/Unicefrapport_tcm149-61153.pdf

return on investment on child care and early years education can run up to \$8 per \$1 invested⁹.

The integration and reconciliation of the economic, educational and social functions of child care within child care facilities is an exercise with a range of benefits to society that also contributes to positive economic effects.

⁹ Heckman, J, Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children, Science, vol. 312, 30 June, pp. 1900-1902.