



## Country profile

# BELGIUM: Flanders

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# 1. Cultural policy system

## 1.1. Objectives, main features and background

Belgium is a federal country, in which cultural affairs are mainly the subject of policies on the level of the Flemish, French, and German-speaking Communities (see 1.2.3). Cultural affairs refer to areas such as arts, heritage, language, media, youth policy, and sports (see 4.1.1). Tourism and immovable heritage are competences of the Regions (Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels-Capital Region; see 1.2.3). A number of (large) cultural institutions resides with the competences of the Federal State (see 1.2.2).

Principles of political and cultural democracy and references to human rights pervade the history of cultural policies in Belgium and its Communities. Many actions conducted in the framework of these policies are in line with the principles of the Council of Europe on the promotion of cultural diversity and cultural participation, respect of freedom of expression and association, and support of creativity. (Belgium played an active role in the history of the Council.) Another important principle underpinning a large deal of cultural policies in Belgium and its Communities is subsidiarity — or, the principle that the state does not directly intervene in cultural matters, other than by means of general regulations and support measures. Many cultural policy instruments are devised as subsidies for non-governmental organisations and non-profit players.

In this profile, we will focus on the cultural policies of the Flemish Community (which applies to people and organisations living and working in Flanders and Brussels) — more specifically: the policies subsumed under the Flemish policy field of Culture. This spans arts, heritage, socio-cultural work, circus, amateur arts, sign language, and policies that permeate these different fields. If relevant, we will refer to cultural or culture-related affairs that are subsumed under other policy fields of the Flemish Community (such as Youth and Media), or that are competences of the Flemish and Brussels-Capital Region (such as Immovable Heritage, Tourism, Economy, and Foreign Affairs) or the Federal State (such as Federal cultural institutions, Social Security, and Development Cooperation). This profile also deals with general trends in local cultural policy in Flanders and Brussels (see 1.2.4). Specific cases of local cultural policies will only be mentioned in this profile when relevant to a topic. Provincial authorities played a historical role in shaping cultural policy in Flanders, but are now largely divested from cultural competences (see 1.2.4).

In general, cultural policy in the Flemish Community is based on the following values:

- equal rights for all its inhabitants
- quality and diversity of the cultural offer (and taking measures to correct market distortions)
- cultural democracy and cultural participation
- cultural competences
- creativity
- protection and promotion of cultural heritage

Core responsibilities of the Flemish authorities with regard to the competence of Culture are:

- developing a strategic conceptual framework for cultural policies
- providing a set of policy instruments

- taking measures to increase the quality of the cultural offer and provision of cultural services
- monitoring (the effects of) these policy frameworks and instruments

A look at the historical background<sup>[1]</sup> elucidates how this complex policy structure and the principles that imbue it came about:

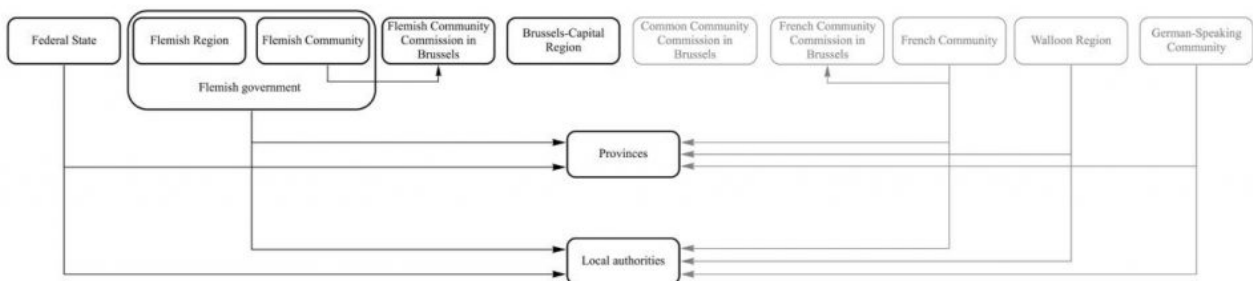
- 1944-1970: After the Second World War, cultural policies in Belgium expanded and were shaped by a drive to democratize culture — inspired by principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In line with international developments, cultural policies developed as an alternative to both the state culture of Communist countries and the market-governed system of the United States. These developments converged with the way Belgian society was historically shaped by philosophical and political divisions (the so-called ‘zuilen’, literally ‘pillars’), leading to the subsidiary government intervention in cultural affairs as described above.
- 1970-1980: The autonomy of the linguistic communities vis-à-vis the Federal State was further institutionalised. Cultural policy was divided over the newly created government levels. In the wake of these reforms, the Culture Pact (see 4.1.2) was passed. Throughout this decade, the ministers of Dutch Culture (as it was called) were Christian-Democrats, whose policies were geared towards democratizing culture (a network of culture centres and libraries was built throughout Flanders). In 1980, the Flemish and Walloon Regions were created (the Brussels-Capital Region followed in 1989), which also took up culture-related competences.
- 1981-1992: In the wake of economic turmoil, overall government expenditure on culture decreased. A new, rather management-oriented style of cultural policies — which included encouraging cultural organisations to generate a private income — was introduced by Liberal ministers of Culture in the Flemish government.
- 1992-1999: Christian-Democrat ministers of Culture continued the line of their liberal predecessors and focussed on the traditional arts and on socio-cultural work. Legislation on performing arts, music, and museums in Flanders and Brussels was passed that provided funding for delineated periods of time and which allowed funded players to devise longer-term planning.
- 1999-2009: Flemish government budgets for Culture increased considerably. Legal frameworks were streamlined and ‘integrated’ policies were created for the professional arts (the Arts Decree, which replaced discipline-specific regulations), cultural heritage (the Cultural Heritage Decree), and socio-cultural work (the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults). The Funds for literature and for audiovisual production were also established in this period, as well as the Participation Decree (see 6.1).
- 2009-2020: Budgets for Culture came under pressure (see 7.1.2) and the number and scope of new policy initiatives on the Flemish level were rather limited compared to the preceding decade. As result of a reform of government levels and their remits in Flanders, local cultural policy was decentralised and provincial authorities were largely divested of their cultural competences. In the wake of these reforms, a new Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities was established (see 1.2.4).

The previous five years of cultural policies and affairs constitute the main scope of this profile, with excursions to debates and policy initiatives of (roughly) the ten preceding years. This means we will refer to the terms of Bert Anciaux (Leftist-Liberal, in 2004-2009; this was his second term, after 1999-2002, when he was member of the Flemish nationalist Volksunie), Joke Schauvliege (Christian-Democrat, in 2009-2014), Sven Gatz (Liberal, in 2014-2019), and Jan Jambon (of the Flemish nationalist N-VA, 2019-2024).

<sup>[1]</sup> This section is an edit of similar sections in previous Compendium profiles on Belgium. For comprehensive overviews and analyses of (the history of) cultural policy in Flanders and Belgium, see: Laermans, Rudi. 2002. *Het cultureel regiem: cultuur en beleid in Vlaanderen*. Tielt: Lannoo; De Pauw, Wim. 2007. *Absoluut modern: cultuur en beleid in Vlaanderen*. Brussel: VUB Press; Van der Hoeven, Quirine. 2012. *Van Anciaux tot Zijlstra. Cultuurbeleid in Nederland en Vlaanderen*. Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau; De Kepper, Miek. 2017. *Over Bach, cement en de postbode. 50 jaar lokaal cultuurbeleid*. Kalmthout: Pelckmans.

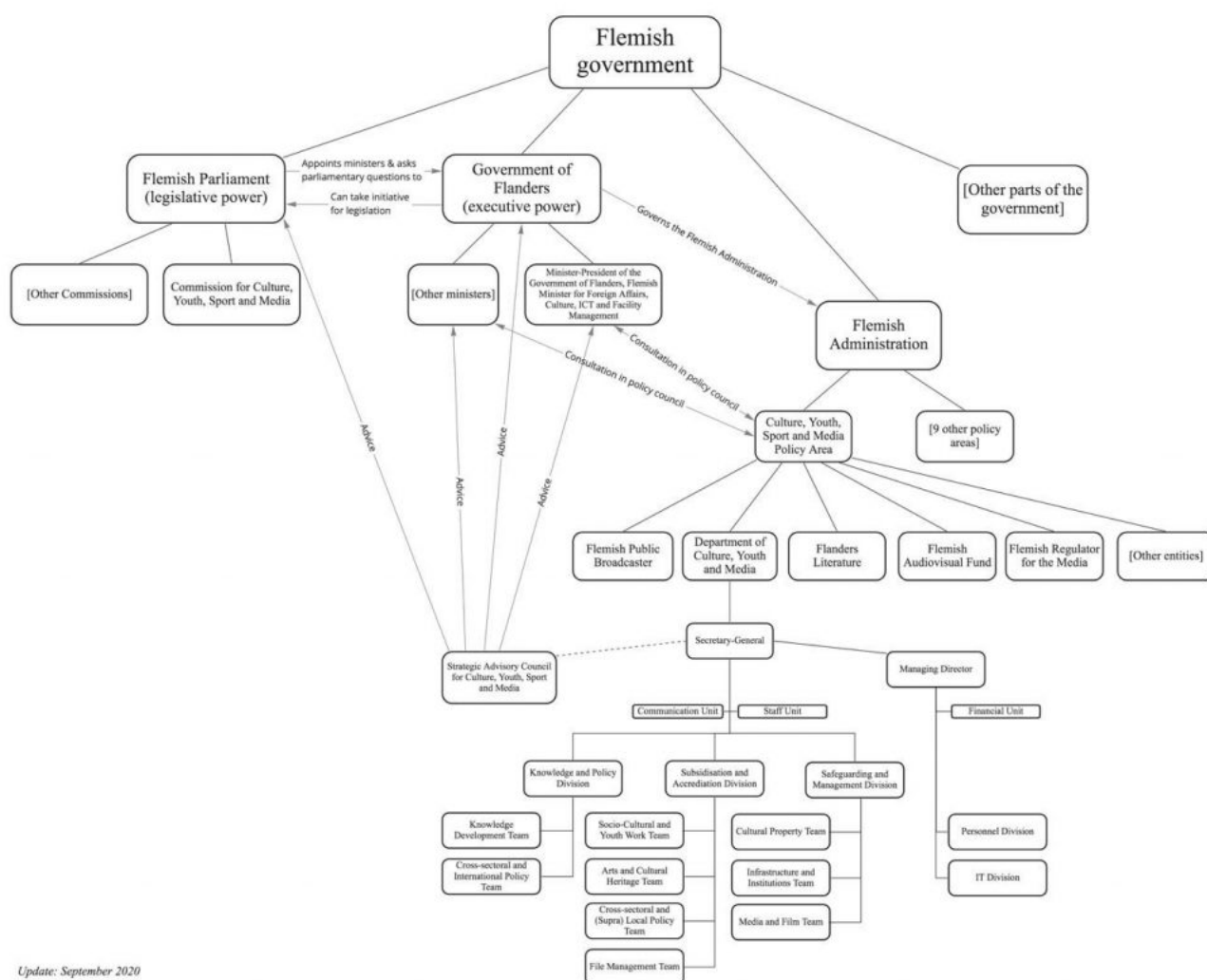
## 1.2. Domestic governance system

### 1.2.1. ORGANISATIONAL ORGANIGRAM



Update: September 2020

### 1. Levels of government in Belgium



## 2. Organogram of the Flemish government

### 1.2.2. NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Belgium is a federal country. After six state reforms (in 1970, 1980, 1988-89, 1993, 2001, and 2012-2014), the Communities and Regions (see 1.2.3) hold a clearly defined set of competences (including, in the case of the Communities, Culture; see 1.1). The Federal State, which currently stands on the same hierarchical level as the Regions and Communities (see 1.2.1), still holds a number of important **competences**. Its legislation and policies apply to the whole territory of Belgium. Some of these are relevant when discussing cultural policy in Flanders and Brussels and pertain to social security, labour legislation, tax laws, or intellectual property rights (see 4.1). The legislative power on the Federal level resides with the **Federal Parliament**, which consists of two chambers: the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate. The **Federal Government** has the executive power. It is made up of ministers and secretaries of state.

A number of cultural institutions still fall under the competences of the Federal level. There are three Federal Cultural Institutions: **Centre of Fine Arts BOZAR**, **La Monnaie/De Munt** (the National Opera House), and the **Belgian National Orchestra**. Sophie Wilmès (since 2019) is currently the responsible minister. Then there are the Federal Scientific Institutions, such as the **Royal Museums of Fine Arts**, the **Royal Museums for Art and History**, the **Royal Museum for Central Africa**, the National Library (KBR), the **State Archives**, or the **Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage**. These reside with **Science Policy**, of which Thomas Dermine (since 2020) is currently the

minister. Through Science Policy, a number of 'Bi-Community cultural organisations and activities' are funded (such as [CINEMATEK](#), [Europalia](#), and the [Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel](#)) and a number of international organisations (such as [Jeunesses Musicales International](#) and [ICCROM](#)).

### 1.2.3. REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

In federal Belgium, the Communities and Regions hold a defined set of competences vis-à-vis the Federal State. These levels of government are on the same hierarchical footing (see 1.2.1). In general, matters relating to the individual (which include Culture) reside with the Communities and matters relating to the territory (which include Immovable Heritage) with the Regions. Both Regions and Communities hold legislative and executive powers.

There are three Communities:

- The Flemish Community, which spans the territory of Flanders and Brussels
- The French Community, which spans the territory of Wallonia and Brussels
- The German-speaking Community, which spans a number of communes in the east of Wallonia

There are three Regions:

- The Flemish Region (which spans Flanders, but excludes the Brussels municipalities)
- The Brussels-Capital Region (which spans the nineteen Brussels municipalities)
- The Walloon Region (which spans Wallonia)

The powers of the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region are exercised by a single Flemish government (see 1.2.1). Within the government, the Flemish Parliament is the legislative body and the Government of Flanders ('*Vlaamse Regering*') holds the executive power. Legislation on this level is called a 'decree'. A coalition agreement is made during negotiations for a new government, which contains the Government of Flanders' resolutions for the coming term. Each minister then publishes policy memorandums, which lay down the goals in a specific policy field. In addition to the policy memorandum on Culture, the minister provides a more detailed account of policy objectives with regard to arts and cultural heritage in separate Strategic Vision Statements. Since 2020, each minister annually informs the Parliament of his or her policy goals and the planned allocation of funds by way of a formal explanation. In the current Government of Flanders (2019-2024), Jan Jambon is minister of Culture — next to being Minister-President and minister of Foreign Affairs, ICT, and Facility Management. Benjamin Dalle is minister of Youth and Media. Matthias Diependaele is minister of Immovable Heritage.

The services of the Flemish government administration are grouped in ten policy areas, including Culture, Youth, Sport and Media. Within this area, several bodies provide services with regard to the policy field of Culture. Among them, there is the [Department of Culture, Youth and Media](#), which handles the preparation, follow-up, and evaluation of Flemish policies on culture, youth, and media. This includes administering the implementation of a large deal of cultural legislation, such as the Arts Decree, the Cultural Heritage Decree, or the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults. Ministers and senior officials of the different administration services consult each other in policy councils.

Political primacy is an important principle in Flemish cultural policies. When policy instruments are devised or



decisions are made on the support provided by these instruments, the final decision is mostly done by the minister and the Flemish government. However, the minister is advised by special bodies and the government administration. If s/he rejects this advice, the minister must provide a justification for doing so. One can discern two types in the advisory system: strategic policy advice and advice on the allocation of funding.

There is a Strategic Advisory Council for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media ([SARC](#)), which gives advice with regard to policy proposals and planned legislation — either on its own initiative or on request — to (the ministers of) the Government of Flanders or the Flemish Parliament. The SARC consists of independent experts and representatives of civil society. Its workings are integrated into the Department of Culture, Youth, and Media. Apart from a general council, there are subcouncils for Arts and Heritage, Socio-Cultural Work, Media, and Sports.

The basis of procedures for assessing the quality of funding applications in (e.g.) the arts, cultural heritage and socio-cultural work for adults is a combination of peer-review — by independent experts from the field — and review by the government department — of the administrative quality of the application. The result are advices on and rankings of applications, which the minister may follow in his/her decisions on granting subsidies.

There are exceptions to the principle of political primacy. There are entities involved in implementing policies in the area of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media that have a degree of autonomy, such as the funds for literature ([Flanders Literature](#); see 3.5.2) and audiovisual production (Flemish Audiovisual Fund, or [VAF](#); see 3.5.3). These entities sign management agreements with the Flemish government.

It should be noted that the competences of the [Brussels-Capital Region](#) do not wholly exclude Culture. Similar to the other Regions, it can of course devise policies with regard to Immovable Heritage (Pascal Smet is the responsible secretary of state). But as a result of the Sixth State Reform (2012-2014), it now also holds the competence of 'Bi-cultural Matters of Regional Significance' (Rudi Vervoort, who is Minister-President, is responsible). Though there is [discussion](#) about the exact definition of these matters, this new competence more or less means that the Brussels-Capital Region can devise policies for cultural institutions that neither fall under one of the Communities, nor under the Federal State, nor under the local authorities. This also means the Brussels-Capital region can establish its own cultural institutions.<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> One result of this new competence is [KANAL](#), which involves a partnership with the French Centre Pompidou. The foundation of this new museum has caused debate among professionals from the Cultural field in Brussels (see, for example, the reports of a [conference in 2018](#) on the topic).

#### 1.2.4. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

There are ten provinces and (at the time of writing) 581 communes in the whole of Belgium. Five provinces are located in the Flemish Region. These comprise 300 communes, of which thirteen are officially acknowledged as 'centre cities' ('centrumsteden'; this status has an effect on, e.g., their funding). There is no provincial authority *sensu stricto* in the Brussels-Capital Region, which spans 19 different communes. In the hierarchy of government levels (see 1.2.1), provincial and local authorities constitute the lower levels. Both have a large degree of autonomy over the competences they each exert within their territories. They can devise policy instruments and allocate resources to these. Local authorities in the Flemish Region can, for example, set up

their own support schemes for local cultural and leisure time initiatives.

Provincial and local authorities, however, are bound to the general legislation and regulations on the level of the Federal State and the Communities and Regions under which they reside. They are monitored by and receive funding from these higher levels of government ([especially the Regions](#)). The Municipal Fund is the most important source of funding for local governments.<sup>[1]</sup> The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities ([VSG](#)) acts as an advocacy organisation, expertise provider, and network for local governments in the Flemish Region. There is also an Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region ([VSGB](#)). The Association of Flemish Provinces ([VVP](#)) provides similar services for the Flemish provinces.

Both provinces and local authorities have played a historically important role in establishing a cultural offer in Flanders, if not complementary with higher levels of government (see also 1.3.1 and 1.3.3). A landmark was the creation of cultural centres and libraries throughout Flemish communes. This process took off in the 1960s — with, e.g., policies stimulating local governments to start building cultural centres — and continued in the 1970s and afterwards (see also 1.1). This resulted in a substantial network of local cultural infrastructure (see table 1 in 1.3.2 for figures).<sup>[2]</sup>

As a consequence of the 'Internal State Reform', the role of the lower governments in Flanders with regard to cultural policy has changed significantly.<sup>[3]</sup> Since 2018, provincial authorities have been divested of most of their cultural competences (such as providing multi-year funding for cultural organisations). The culture budgets of the provinces have been divided among the Flemish government and the local authorities. Provinces still have some limited competences with regard to Immovable Heritage (see 3.1).

Since 2016, local cultural policy has been largely decentralised.<sup>[4]</sup> Resources for local cultural centres and libraries — which used to be regulated through the Decree on Local Cultural Policy — were integrated into the Municipal Fund. Contrary to the situation under the Decree on Local Cultural Policy (see also 4.1.2), funding through the Municipal Fund is no longer earmarked for specific fields such as culture. At the same time, the conditions for obtaining these funds have changed and the obligation for libraries and cultural centres to report their activities to the Flemish government has ceased (causing a gap in the data). The responsibility for conducting a local cultural policy now fully resides with the local authorities, with the Flemish government taking up a supportive and stimulating role — rather than a steering and controlling role. It is not entirely clear what the effect of these changes has been on local funding for arts and culture, but the overall expenditure on culture and culture-related matters by the lower government levels remains substantial (see 7.1.2<sup>[5]</sup>).

In 2019, in the wake of these governmental reforms, a Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities came into effect. Through this new legislative framework, the Flemish government aims to stimulate collaboration between players of different cultural disciplines (or collaboration between players in culture and other spheres), beyond the borders of communes. The Decree offers project funding for cultural organisations, multi-year funding for inter-municipal partnerships involving culture, and a centre of expertise ([OP/TIL](#)) aimed at supporting projects and partnerships.

Lastly, we should mention the Flemish Community Commission ([VGC](#)). This separate level of government (see 1.2.1) is responsible for competences of the Flemish Community — among them Culture — in the Brussels-Capital Region. Its responsibilities, however, are limited to institutions that are connected with the Flemish Community (such as libraries, community centres, or schools). These responsibilities are in part derived from

Flemish Decrees — this way, the VGC acts as if it were a ‘provincial’ or ‘local’ authority for Flanders — but it can also supply in complementary policies — it for example provides funding for arts organisations or artistic projects. The Flemish government monitors the workings of the VGC and has, under certain conditions, the authority to revoke its decisions. The VGC consults official and advisory councils and panels with regard to its competences, such as Culture. These consist of independent professionals.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Belfius. 2016. ‘Gids: hoe werkt een gemeente?’, 34.

<sup>[2]</sup> De Kepper, Miek. 2017. *Over Bach, cement en de postbode. 50 jaar lokaal cultuurbeleid*. Kalmthout: Pelckmans, 53-92.

<sup>[3]</sup> Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur van de Vlaamse overheid. 2011. *Witboek interne staatshervorming*, 73.

<sup>[4]</sup> In communes with linguistic facilities (see also 2.5.4) bordering Brussels-Capital Region, this reform took place in 2018.

<sup>[5]</sup> Note that the figures in table 6 refer to expenses by all lower government levels (i.e. local authorities + provinces) in the whole of Belgium (not only the Flemish Region).

### 1.2.5. MAIN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

Sections 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 mention official advisory bodies that consist of independent professionals and that provide advice on cultural policy matters of the Flemish Community: the Strategic Advisory Council for Culture, Youth, Sport and Media ([SARC](#)), the commissions for peer-review of funding applications, and the advisory councils and panels of the Flemish Community Commission ([VGC](#)). These show how consultation of non-governmental actors is structurally embedded in the workings of the Flemish cultural policy system.

Beside the functioning of these advisory bodies, there are advocacy organisations and labour unions that aim to represent the voice and interest of the different players in the cultural field (see 7.2.4 for examples of associations and unions in the professional arts). These of course do not wholly exclude the possibility of cultural organisations or artists individually lobbying policy makers. Funds for subsistence security (see 7.2.2) sometimes also make their voice heard in (public) debates on cultural matters.

The independent centres of expertise (‘steunpunten’; see 7.2.1) can be called upon by the Flemish government to provide advice or expertise with regard to certain policy initiatives. [Flanders Arts Institute](#), for example, provides a “[Landscape Sketch of the Arts](#)”, a (strategic) analysis of trends in the professional arts in Flanders and Brussels that serves as input for the Strategic Vision Statement of the Arts of the minister of Culture (this is codified into the [Arts Decree](#), art. 7). Ministers of Culture have also gathered centres of expertise, advocacy organisations, and other professional cultural players in ad hoc working groups or consultation rounds on specific topics, such as fair practices (see 2.3), combatting harassment and abuse (see 2.5.5), ecological sustainability (see 2.8), or changes in the legal framework (see 2.9).

There have been several (usually small-scale) experiments in Belgium with deliberative democracy. A notable example from the field of Culture are the ‘citizen cabinets’ (Burgerkabinetten) that minister Sven Gatz

(2014-2019) organized to gather input for his policies. The ideas that resulted from the citizen cabinet on culture were much in line with existing policies and initiatives from the field.<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Bamps, Hadewych, Michiel Nuytemans, Annemie Rossenbacker, and Jo Steyaert. 2015. 'Burgerkabinet. Rapportering resultaten'. Levuur/Indiville/Tree Company, 85-86.

## 1.2.6. TRANSVERSAL CO-OPERATION

Decisions of the Government of Flanders ('Vlaamse Regering') are made as a result of consensus between its ministers, who meet on a weekly basis. There is regular consultation and cooperation among the different entities of the government administration. The Department of Culture, Youth and Media (see 1.2.3), for example, cooperates with the [Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs](#) (see 1.4.1), [VISITFLANDERS](#) (see 3.5.6), the [Ministry of Education and Training](#) (see 5.1), or other administration services dealing with [Equal Opportunities Policies](#) (see 2.5.1, 2.5.6, and 2.6). It also works together with other entities within the Flemish government, such as the [Flemish Ombudsman Service](#) (see 2.5.5).

Consultation between the Federal State and the Communities and Regions in Belgium happens in an Intergovernmental Committee. Here, policies are geared to one another, cooperation agreements are defined, and conflicts of interest between the governments are settled. From within this Committee, the topics for specific Inter-Ministerial Conferences are decided. In the Inter-Ministerial conference on Culture, the ministers of this policy field from the different governments meet. This currently includes minister Jan Jambon, his counterparts in the French and German-speaking Communities, the Brussels minister for Bi-cultural Matters (see 1.2.3), the Federal ministers mentioned in 1.2.2., and members of the executive boards of the Flemish (VGC, see 1.2.4) and French Community Commissions in Brussels. [Current topics](#) include the impact of COVID-19 on cultural sectors, the regulations for artists in the social security framework (the 'kunstenaarsstatuut', see 4.1.3), and tax shelter regulations (see 4.1.4).

In 2012 — after a long period of preparation and negotiation — a [cooperation agreement](#) was signed between the Flemish and the French Communities. This provides the framework for exchange of expertise between these levels of government and support schemes for cultural projects that involve cooperation between organisations in both Communities. A [cultural programme](#) with the German-speaking Community was set up for the period 2019-2021. This includes similar project support, but also literary residencies and exchange of expertise on heritage (see also 1.4.1).

There are different legal frameworks in Flanders for cooperation between local authorities. With regard to the policy field of Culture, we should mention the Cultural Heritage Decree — which allows for the funding of inter-municipal covenants in providing services with regard to cultural heritage — and the new Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities (see 1.2.4).

## 1.3. Cultural institutions

### 1.3.1. OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Flanders has been described as a cultural ‘nebular city’, a sprawl of predominantly small to mid-large cultural infrastructure and organisations of private and public origin.<sup>[1]</sup> The distinction between both is not always clear, as some public organisations are former private initiatives and private organisations may have received some form of public support at some point in their history. The Flemish Arts Decree, for example, has provided a relatively flexible framework that allows organisations with a predominantly private income structure (such as music clubs) to apply for public funding. Many publicly funded socio-cultural organisations also rely for a large part on private sources of income.

(Ameliorating the conditions for) private funding was one of the key policy themes during the term of former Flemish minister of Culture Sven Gatz (2014-2019) (see 7.3). It remains a focus under current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024). In his recent Strategic Vision Statements for the Arts, Jambon stressed that the cultural sector is to be seen as part of a broader market economy and that subsidized actors should organise and sell their work according to the market value.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Davidts, Wouter. 2004. ‘[Vlaanderen Culturele Nevelstad: culturele infrastructuur in een horizontaal verstedelijkt landschap](#)’. In *Jaarboek Architectuur Vlaanderen 02-03*, Antwerpen: Vlaams Architectuurinstituut (VAi), 71–79.

<sup>[2]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. ‘[Strategische Visienota Kunsten](#)’, 16-17.

### 1.3.2. DATA ON SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Table 1 provides the most recent numbers of selected types of cultural institutions. Immovable heritage sites and archaeological sites are a competence of the Flemish Region (thus excluding the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region) and fall under a different policy area than the other mentioned institutions. Museums, archives, and other organisations receiving multi-year (‘structural’) funding through the Cultural Heritage Decree (95 in total<sup>[3]</sup>), the arts organisations with structural subsidies through the Arts Decree (performing arts, music, visual arts, architecture and design, and transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary arts; 215 in total<sup>[2]</sup>), and the organisations structurally supported through the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults (126<sup>[3]</sup>) are seen as part of the Flemish Community (which spans both Flanders and Brussels).

Public libraries and local cultural centres<sup>[4]</sup> (the figures presented refer to Flanders *and* Brussels) are now fully under the responsibility of local governments (see 1.2.4). Although culture is, strictly seen, not one of its competences, the Federal Government provides funding to some important cultural institutions. These fall under different official categories: ‘Scientific Institutions’, ‘Cultural Institutions’, and ‘Bi-Community cultural organisations and activities’ (see 1.2.2 for further details).

There is one Flemish Public Broadcaster (VRT), which includes television and radio broadcasting). This is complemented by a number of licensed private television companies. Then there smaller, regionally organised public television organisations throughout Flanders. In radio broadcasting, there are, next to VRT, numerous licensed private and local stations active.

Table 1 also counts cinemas in Flanders and Brussels. These are predominantly private: the Flemish government does not provide funding specifically aimed at cinemas, but some do receive support from other levels of government.

*Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain*

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Public sector	Private sector
		Number (year)	Number (year)
Cultural heritage	Immovable heritage sites (protected) in Flemish Region (excluding protected archeological sites)	13 725 (2020)	/
	Archaeological sites (protected) in Flemish Region	46 (2020)	/
Museums	Museums institutions structurally funded through Cultural Heritage Decree	45 (2020)	/
Archives	Archive institutions structurally funded through Cultural Heritage Decree	9 (2020)	/
Visual arts	(Audio-)visual arts organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	25 (2020)	/
Performing arts	Performing arts organisations (theatre, dance, musical theatre) structurally funded through Arts Decree	70 (2020)	/
	Music organisations (classical music, jazz, folk, pop and rock) structurally funded through Arts Decree	59 (2020)	/
Libraries	Public libraries	314 (2015)	/
Audiovisual	Cinemas in Flemish and Brussels-Capital Regions	/	43 (2018)
	Flemish public broadcasting organisation (VRT)	1 (2020)	/
	Regional television broadcasting organisations	10 (2020)	/
	Flemish private television broadcasting organisations	/	16 (2020)
	Flemish private radio broadcasting organisations	/	3 (2020)
	Network radio broadcasting organisations	/	61 (2020)
	Local radio broadcasting organisations	/	236 (2020)
Interdisciplinary	Transdisciplinary organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	8 (2020)	/
	Multidisciplinary organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	39 (2020)	/
Other	Architecture and design organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	7 (2020)	/
	Art institutions funded through Arts Decree	7 (2020)	/
	Organisations structurally funded through Cultural Heritage Decree, other than museums and archive institutions	41 (2020)	/
	Organisations structurally funded through the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults	126 (2019)	/
	Local culture centres	69 (2015)	/
	Federal Scientific Institutions	10 (2020)	/
	Federal Cultural Institutions	3 (2020)	/
	Federally funded Bi-Community cultural organisations and activities	9 (2020)	/

Sources:

Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish government, Flanders Heritage, Flemish Regulator for the Media, and Statbel.

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<sup>[1]</sup> FARO made an [online overview](#) of organisations funded through the Cultural Heritage Decree and other organisations dealing with cultural and immaterial heritage in Flanders and Brussels. An [online inventory](#) of immaterial heritage practices is provided by Workshop Intangible Heritage Flanders. See also 3.1.

<sup>[2]</sup> These organisations are included — together with private initiatives and individual artists in Flanders and Brussels — in the [online databases](#) of Flanders Arts Institute. For an analysis of trends in the number of organisations with multi-year funding through the Flemish Arts Decree, see: Leenknecht, Simon. 2020. 'Structurele subsidies via het Kunstendecreet - Kunsten.' [Kunsten.be](#).

<sup>[3]</sup> Socius has an [online database](#) of organisations for socio-cultural work for adults.

<sup>[4]</sup> 'Culture centres' (or 'cultuurcentra') were until 2016 an official category, used to denominate local cultural institutions in municipalities all over Flanders. (These were funded in a different way than the 'community centres' or 'gemeenschapscentra', which are not included in table 1.) The number of institutions in 2015 is still the same in 2020, but the legal framework (and funding modalities) have changed.

### 1.3.3. PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: TRENDS AND STRATEGIES

Public cultural infrastructure in Flanders (the so-called 'nebular city', see 1.3.1) is in large part a result of the interplay between the Flemish Community, the provinces, and local authorities. This balance has changed in recent years, however, as a result of the 'Internal State Reform' (see 1.2.4). This divested the provincial governments of most of their cultural competences and intensified a decentralisation of local cultural policy in Flanders. The lower levels of government nonetheless remain an important provider of funding for cultural and culture-related initiatives (see also 7.1.2).

A substantial part of the funding of cultural organisations by the Flemish government is respectively arranged through the Arts Decree, the Cultural Heritage Decree and the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults. Opportunities are also provided by the Participation Decree (see 6.1) and, since 2019, the Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities ("Decreet Bovenlokale Cultuurwerking", see 1.2.4). Through this new legislative framework, the Flemish government aims to stimulate collaboration between players of different cultural disciplines (or collaboration between players in culture and other spheres), beyond the borders of municipalities. The Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities offers project funding for cultural organisations, multi-year funding for intermunicipal partnerships involving culture, and a centre of expertise ([OP/TIL](#)) aimed at supporting projects and partnerships. Funding through these various decrees has been subject to budget cuts during the current and previous legislative sessions (see also 7.1.3).

Until recently, a group of major cultural institutions with a close relationship to the Flemish government ('Instellingen van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap') was excluded from existing decrees. The legal framework on the funding and governing of most of these organisations has been integrated into the Arts Decree and the Cultural Heritage Decree, giving rise to new official categories: 'art institutions' or 'kunstinstellingen' (such as deSingel, Ancienne Belgique, or Opera Ballet Vlaanderen) and 'cultural heritage institutions' (currently only one, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp). Each of these signs an official management agreement with the Flemish government and is subject to specific procedures of quality assessment.<sup>[1]</sup>



Though also affected by budget cuts, these major institutions have been spared more than other organisations and even saw a steady increase in overall funding throughout the years. Both the former and the current minister of Culture championed them as “ambassadors” and as serving as models for others.<sup>[2]</sup> Under Sven Gatz (2014-2019) the group of art institutions was expanded with two more organisations (Vooruit and Concertgebouw Brugge). Current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024) announced he would introduce a new category of funding for major institutions (‘kerninstellingen’), similar to the art institutions (see 2.3 and 2.9).<sup>[3]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> There has been debate on the position and role of major art institutions in the (subsidised) arts field, see Overbergh, Ann, Katrien Kiekens, and Dirk De Wit. 2019. ‘First among equals? The art institution today’.

<sup>[2]</sup> Gatz, Sven. 2014. ‘Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur’, 11 and 18; Jambon, Jan. 2019. ‘Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024’, 15.

<sup>[3]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. ‘Strategische Visienota Kunsten’, 8.

## 1.4. International cooperation

### 1.4.1. PUBLIC ACTORS AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Both the Federal State and the Communities and Regions have competences in foreign relations. The latter can devise policies on foreign affairs, but only with regard to their own competences (this is the principle of “in foro interno, in foro externo”). This means the Flemish government can sign agreements with (foreign) regions and other countries than Belgium.<sup>[1]</sup>

Culture is deemed an [important topic](#) in the international relationships of the Flemish government. A significant part of government policies on international cultural cooperation can be described as being governed by the principle of ‘follow the actor’, in which especially players from the cultural field take the initiative (see 1.4.3).

The Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)<sup>[2]</sup> acts as a bridge between the cultural field and the network of General Representatives of the Government of Flanders. This network consists of thirteen [diplomatic representatives](#) in other countries or in international bodies such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the UN, or the OECD. Part of their job is to enhance the international visibility and reputation of Flanders through the arts and heritage sector. The General Representatives can support cultural partnerships and events involving cultural players from Flanders and abroad. The FDFA also provides support for cultural projects that share the interests of the Flemish government (for example on topics related to human rights) or that help fostering relations with other regions and countries. The FDFA represents Flanders in the [EUNIC](#) network.

For matters related to culture, the FDFA consults the [Department of Culture, Youth and Media](#) (see 1.2.3 and 1.2.6), [VISITFLANDERS](#) (see 3.5.6), and [Flanders Investment & Trade](#) (see 3.5.1). There is also collaboration on international cultural partnerships with the centres of expertise (see 7.2.1), the funds for literature (see 3.5.2) and audiovisual arts (see 3.5.3), and museum associations (see 3.1) through the platform [Flanders Culture](#).

There is no network of publicly mandated cultural institutes, except for [Arts Flanders Japan](#) (a Liaison Office of



the Government of Flanders for cultural affairs) and [De Brakke Grond](#). The latter is a cultural centre established by the Flemish government in Amsterdam in 1981. Its mission is to promote the cultural identity of Flanders, offer a stage for artistic developments from Flanders, and promote Dutch-Flemish cooperation.

The Netherlands has been a preferred partner in bi-lateral cultural collaboration since long — and especially so for current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024; see 2.5.4). Both governments, for example, founded [deBuren](#) in 2004. It is a cultural organisation seated in Brussels that organises cultural projects and debates on culture, society, and politics in the Low Countries. Next to exchange and cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands, there is also joint action in establishing external relationships. An important example is the Union for the Dutch Language or [Taalunie](#), which is the result of a treaty between the Flemish and Dutch Governments in 1980. This intergovernmental organisation (Suriname is also an associate member since 2004) has reconsidered its mission over the years and focuses now on developing and promoting policies on Dutch, promoting the Dutch language in other countries, and hosting a network of experts on language-related matters.

Other partners for intense bi-lateral collaboration are the French Community in Belgium (see 1.2.6) and Morocco (since 1975). The governments of Flanders and Morocco together founded [Darna](#), with the aim of stimulating cultural interaction between the Flemish and Moroccan communities in Flanders and Brussels. This cultural house in Brussels organises events and supports projects that contribute to this goal. Other, more recent, [bi-lateral cultural cooperation partnerships](#) were established with (among others) the Hauts-de-France region in France (2018-2021), China (2019-2022), and the German-speaking Community in Belgium (see 1.2.6).

Lastly, we should mention that cultural diplomacy initiatives are also undertaken on the Federal level, especially by the cultural institution [BOZAR](#).

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<sup>[1]</sup> The FDFA provides an [overview](#) of agreements with regard to culture (see also 4.2.1).

<sup>[2]</sup> This government department was at the time of writing in the process of merging with the Department of Public Governance and the Chancellery.

#### 1.4.2. EUROPEAN / INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND PROGRAMMES

Belgium is a member state of the [EU](#), [Council of Europe](#), [UN](#), [UNESCO](#), and the [OECD](#). The Flemish government is also involved in these intergovernmental bodies, either through independent relations, or through the Belgian membership (which requires coordination with the other government levels involved). This involvement includes implementing treaties and policies, financial support for the workings of these bodies, and participation in working groups or conferences. Carrying out and monitoring treaties and policies<sup>[1]</sup> is done by different ministers and administration services of the Federal and Flemish governments, such as the Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA; see 1.4.1) and the [Department of Culture, Youth and Media](#) (see 1.2.3 and 1.2.6). With regard to their competences (including Culture), the responsible ministers of the different Communities take on a [rotating role](#) in the Council of the European Union (this follows the principle explained in 1.4.1).

[Creative Europe Desk Vlaanderen](#) is the information desk on the Creative Europe programme for the Flemish

Community. There is a separate national agency for the Erasmus+ programme in Flanders, namely [Epos](#). There are also separate national UNESCO Commissions for the different Communities: the [Flemish UNESCO Commission](#) and the [Commission](#) representing both the French and German-speaking Communities. The Flemish government created two [UNESCO Trust Funds](#), of which the general fund supports projects on cultural heritage (this is financed by the FDFA). The [UNESCO Platform Flanders](#) functions as an information desk for the Flemish Community.

With regard to the role of Flanders in the EU, we should mention the Liaison agency Flanders-Europe ([VLEVA](#)). This is a membership organisation that acts as a network and expertise provider for actors from civil society (such as advocacy associations) and for the different government levels in Flanders.

Lastly, we should mention that the Flemish government is a member of the Union for the Dutch Language, together with the Netherlands and Suriname ([Taalunie](#); see 1.4.1).

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<sup>[1]</sup> The FDFA provides an [overview](#) of international treaties with regard to culture in which the Flemish government is involved, including those of the Council of Europe, UNESCO, and UN (see also 4.2.1).

### 1.4.3. NGO'S AND DIRECT PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION

Transnational collaboration on developing and sharing work and projects is widespread among artists and organisations in the professional arts scene in Flanders and Brussels.<sup>[1]</sup> This exchange is in part facilitated by international network organisations in arts and culture — some of which have their main seat in Belgium, such as [IETM](#), [On the Move](#), the [EFA](#), [Pearle\\*](#), or [Culture Action Europe](#) (all of them in Brussels). In the cultural heritage field in Flanders and Brussels, international cooperation happens through membership of network organisations ([ICOM](#), [NEMO](#), etc.), engaging in the UNESCO networks, or participating in international (digitization) projects such as [Europeana](#). Complementary to the mentioned international networks, the centres of expertise (see 7.2.1) play an active role in establishing relations between cultural professionals from Flanders and abroad.

Another impetus for professional cooperation beyond borders is provided by the framework of support measures. These include the EU support schemes (Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, Interreg, etc.), in which cultural organisations and professionals from Flanders and Brussels have participated throughout the years.<sup>[2]</sup> The Flemish government also provides a range of relevant funding options. Project funding, grants, multi-year subsidies arranged by the Arts Decree, for example, can be used for deploying international activities. Additionally, it supplies in a number of schemes specifically aimed at supporting international career development or mobility (see 7.2.1). Networks such as those mentioned above can apply for project funding through the Arts Decree. Outside the policy field of Culture, we could mention the support schemes of [Flanders Investment & Trade](#) (see also 3.5.1) that are applicable to international entrepreneurial activities in the CCI, such as participating in foreign art or design fairs.

Next to funding schemes that 'follow the actor', we could also refer to those mentioned in 1.4.1 as relevant for supporting international cooperation by cultural professionals and organisations — such as funding by the [Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs](#) or within the context of bi-lateral relationships. Here, the goals and geographical reach of projects are more strictly defined and fit into specific government strategies.

Current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) has mentioned (policies aimed at) internationalisation as a priority in his policy statements on arts and culture.<sup>[3]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of international cooperation in the arts in Flanders and Brussels, see Janssens, Joris. 2018. [\(Re\)framing the International. On new ways of working internationally in the arts](#). Brussel: Kunstenpunt. For facts and figures on international activities by artists and arts organisations, see Janssens, Joris, Simon Leenknecht, and Tom Ruetten, eds. 2018. [Cijferboek Kunsten 2018](#). Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 33-178.

<sup>[2]</sup> VLEVA (see 1.4.2) provides an [overview](#) of EU funding measures in which players from Flanders and Brussels were recently honoured.

<sup>[3]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 28-31; Jambon, Jan. 2020. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten', 15-16.

## 2. Current cultural affairs

### 2.1. Key developments

A number of issues have been the subject of debate in and on the cultural field in Flanders and Brussels in the past years. General issues include the socio-economic position of artists and cultural workers (see 2.3), the impact of digitization on the workings of the arts and cultural sector (see 2.4), the position of people with culturally diverse background in the field of culture (see 2.5.1), gender inequality and harassment (see 2.5.5), equal access to culture (see 2.5.1, 2.5.6, and 2.6), questions of ecological sustainability (see 2.8), and questions of funding for arts and culture (see 2.3, 2.7, and 2.9). It should be noted that certain topics receive more or different attention in the different sectors within the cultural field. The issues at stake are discussed throughout section 2, as well as the (varying) interest and initiatives of cultural policy makers with regard to these topics.

Issues that are more specifically related to the workings of particular sectors within the cultural field are discussed throughout section 3.

### 2.2. Cultural rights and ethics

The [Belgian Constitution](#) guarantees a number of fundamental rights for Belgian citizens, some of which are relevant in the light of the discussions in the following sections (see also 4.1.1). These include:

- All citizens are equal, which comprises the equality between men and women (art. 10). Discrimination is prohibited (art. 11).
- The freedom of expression (art. 19) and the freedom of press. Censorship is prohibited (art. 25).
- The right to an existence worthy of human dignity (art. 23), which explicitly includes the right to fair working conditions (1°) and the right to cultural development (5°).
- The freedom of education (art. 24).
- The freedom of language use (art. 30).

Cultural policy (see 1.1 and 4.2) and educational policy (see 2.5.1 and 5.1) are in the first place competences of the Communities (see also art. 127 and 130 of the Constitution). Language policies have been subject to a long history of reform, which has led to separate language areas with separate regulations that further stipulate language usage (see 2.5.4 and 4.1.8). Equal opportunities policies are devised on different government levels (see 2.5.1, 2.5.5, 2.5.6, and 2.6). The article of the Constitution on non-discrimination (art. 11) is the basis of the Culture Pact (see 4.1.2).

### 2.3. Role of artists and cultural professionals

The socio-economic position of artists — and by proxy, of cultural professionals in similar working conditions — has been a prominent subject of debate in the cultural field in Flanders and Brussels over the past years (and will probably continue to be so in the coming years, as the COVID-19 crisis reinvigorated the debate).<sup>[1]</sup> Extensive research<sup>[2]</sup> — conducted with government support — has given insight into the working conditions of artists in Flanders and Brussels. Their situation is often one of multiple job holding, a combination of different social

security schemes, informal and short-term labour agreements, and wages that are lower than the average — conditions that are still very different from those of the majority of working people in Belgium.

The role of organisations and governments in creating these conditions is often called into question. Criticism towards the government is recurrently directed at the budget for project funding for artists or the regulations for artists in the social security framework. With regard to cultural organisations, the question of applying fair practices is raised — which include fair payment, decent working time, transparency, sustainable practices etc. The debate on fair practices intersects with other issues at stake, as some voices point out that the precarious nature of the described working conditions is deepened by (e.g.) gender inequality (see 2.5.5) and structural racism (see 2.5.1; this has led to criticism of silencing and (implicit) censorship of non-white artistic voices). In the wake of these debates, a number of charters, model agreements, and initiatives to raise awareness of fair practices were launched from within the cultural sector itself. Recent examples include [Juist is Juist](#), the [Fair Arts Almanac](#), or [Engagement](#).

This takes place within a context of a cultural policy that has rather provided outlines than specific rules on how to implement fair practices. Since its reform in 2013, the [Arts Decree](#) mentions the application of collective labour agreements (art. 51; see 4.1.5) and “attention to a correct remuneration for artists” (art. 23 and 28) as prerequisites for receiving funding. It does not, however, provide a detailed definition of “correct remuneration”. Former minister of Culture Sven Gatz (2014-2019) put “strengthening the socio-economic position of artists” as a priority in his arts policy and would see to it that funded organisations sufficiently support artists. At the same time, he stated that correct remuneration of artists is a nuanced story and an ambition (“betrachting”) for organisations.<sup>[3]</sup>

Players in the cultural field are seen by policy makers as active partners in achieving fair practices. In preparing his Action Plan against harassment and abuse in the cultural field and media (see 2.5.5.), Gatz organised round-table discussions with associations, intermediary organisations, and labour unions from the cultural field.<sup>[4]</sup> Current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024) mentions cooperation with cultural players and initiatives in his Strategic Vision Statement on the Arts. In his goal of ameliorating the socio-economic position of artists, for example, he wishes to investigate if guidelines on fair practices provided by Juist is Juist could be adapted for the criteria for funding. Jambon’s vision hints at a more specified set of rules for implementing fair practices than was previously the case. Another example of this is the plan of devising a matrix for remunerating visual artists.<sup>[5]</sup>

Jambon also announced to enhance support schemes for artists (in contrast to the cuts at the beginning of his term, see 7.1.3). Budgets for project funding and grants in the arts have fluctuated from year to year — with lower budgets causing protest among arts professionals. The minister now wishes to reserve a specific share of the government expenditure on the arts for project funding and grants.<sup>[6]</sup> The largest part of the arts budget goes to multi-year funding for organisations. Among these, the seven major art institutions (‘kunstinstituten’) receive a substantial part – which has steadily increased over the years, compared to the budget for other organisations (see 1.3.3). Jambon plans to provide some of the latter the opportunity to become a ‘core institution’ (‘kerninstelling’), a new category of funding, similar to the existing major art institutions (see also 2.9).<sup>[7]</sup> This has led to concern among arts professionals that (if the overall budget for the arts will not rise) the available funding for other organisations will shrink considerably.<sup>[8]</sup> The future core institutions will also sign a management agreement with the Flemish government. This system is already in place for the major art institutions and implies that these organisations can receive official assignments from the government. This

means a larger part of the publicly funded arts field (which will also represent a substantial part of the overall budget for the arts) will come into a more direct relationship with their funding government.

The regulations for artists in the social security framework (the ‘kunstenarsstatuut’, see 4.1.3) are more than once referred to in vision statements by ministers of Culture as being important.<sup>[9]</sup> These regulations, however, are Federal policy matters. If a Flemish minister of Culture wishes to impact these regulations, this would require — as Jambon proposed in his policy memorandum<sup>[10]</sup> — negotiation with the Federal Government (see also 1.2.6).

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<sup>[1]</sup> For an overview, see Hesters, Delphine. 2019. *D.I.T. (Do It Together). The position of the artist in today's art world*. Kunstenpocket 3. Brussel: Kunstenpunt; Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 149-165.

<sup>[2]</sup> Notably Siongers, Jessy, Astrid Van Steen, and John Lievens. 2016. *Loont passie? Een onderzoek naar de sociaaleconomische positie van professionele kunstenaars in Vlaanderen*. Ghent University; Siongers, Jessy, Mart Willekens, Lucas Pissens, and John Lievens. 2018. *Wie heeft het gemaakt? Een onderzoek naar de sociaaleconomische positie van architecten en designers in Vlaanderen*. Ghent University.

<sup>[3]</sup> Gatz, Sven. 2015. ‘Strategische Visienota Kunsten. Naar een dynamisch, divers en slagkrachtig kunstenlandschap in Vlaanderen’, 33-35.

<sup>[4]</sup> Gatz, Sven. 2018. ‘Actieplan Grensoverschrijdend gedrag in de cultuur en audiovisuele sector’. Departement Cultuur, Jeugd en Media van de Vlaamse overheid, 3-4.

<sup>[5]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. ‘Strategische Visienota Kunsten’, 12-13.

<sup>[6]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. ‘Strategische Visienota Kunsten’, 6-7. The size of the share of expenditure on project funding and grants is yet to be defined at the time of writing.

<sup>[7]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. ‘Strategische Visienota Kunsten’, 8.

<sup>[8]</sup> See for example [the critique of the ‘Alden-Biesen Group’](#), a group of arts professionals called together by minister Jambon to reflect on the plans for reforming the Arts Decree.

<sup>[9]</sup> E.g. Anciaux, Bert. 2004. ‘Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009’, 9; Gatz, Sven. 2014. ‘Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur’, 21; —. 2015. ‘Strategische Visienota Kunsten. Naar een dynamisch, divers en slagkrachtig kunstenlandschap in Vlaanderen’, 34.

<sup>[10]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. ‘Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024’, 29.

## 2.4. Digital policy and developments

Digitisation has had a profound impact on the functioning of the cultural field in Flanders and Brussels. It has especially received attention in relation to sectors where new technologies have disrupted the traditional

functioning of value chains, such as the music and the audiovisual sector (see resp. 3.5.3 and 3.5.4). When summarising the debate on digitisation and cultural sectors<sup>[1]</sup>, we can roughly discern the following issues:

- An intensifying attention economy: the creation and dissemination of culture has been drastically democratized thanks to the possibilities of digital technologies. This ensures that many providers of culture are active in the digital domain, each demanding attention for their cultural practice.
- A value gap between the providers of digital technologies and the many (cultural) players who use them. Those providers (such as big tech companies) can generate large revenues through the long tail of individual actions in the digital domain (revenues that do not flow proportionally to those cultural players) and develop into power factors with a problematic relationship to existing ethical and legal frameworks.
- Inequality in digital skills: the way in which cultural practices accumulate meaning and significance can strongly depend on the extent to which digital technologies are used to create and disseminate those cultural practices. Building digital skills is therefore an important part of the workings and professionalization of players in the cultural field.
- (A lack of) digital maturity: the choice for digital technology is not always easy and innocent in a context where, on the one hand, there is an almost unlimited supply of digital technology that promises solutions to all kinds of problems and, on the other hand, technological companies have created monopolies of dubious size. A widely supported vision of how such choices can be deliberately made, is still largely lacking in the cultural field.

Digitisation is a recurring topic in policy statements of consecutive ministers of Culture. In previous terms, Joke Schauvliege (2009-2014) and Sven Gatz (2014-2019) have devoted strategic policy goals to this subject.<sup>[2]</sup> Gatz also published a [vision memorandum](#) on “cultural policy in the digital era” (2018).<sup>[3]</sup> Both Schauvliege and Gatz advocated a thorough digitisation of cultural sectors and linked them with goals such as achieving innovation, conserving cultural heritage, and enhancing participation to the cultural offer. These statements show a concern with the intensifying attention economy and the issue of digital skills. In stressing the importance of digital transformation and innovation, however, they largely ignored the issues of digital maturity and the value gap between tech players and the cultural field.

Similar to his predecessors, current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024) — who is also minister of ICT — stresses the need for digital transformation and innovation.<sup>[4]</sup> Intermediary organisations [memoo](#), [Cultuurconnect](#), and [publiq](#) — all funded by the Flemish government — are chosen as partners in implementing this.

Memoo supports the digital archive operations of cultural, media and government organisations (e.g. by digitizing and managing archive content and sharing expertise on this subject; see also 3.1) and is the recent merger of three non-profit organisations (Lukas, PACKED, and VIAA) that each provided different digital services to the cultural field.

The services, workshops, research projects, and network of Cultuurconnect are focused on tackling the digital challenges of public libraries, culture centres, and community centres. One of their projects is the development of a single digital library system throughout Flanders (which started under Gatz, see also 3.2). The organisation was formed in 2016 through the merging of Bibnet and Locus. Whereas the latter provided support for local cultural policy in general, the focus of Cultuurconnect is primarily restricted to digital issues.

Publiq aims to stimulate participation to cultural and other leisure time activities through communication,



marketing and information services. Their services include an online database for announcing events and managing electronic event passes (see also 6.1). Publiq is the merger of the former Cultuurnet Vlaanderen and CJP (Cultural Youth Passport).

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<sup>[1]</sup> For a summary of the debate on digitisation and the arts in Flanders and Brussels, see Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 133-137.

<sup>[2]</sup> Joke. 2009. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2009-2014', 15-16; Gatz, Sven. 2014. 'Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur', 33-35.

<sup>[3]</sup> In the wake of this vision memorandum, new residency programs for digital arts and culture and [an online tool](#) for assessing the digital competences in organisations were launched.

<sup>[4]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 27.

## 2.5. Cultural and social diversity

### 2.5.1. NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

In 2016, one out of five inhabitants of the Flemish Region is of 'foreign' origin.<sup>[1]</sup> In the Brussels-Capital Region, this amounts to seven out of ten. In the Flemish Region, the foreign origin lies in most cases (23%) in one of the neighbouring countries. EU-citizens make up 45% of inhabitants of foreign origin. In the Brussels-Capital Region, people with roots in another EU country represent 40%. When looking at the countries of origin, links can be made with historical and recent labour migration (e.g. Italy, Morocco, Turkey, Poland, Romania), Brussels as capital of Europe and as headquarters of NATO (attracting expats from the EU and the rest of the world), and Belgium's colonialism (Congo, Burundi, Rwanda).

These statistics indicate that society in Flanders and Brussels is very culturally diverse. Debates on topics such as structural racism — recently reinvigorated by cases of police brutality in Belgium and the international Black Lives Matter movement —, the role of Belgians and Flemings in colonial repression and its repercussions — especially in light of the sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the former Belgian Colony that gave birth to the Democratic Republic of the Congo —, or migration — elections in 2019 were (again) a success for the radical right — have demonstrated that the position of people with culturally diverse backgrounds in Flemish society is a far from uncontested matter. Cultural affairs are central to these debates, as is shown by, for example, the controversies surrounding the ubiquitous public monuments of Leopold II, museums with collections of looted art (see 3.1), or a number of recent books, documentaries, and theatre plays on the colonial history of Belgium.

Equal opportunities policies in Belgium (see also 2.5.5, 2.5.6, and 2.6) include strategies towards equality for citizens with a culturally diverse background. (Coordinated) actions are taken from within different levels and areas, including the [Flemish policy field of Equal Opportunities](#). In the area of Culture, ministers have recurrently devised policies on the related topic of interculturalisation ('interculturaliseren'). These have focused on making participation, personnel, and programming more culturally diverse. Bert Anciaux (2004-2009) launched an [Action Plan](#) for interculturalisation in Culture, Youth, and Sport (2006) with a top-down approach that made use



of quotas and the earmarking of resources.<sup>[2]</sup> During Anciaux's term, the Participation Decree also came into effect (see 6.1). By contrast, Joke Schauvliege (2009-2014) took a bottom-up approach by encouraging cultural organisations to sign a declaration of commitment to cultural diversity. In 2013, cultural diversity was embedded in the [Arts Decree](#) as criterion for funding (see esp. art. 28 and 88) — something which was also applied in other cultural decrees. Successor Sven Gatz (2014-2019) acknowledged the importance of cultural diversity in his policy memorandum.<sup>[3]</sup> No specific policy frameworks were developed: for Gatz, attention for people with a culturally diverse background was rather a principle that permeated different policy matters.

A number of (funded) organisations in the field of Culture devise projects on intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in participation, personnel, and programming. These include [Dēmos](#) (see 6.1), the [Minority Forum](#) — who will change their vision and name in 2021 —, socio-cultural organisations working on topics related to social and cultural diversity (see 6.4), the centres of expertise (see 7.2.1), and the funds for subsistence security (see 7.2.2).

There are few numbers available on the diversity of the labour force and public of arts and culture in Flanders and Brussels. However, a range of voices have uttered critiques of both being predominantly white and definitely not free of (structural) racism.<sup>[4]</sup> One of the issues in the debate centres around the notion of 'interculturalisation' and the (outcome of the) strategies used to achieve it. Critics point out that interculturalisation often means that people with a culturally diverse background are viewed as 'the Other', for whom a special place in the regular workings of the sector is reserved, but who is at the same time recuperated in a dominant discourse, pigeonholed, and silenced. The (predominantly white) power structures that existed before remain unchallenged. In this context, the notion of 'decolonisation' is now frequently used, as a way to challenge the dominant narrative and denote that power and resources should be righteously shared with or ceded to artists and cultural workers with a culturally diverse background.<sup>[5]</sup>

"Meerstemmigheid" ('multivocality') is another notion that has popped up in the debate. It calls for a dominant (white) cultural discourse to be replaced by a multitude of voices being represented. "Meerstemmigheid" is also a topic in the Strategic Vision Statement of minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024), which stated that "all voices should be heard, [...] also those deemed unacceptable".<sup>[6]</sup> Though applicable to the debate on diversity and decolonisation, cultural policy documents of the current term are — in contrast to previous terms — largely devoid of direct references to these subjects.

Some recent discussions have revealed frictions in the relation between the (cultural) policy makers in power and the topic of cultural diversity. One example is the controversy surrounding the Carnival of Aalst, an annual satirical carnival parade in the city of Aalst that was removed from the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The UNESCO Secretariat received complaints on an act of a carnival group, which was considered anti-Semitic, and judged by UNESCO as 'crossing the red line'. After drafting a decision for removal, the Secretariat received an official announcement from Belgium — on the initiative of the City of Aalst (whose mayor is a political compatriot of Jambon) — with the wish to withdraw the carnival parade from the List itself. They stated that Aalst carnival prefers to retain their freedom of expression over having an UNESCO listing.<sup>[7]</sup>

Another example of recent frictions between policy makers and cultural workers concerns the funding of socio-cultural organisations. Following Jambon's policy memorandum on Culture<sup>[8]</sup>, a [proposal](#) was handed in for changing the Decree that arranges the support schemes for these organisations. The change implied that

organisations that “withdraw in ethnic-cultural identity” (“terugplooiën op etnisch-culturele identiteit”) could no longer be eligible for funding. Though no specific names were mentioned, some organisations felt targeted and the socio-cultural sector and opposition parties protested against the proposed changes and the short period in which these were to be implemented. This event led to a special procedure via the Federal Parliament. The proposal was eventually adopted, but the implementation will take longer than first envisioned.<sup>[9]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Noppe, Jo, Myriam Vanweddigen, Gerlinde Doyen, Karen Stuyck, Yinte Feys, and Philippe Buysschaert. 2018. ‘[Migratie- en integratiemonitor 2018](#)’. Brussel: Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur van de Vlaamse Overheid/Statistiek Vlaanderen, 131-148. “Persons of foreign origin” here denotes people with a non-Belgian nationality, Belgians born abroad, and Belgians with one or more parents with foreign birth nationality. Note that third generation descendants of people with foreign origin are not included.

<sup>[2]</sup> Anciaux’s Action Plan was evaluated in 2010. [The report](#) showed that implementing its regulations has proven to be difficult for organisations in Culture, Youth, and Media.

<sup>[3]</sup> Gatz, Sven. 2014. ‘[Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur](#)’, 36-38

<sup>[4]</sup> See, for example, Aziz, Rachida. 2017. *Niemand zal hier slapen vannacht*. Berchem: EPO; and Lamrabet, Rachida. 2017. *Zwijg, allochtoon!* Berchem: EPO. For an overview of research and debate on cultural diversity in the arts in Flanders and Brussels, see: Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. [Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019](#). Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 127-133.

<sup>[5]</sup> See, for example, the issue of cultural magazine *Rekto:Verso* on “[Dekoloniseren](#)”; the [brochure of Dēmos](#) on “redistributing power”; or the writings of Joachim Ben Yakoub (e.g. Ben Yakoub, Joachim, and Wouter Hillaert. 2018. ‘(Witte) instellingen: van congoliseren naar dekolonisering’. [rektoverso.be](#). 23 March 2018).

<sup>[6]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. ‘[Strategische Visienota Kunsten](#)’, 5. The original sentence in Dutch states: “Alle stemmen moeten aan bod komen, ook degene [...] die we onaanvaardbaar vinden.”

<sup>[7]</sup> UNESCO Belgium published an [article](#) with an overview of the course of events. [A report on the case](#) was published by UNIA, the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism.

<sup>[8]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. ‘[Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024](#)’, 23.

<sup>[9]</sup> Advocacy organisation De Federatie published an [overview of the events](#).

## 2.5.2. DIVERSITY EDUCATION

Both culture and education are competences of the Flemish Community, but each resides under a different policy area and government department (see 5.1). Compulsory education is subsumed under the [Ministry of Education and Training](#) and is subject to attainment targets, which constitute a binding framework on what to teach. These [attainment goals](#) are currently in a process of reform, but in both the old and new versions there is attention for social and cultural diversity and intercultural competences. These are aimed at facilitating the recognition and appreciation of (cultural) diversity and at learning how to live together and cooperate within a

democratic society. Although they constitute a binding framework, attainment goals still offer schools a large degree of freedom. As a result, the ways in which the topic of social and cultural diversity is implemented in the curriculum can vary among schools.

The Ministry of Education offers training and information sessions for school teams on inclusion and diversity. Schools can also apply for project support by [Kruit](#), an expertise organisation on global citizenship education (funded within the federal policy field of Development Cooperation). Social and cultural diversity can also be the topic of cultural education projects (in which, for example, schools collaborate with cultural organisations, see 5.2).

Attention for diversity is not limited to the curriculum: there are also policies aimed at achieving equal access to schooling for pupils in different socio-economic situations (the ‘[GOK](#)’-policies). Next to these, pupils that have specific needs related to disabilities can take courses in a dedicated network of schools (the special educational needs education). Since 2017, these pupils have the right to register in ‘regular’ schools. The legal framework that arranges these rights and the consequent support for schools (the ‘[M-Decree](#)’) is currently being revised. It should be noted that Dutch is the compulsory language for teaching most courses in schools (see 2.5.4). The Flemish education system is primarily monolingual, with special programmes for Dutch language acquisition (such as the reception classes for non-Dutch speaking newcomers or ‘[OKAN](#)’).

Despite the attention for social and cultural diversity in the curriculum and in regulations on access to education, research has shown that socio-economic and ethnic inequality is an issue in the Flemish education system, with high performance gaps between students, tightly linked to one’s background.<sup>[1]</sup> Researchers have also criticised the eurocentrist character of history education in practice.<sup>[2]</sup> In light of the latter, academics have spoken out against the plan of the Flemish government of introducing a Flemish canon in education and integration policies, which is argued to enforce the eurocentric approach.<sup>[3]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> See, for example, the research of education specialist [Orhan Agirdag](#).

<sup>[2]</sup> Van Nieuwenhuysse, Karel, and Marjolein Wilke. 2020. ‘History education in Belgium/ Flanders since 1945 between a national and a global scope: whose past, what for, and for whom?’ [Bulletin du CREAS](#) 7: 65–76.

<sup>[3]</sup> The idea of introducing a canon is mentioned, among others, in the coalition agreement of the current Flemish government (Vlaamse Regering. 2019. ‘[Regeerakkoord 2019-2024](#)’, 17, 21, 25-26, 107) and in the policy memorandum of minister of Culture Jan Jambon (—). 2019. ‘[Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024](#)’, 15). For comments by historians and other academics on the idea and use of a canon, see e.g. [this open letter](#). For a defence from the side of policy makers, see [here](#).

### 2.5.3. MEDIA PLURALISM AND CONTENT DIVERSITY

In Belgium, Media is a competence of the Communities, with each having its own legal framework for media and its own media regulator. In the Flemish Community, Media is a separate policy field from Culture, of which Benjamin Dalle (2019-2024) is the sitting minister for Flanders (in the previous term, Sven Gatz was both minister of Culture and Media).

The independent [Flemish Regulator of the Media](#) monitors media concentration, but does not have the authority to take regulatory action. The Flemish government subsidizes the [Pascal Decroos Fund](#), which gives grants to projects in investigative journalism. The Vlaamse Vereniging voor Journalisten (VVJ) is an advocacy and support organisation for journalists. In 2019, they established an [online complaints office](#) for cases of aggression against journalists. The VVJ is also one of the initiators of the Council for Journalism (RVDJ), an independent body for self-regulation in the Flemish press. [Mediawijs](#) is the expertise centre on media and digital literacy. Media literacy is also a topic in the curriculums of schools as it is featured in the legally binding attainment goals of the Flemish education system (see 5.1).

Next to policies on the Flemish level, we should mention that the [Belgian Constitution](#) guarantees freedom of expression (art. 19) and freedom of press (art. 25; see also 2.2 and 4.1.1). As a consequence, people are free to carry out journalistic activities and can call themselves a 'journalist' as they like. Professional journalists, however, are protected by law and permissions to carry out the profession are granted by an official [commission](#).

Media industries in Flanders have developed largely independent from those in the other parts of Belgium and constitute a small market compared to neighbouring countries. There is one Flemish Public Broadcaster ([VRT](#)), which has radio, television and online services. Together with four private media companies, VRT owns a majority of radio, television, and print (newspapers and magazines) media in Flanders.<sup>[1]</sup> The most read online news media are also owned by the companies among these 'big five'. Next to this, the Flemish public has access to a broad range of local media (see also table 1 in 1.3.2) and media outlets from the other Communities and other countries.

88% of people in Flanders consults news on a daily basis, mostly through (respectively) television, radio, and smartphone. Classic media remain a stronghold, with 'new' media such as streaming services often combined with more traditional media consumption ('cord cutting' is for example rare).<sup>[2]</sup> In 2020, [Streamz](#) was launched as a Flemish 'alternative' for foreign video streaming services. It was initiated by two of the four large private media companies. VRT was prompted by the Flemish government to participate in the project by delivering content.<sup>[3]</sup>

VRT produces its own audiovisual content, but also participates in independent productions — as is stipulated in its current management agreement with the Flemish government. One of the strategic goals in this agreement states that VRT must encourage cultural participation and must pay attention to a diversity of artistic and cultural expressions.<sup>[4]</sup> A new management agreement is due for 2021. In preparatory texts, "stimulating Flemish creativity" is put forth as one of the main topics and information and culture are mentioned as priorities in the offer of the VRT.<sup>[5]</sup> Audiovisual media productions such as television series can also receive support from the Flanders Audiovisual Fund ([VAF](#); see 3.5.3).

According to the 2020 edition of the [Media Pluralism Monitor](#) (MPM2020), Belgium as a whole (thus comprising all three Communities) has a relatively positive score for media pluralism. Basic protection (related to the status of journalists, safeguards for freedom of expression, the independence of regulatory bodies, etc.) and political independence (of news production, distribution, and access) are both low risk. The MPM2020 signals a medium risk with regard to media plurality. As described above, there is a significant (cross-media) concentration of players, which own the majority of news media outlets on the Flemish market. The threat is also real for online platforms: use of social media and online search engines is well-established in Belgium, but the companies behind these media do not provide the necessary transparency. Neither Federal nor regional regulations

contain provisions that account for the non-economic threats associated with a highly concentrated media market. Commercial and owner influence over editorial content form a potential threat, as social protection for journalists and editors against these influences is only accounted for through self-regulation and deontological codes.

Social inclusiveness of the Belgian media also constitutes a medium risk according to the MPM2020. The report notes that protection of access to media for minority groups is based on rather generic and abstract anti-discrimination regulation, which might pose a problem for effectively implementing this access. Public service media do a better job than private players in providing access to media for people with disabilities. Revision and correct implementation of policies on point remain an issue. With regard to gender balance, the MPM2020 concludes that women are underrepresented in higher positions (see 2.5.5 for similar conclusions on the arts), especially in those related to production of media content. Women are still underrepresented in news media, both as 'news subjects' and as 'reporters or presenters', across all media.

The MPM2020 presents a separate discussion of media pluralism in the online environment. Here, the indicators of media plurality and political independence are highlighted as medium risks. It signals the lack of control mechanisms and knowledge on digital native news media (which do not fall under the obligations of transparency towards media regulators, but whose audience reach is rather limited) as a potential problem, for example with regard to relations with political groupings. The role of social media and online platforms as intermediary for consulting news (59% of Belgians access news through these) entails a problem for the traditional advertising revenue model of media companies.

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<sup>[1]</sup> See the [2019 report on media concentration](#) by the Flemish Regulator of the Media.

<sup>[2]</sup> Vandendriessche, Karel, and Lieven De Marez. 2020. 'IMEC Digimeter 2019. Digitale mediatrends in Vlaanderen'. Leuven: IMEC, 48-49, 72-74.

<sup>[3]</sup> Vlaamse Regering. 2019. 'Regeerakkoord 2019-2024', 136.

<sup>[4]</sup> VRT. 2016. 'Overeenkomst Vlaamse Overheid - VRT', resp. 32 and 17.

<sup>[5]</sup> VRT. 2019. 'Vlaanderen mee-maken. Visietekst ter voorbereiding van de beheersovereenkomst 2021-2025', resp. 9 and 6.

## 2.5.4. LANGUAGE

Language, language communities, and language areas are fundamental to understanding the evolution of the Belgian State and the policies that govern its society. One important factor in this evolution is the striving for language rights for Dutch speakers since the inception of the Belgian State in 1830, when French was the only official language. These rights were gradually acquired throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Note that this did not result in a bi- or multilingual state: different language areas and communities were codified into official policies (see also 4.1.8). In 1962, a language border was defined, dividing Belgium into Dutch-, French-, and German-speaking areas and one bi-lingual area (i.e. Brussels-Capital, where French and Dutch are the official languages).

With the exception of a number of municipalities with special language rights for French-speaking residents<sup>[1]</sup>, Dutch is the official language in the Dutch-speaking area. People are free to use the language they wish, but there are restrictions that are governed by laws. These stipulate language usage in schools, in law suits, at the workplace, or by public authorities. Non-native speakers of Dutch are for example allowed to register at Dutch-speaking schools, but the compulsory language for most courses is Dutch. Another example: the mastery of Dutch is not an official prerequisite for cultural professionals to apply for funding from the Flemish government, but most application procedures are strictly in Dutch.

General statistics on language use in the whole of Belgium or Flanders are not available. Data on 2020 provided by [Statbel](#) show that 58% of the Belgian population lives in the Flemish Region (which excludes the bi-lingual Brussel-Capital Region). However, statistics on persons with a culturally diverse background (see 2.5.1) suggest that a range of languages other than Dutch is spoken by significant parts of the population of Flanders and Brussels. There is data from the [Ministry of Education and Training](#) on the home language of pupils in Dutch-speaking schools. These show that in 2018-2019 about 22% of pupils in nursery and primary education and 18% of those in secondary education speak another language than Dutch at home — in both cases an increase compared to previous years. With regard to the Brussels region, there is the periodic ‘Taalbarometer’-survey on language use and knowledge. [Results](#) have shown that over a 100 different languages are spoken here. The [most recent edition](#) (2018) revealed that the use of Dutch as home language has remained stable, but that general knowledge of Dutch is waning, which has caused [concern among Flemish politicians](#).

Throughout its history, the Flemish government has signed multiple international cooperation agreements related to culture. These feature agreements with countries or regions where (a form of) Dutch is (or was) spoken, such as South Africa and especially the Netherlands. Section 1.4.1 discusses the international cooperation on culture between Flanders and the Netherlands and the organisations that play an active role in these relationships, such as [Taalunie](#), [deBuren](#), and [De Brakke Grond](#). Current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) — member of the Flemish-Nationalist party NV-A — wishes to deepen the cultural and linguistic relations with the Netherlands.<sup>[2]</sup> The mentioned organisations are named as partners in achieving this goal. In this context, the minister also envisions more cooperation between the funds for literature and audiovisual production from Flanders and those from the Netherlands (see resp. 3.5.2 and 3.5.3).

The [Flemish Sign Language](#) is a language in its own right and has its own legal framework (see also 2.5.6 and 4.1.8).

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<sup>[1]</sup> There are twelve municipalities with linguistic facilities or ‘faciliteitengemeenten’, six in the Flemish periphery around Brussels and six along the border with the French-speaking area.

<sup>[2]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. ‘[Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024](#)’, 28-29.

## 2.5.5. GENDER

In 2016, cultural magazine [Rekto:Verso](#) published a special issue on gender inequality in the arts. Together with results of [research on the working conditions of artists](#) (see 2.3) that revealed a gender pay gap in artistic professions, debate among professionals and policy makers was sparked. Then minister of Culture Sven Gatz (2014-2019) ordered further research on gender inequality in creative sectors. The debate was reinvigorated in



the wake of the #MeToo movement in 2017 and anonymous testimonials about gender-based and sexual harassment and gender discrimination that named prominent television producers and artists from Belgium. Gatz ordered a [second survey](#) in 2018, focused on harassment and abuse in the fields of culture and media. In the same year, the BelgianArtPrize (see 7.2.3) was cancelled, after a petition was launched against the all-male and all-white selection of nominated artists — a sign that the debate on gender inequality often intersects with other forms of inequality (see also 2.3 and 2.5.1).

The mentioned research on working conditions and gender inequality<sup>[1]</sup> shows that among artistic professions, especially music, film, and architecture are predominantly male sectors. In other artistic sectors, the gender balance is fifty-fifty, unless age is taken into account: men are overrepresented in the older age groups and there is a larger share of women in the younger categories. Among older age groups, the gender pay gap is larger. Other surveys point at gender inequality in the decision-making positions in arts organisations funded by the Flemish government. In 2017, a mere 18% of arts organisations with multi-year funding had a management board that was all-female — compared to 53% with an all-male board. In 29% of the cases, there was a mixed-sex management board. Among the organisations receiving most funding, management functions are predominantly male.<sup>[2]</sup> Two years later, [another survey](#) looked at the boards of directors of these arts organisations. In 71% of the examined cases, the board of directors consisted of a majority of men. In 18%, there was a preponderance of women and in 11% the balance was fifty-fifty.

The mentioned research on gender-based and sexual harassment and abuse in the fields of culture and media concluded that 71% of female respondents were, throughout their career, once or more the victim of behaviour deemed as harassment. Among male respondents, the share was one in three. 50% of female respondents reported an incident in the preceding year — compared to one in five male respondents. People with artistic or technical jobs in the cultural field and media are more often confronted with harassment at work. Especially young people, at the start of their career, and freelancers or people with short-term contracts are vulnerable. The perpetrators of harassment are in most cases superiors in rank, which links to a gendered power imbalance. 30% of all respondents indicate that reporting and discussing harassment at their work is (very) difficult.

Gender equality is often part of equal opportunities policies in Belgium. Legal frameworks on this matter reside with different government levels and policy areas. (Coordinated) actions for establishing gender equality are taken from within these different levels and areas.<sup>[3]</sup> General legislation on the Flemish level that is relevant for the area of Culture includes rules that stipulate that a maximum of two thirds of members of governmental advisory bodies (such as the commissions evaluating funding applications) may be of the same sex.<sup>[4]</sup>

In the policy field of Culture, former minister Gatz launched an Action Plan against harassment and abuse ([‘Actieplan Grensoverschrijdend gedrag in de cultuur en audiovisuele sector’](#)) in 2018. Taking into account the results of the mentioned research and round-table discussions with organisations in the cultural field, a set of actions for a three-year period (until 2021) was defined. These focused on promoting and re-enforcing the reporting channels, on raising awareness and sharing knowledge on the subject, and on addressing perpetrators. The actions included setting up training courses for confidential advisors, expanding the team of the [Flemish Ombudsman Service](#) for providing services tailored to the cultural and media sector, and support for the artist-led movement [Engagement](#). Current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) announced to continue the support for the actions until 2021 and evaluate these afterwards.<sup>[5]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> For an overview of (other) research on gender inequality in the arts in Flanders and Brussels, see Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 121-126.

<sup>[2]</sup> Hesters, Delphine, Simon Leenknecht, and Tom Ruetten. 2018. 'Cherchez les femmes. Genderverhoudingen in directies van structureel gesubsidieerde kunstenorganisaties'. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, 389–400. Brussels: Kunstenpunt.

<sup>[3]</sup> The [Vrouwenraad](#) provides an overview of relevant actors and policies on the different government levels in Belgium. Equal Opportunities is a separate policy field among the competences of the Communities. The website of the [team Equal Opportunities](#) of the Flemish government gathers information on equal opportunity policies of the Flemish Community.

<sup>[4]</sup> See Art. III.58 of the [Governance Decree of 7 December 2018](#).

<sup>[5]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 16. For a discussion of the state of affairs of cultural policy on the topic of harassment and abuse anno 2020, see also: Wellens, Nikol. 2020. 'Grenscorrectie'. Kunsten.be. 13 July 2020.

## 2.5.6. DISABILITY

Equal opportunities policies in Belgium (see also 2.5.1, 2.5.5, and 2.6) include strategies towards equality for citizens with both physical and mental disabilities. (Coordinated) actions are taken from within different levels and areas, including the separate [Flemish policy field of Equal Opportunities](#). In the area of Culture, interest from policy makers in the subject has varied. If people with disabilities are mentioned in policy statements, the focus lies on participation to culture.<sup>[1]</sup> Various cultural policy instruments have been devised for this goal, such as the support schemes of the Participation Decree (although the project funding for participation of disadvantaged groups were recently repealed; see 6.1) or subsidies for making cultural infrastructure more accessible (which is one of the priorities of infrastructure funding for 2017-2021, see also 2.8). Relevant support measures on the provincial and local level include passes that grant companions of disabled persons free access at cultural events.

There is a legal framework for [Flemish Sign Language](#) (which is a language in its own right; see 4.1.8), which arranges support for the Expertise Centre for Flemish Sign Language ([VGTC](#)) and for projects that contribute to the establishment of the language.

There are (publicly funded) organisations in arts, cultural heritage, and socio-cultural work for adults (see 6.4) that focus on the position of people with disabilities in arts, culture, and society. Examples include [Autisme Centraal](#), [Doof Vlaanderen](#), [Gezin & Handicap](#), [KAOS](#), [Museum Dr. Ghuislain](#), [Platform K](#), [Sig](#), [Theater Stap](#), [Zicht op Cultuur](#), and others. There are cases of other arts and culture organisations that make efforts to make their offer (more) accessible for visitors with mental or physical disabilities (if not with support from the funding options mentioned above). Despite dedicated organisations and best practices, there is recurring [criticism](#) that access to culture for people with disabilities is far from established in Flanders and Brussels.



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<sup>[1]</sup> Anciaux, Bert. 2004. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009', 7; Schauvliege, Joke. 2009. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2009-2014', 22 and 33.

## 2.6. Culture and social inclusion

(Coordinated) actions for equal opportunities are taken from within different government levels (the Communities, the Federal State, provincial and local authorities) and policy areas in Belgium (including the separate [Flemish policy field of Equal Opportunities](#)). Flemish anti-discrimination policies are aimed at equal opportunities on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, ethnic-cultural background, nationality, sexual orientation, disabilities, health condition, language, socio-economic position, religion and ideology, and other legally defined protected traits of people. Important institutions for realising equal opportunities and combatting discrimination on the Flemish and (inter)federal level are [UNIA](#)<sup>[1]</sup> (see also 2.5.1), the [Flemish Ombudsman Service](#) (see also 2.5.5), and the [Institute for the Equality of Men and Women](#).

Sections 2.5.1, 2.5.5, and 2.5.6 discuss cultural policy initiatives for equal access to culture with regard to (respectively) cultural diversity, gender, and disability. One specific group of citizens not mentioned in previous sections but which has been consistently the subject of attention in cultural policy statements is people in poverty.<sup>[2]</sup> Since 2008, the Participation Decree (see 6.1 for details) provides a legal framework for support measures that aim to enhance access to culture for people in poverty — next to people with a culturally diverse background, people with disabilities, convicts, and families with children. Though some of the funding schemes of the Participation Decree have been repealed over the years, current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) stated he would continue to invest in (some of) these policy instruments.<sup>[3]</sup> Enhancing access to the arts for all people (especially children) in Flanders is one of the priorities of his Strategic Vision Statement on the Arts — and here, collaboration with out-of-school child care or the role of participatory artistic and cultural practices is deemed important (see 5.4).<sup>[4]</sup>

Section 6.4 mentions the different organisations and initiatives from the cultural field that actively engage with civil society, among them organisations discussed in 2.5.1 and 2.5.6. To those mentioned in the previous sections, we could add organisations that work with people in poverty (e.g. [Cie Tartaren](#), [Tutti Fratelli](#), [Unie der Zorgelozen](#)), refugees (e.g. [Globe Aroma](#)), or people (regardless of their background) from local neighbourhoods (e.g. [Bij'De Vieze Gasten](#), [kleinVerhaal](#), [Zinneke](#)).

Participation to culture in Flanders has been monitored since 2004 through the [Participation Survey](#). Section 6.2 summarizes the results of the subsequent surveys, which show correlations with aspects such as age (younger generations participate less in 'highbrow' art such as performing arts, classical music, and museum visits), gender (women participate more, except for pop, rock, blues and jazz concerts), and the level of education (highly educated people participate more in most cultural activities). These surveys could not assess the impact of policy measures on cultural participation in Flanders.<sup>[5]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> In 2019, the current Flemish government decided to end the collaboration with the intergovernmental institute UNIA (see: Vlaamse Regering. 2019. 'Regeerakkoord 2019-2024', 112).

<sup>[2]</sup> Anciaux, Bert. 2004. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009', 46; Schauvliege, Joke. 2009. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2009-2014', 14-15, 22; Gatz, Sven. 2014. 'Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur', 36-37.

<sup>[3]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 14.

<sup>[4]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten', 18-19.

<sup>[5]</sup> Lievens, John, Jessy Siongers, and Hans Waeye, eds. 2015b. *Participatie in Vlaanderen 2. Eerste analyses van de Participatiesurvey 2014*. Leuven: ACCO Uitgeverij, 13-64.

## 2.7. Societal impact of arts

Public debate in Flanders and Brussels about the role of arts and culture in society usually occurs at moments when public support for arts and culture is called into question. Examples are budget cuts in funding for culture (see 7.1.3), concerns about the role of arts and culture in the curriculum of schools (see 5.2), or the allocation of support measures in the wake of the [COVID-19 crisis](#). Diverse arguments (economic, aesthetic, emancipatory, *bildung*-related, etc.) are used to make the case for support.

A number of publicly funded surveys have looked into the different values and roles that arts and culture can assume in a (domain of) society. Examples from recent years include the surveys on the economic impact of cultural and creative industries (see 3.5.1; the [last edition](#) was published in 2019) and the report [De waarde van cultuur](#) ("The Value of Culture", 2014). The latter involved an interdisciplinary team of researchers who explored the existing research on the different values of arts and culture. The report concluded that the most important value of culture is its role in giving meaning to people's lives and their position in society. It also concluded, however, that evidence-based research on exactly this value was missing. The researchers also wrote about the political implications of this value: culture functions as a 'common', and a dynamic and democratic community needs this shared and accessible space, in which meanings can be exchanged, can be discussed, and can lead to dissensus. The report furthermore assessed and summarized the existing evidence on the role of arts and culture in cognitive development, mental and physical health, economic growth, and social cohesion.<sup>[1]</sup>

Ministers of Culture in Flanders have had eyes for the different values arts and culture can assume, which have underpinned their various strategies for support. Bert Anciaux's (2004-2009) interest in culture as a driver for community building<sup>[2]</sup>, for example, can be linked to his policy initiatives on interculturalisation (see 2.5.1). Another example is the particular attention Joke Schauvliege (2009-2014) and Sven Gatz (2014-2019) had for the economic value of arts and culture<sup>[3]</sup>, which is demonstrated by the measures for entrepreneurship and relationships between public and private partners (see 7.3). In policy statements by current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024), we again see specific attention for arts and culture as drivers for community-building and social cohesion (see also 2.6).<sup>[4]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Gielen, Pascal, Sophie Elkhuisen, Quirijn Van den Hoogen, Thijs Lijster, and Hanka Otte. 2014. 'De waarde van cultuur'. Brussel: Onderzoekscentrum Arts in Society (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen), 120-121.

<sup>[2]</sup> Anciaux, Bert. 2004. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009', 13.

<sup>[3]</sup> Schauvliege, Joke. 2009. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2009-2014', 8; Gatz, Sven. 2014. 'Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur', 13.

<sup>[4]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten', 18-19.

## 2.8. Cultural sustainability

At the occasion of COP21 in Paris in 2015, about 450 cultural organisations from Belgium signed an [open letter](#) addressing the authorities to do their best in tackling climate change. The open letter shows that climate change and other issues related to sustainability are deemed important matters among cultural professionals in Flanders and Brussels. There are prime examples of cultural professionals implementing this ecological awareness. These include (subsidized) organisations in arts, architecture, design or socio-cultural work that devise projects in which sustainable practices (with regard to socially just transition, reducing carbon emissions, cradle-to-cradle strategies, green mobility, etc.) are central. Despite these examples, sustainability remains a challenging matter for many other cultural professionals, who find it difficult to reconcile it with their ways of working (such as international touring).<sup>[1]</sup>

When looking at policy statements of ministers of Culture, ecological sustainability is primarily mentioned in relation to cultural infrastructure.<sup>[2]</sup> The exception is former minister Joke Schauvliege (2009-2014) — then also minister of Environment and Nature — who made "initiating eco-culture" a strategic goal during her term.<sup>[3]</sup> In 2010, workshops with cultural professionals gathered around the topics of Schauvliege's strategic goals. The vision paper delivered by the workshop on eco-culture was one of the impetuses for [Pulse](#), a network of individuals and organisations that connects and shares knowledge on sustainable practices in the domains of culture, youth, and media. In 2013, Pulse also started receiving funding from the Flemish government.

In the wake of the Flemish government's commitment to the COP21, Schauvliege's successor, Sven Gatz (2014-2019), commissioned Pulse to create [Cultuurzaam.be](#), a collection of online toolkits that culture professionals can use to make their practice more sustainable. With a financial injection from the Flemish Climate Fund, Gatz redirected the funding schemes of the Cultural Infrastructure Fund (FoCI) to prioritize investments in energy efficient buildings (these priorities are in place until 2021, see also 2.5.6). Special loans for culture and youth organisations to invest in solar power were also made available.

Other pertinent funding schemes in the policy field of Culture include the policies of the Flanders Audiovisual Fund ([VAF](#)) on sustainable film production. Outside the area of Culture, we should mention the Public Waste Agency of Flanders ([OVAM](#)). They have support schemes for sustainable events (which include cultural events) and promote sustainable design projects with their Ecodesign Awards. Local authorities can also be relevant on a policy level with regard to culture and sustainability. Some cities, for example, provide support to their local [Greentrack](#) network. Greentrack networks gather arts organisations that strive for a socially just and sustainable society in Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Bruges, and Courtrai.

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<sup>[1]</sup> See also Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. [Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019](#). Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 138-143; Wellens, Nikol. 2020. 'Klimaatregeling'. Kunsten.be. 17 September 2020.

<sup>[2]</sup> E.g.: Anciaux, Bert. 2004. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009, 19-20; Gatz, Sven. 2014. 'Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur', 28-30; Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 19.

<sup>[3]</sup> Schauvliege, Joke. 2009. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2009-2014', 20.

## 2.9. Other main cultural policy issues

The Arts Decree is the main legislative framework in Flanders and Brussels for supporting the professional arts (see also section 3). It provides open and flexible support schemes for diverse artistic initiatives, which are granted funding on the basis of peer-assessed artistic quality. At the same time, primarily the individual qualities of funding applications are judged. There is no procedure for assessing a 'right' balance between qualified applications. This poses a problem in a context of pressure on public expenditure for the arts (see 7.1.3). If there is not enough funding for all artistic initiatives deemed deserving of subsidies, how to decide on who will eventually get funding? And which balances — between disciplines, between functions, between large, mid-large and small initiatives, between new and old organisations, etc. — should be taken into account when deciding?<sup>[1]</sup>

The Strategic Vision Statement on the Arts of minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024) took up these questions and proposed a reform of the Arts Decree.<sup>[2]</sup> Part of the reform is the plan to incorporate the assessment of balances in the procedures for evaluating funding applications. This should enable to evaluate the ratio between disciplines in arts funding and provide more opportunities for genres that have been previously 'overlooked', such as visual arts (see 3.4), design, or architecture (see 3.5.5).

Another part of the reform of the Arts Decree is a quadripartite division of funding schemes. The different types of project funding and grants will be subsumed in the category of 'dynamic space' (dynamische ruimte) — for which a specific and possibly larger share of government expenditure on arts will be reserved. The existing category of major art institutions (see 1.3.3) will be maintained. The other funding category of multi-year-funding for arts organisations will be split in two. One part will be reserved for subsidies for the 'broad field' ('brede veld') — which will be similar to the existing multi-year support schemes — and another for 'core institutions' ('kerninstellingen') — which will receive longer term support than is currently the case. Similar to the major art institutions, the future core institutions will sign a management agreement with the Flemish government, which implies that these organisations can receive official assignments from the government (see also 2.3). This is (more implicitly) an answer to the question of balances between large, mid-large, and small initiatives — in which the small ones (funded within the 'dynamic space') and larger ones (funded as core or major arts institutions) will most likely get more options.

The latter has led to concern among arts professionals that (if the overall budget for the arts will not rise) a number of important initiatives (in the mid-large range) will no longer receive funding and that the gap between small and large players will become bigger — leaving fewer opportunities for innovation and for the development of artists' careers.<sup>[3]</sup> Another implication of the proposed reform relates to the core institutions signing a management agreement with the Flemish government. This means a larger part of the publicly funded arts field — which will also represent a substantial part of the overall budget for the arts — will come into a more direct relationship with their funding government.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 195-208.

<sup>[2]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten', 6-12. This, in turn, followed the announcement of a number of changes to the regulations and legal frameworks in Jan Jambon's policy memorandum on Culture (—. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 33-34), also including the Decree on Socio-Cultural Work for Adults (see 2.5.1).

<sup>[3]</sup> See for example [the critique of the 'Alden-Biesen Group'](#), a group of arts professionals called together by minister Jambon to reflect on the plans for reforming the Arts Decree.

## 3. Cultural and creative sectors

### 3.1. Heritage

From the policy perspective, heritage in Flanders is divided in cultural heritage (which is part of the policy field of Culture) and immovable heritage (which is part of the policy area of Environment). The former is a competence of the Flemish Community — which means that the sphere of cultural heritage spans the territories of both Flanders and Brussels—, whereas the latter resides under the Regions — which means that the Flemish Region has a different policy on immovable heritage than the Brussels-Capital Region.

Cultural heritage comprises both movable cultural heritage (archive documents, books and manuscripts, works of art, old utensils, etc.) and immaterial heritage (oral traditions, transferable skills and knowledge, community practices, etc.). Museums, archives, heritage libraries, local heritage societies, and other organisations and projects dealing with cultural and immaterial heritage<sup>[1]</sup> receive support from different levels of government, especially the [Flemish Community](#) (mainly through the Cultural Heritage Decree, see 4.2.2) and local authorities.<sup>[2]</sup> The Flemish Community supports [FARO](#) as the independent interface centre for cultural heritage in Flanders. FARO supports organisations and initiatives (see 5.5 and 7.2.1) and organises projects for public outreach, such as the annual [Heritage Day](#). [Memoo](#) is another funded intermediary (see also 2.4). It supports the digital archive operations of cultural, media and government organisations, e.g. by digitizing and managing archive content and sharing expertise on this subject. They are also one of the partners of [TRACKS](#), a network for archive and collection management in the arts.

Until 2018, the provincial governments played an important role in cultural heritage (e.g. through providing digital databases). This level of government, however, has been divested of its cultural competences (see 1.2.4). At the beginning of his term, current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) announced he would invest in the field of cultural heritage.<sup>[3]</sup> Among other measures, this has resulted in an increase of subsidies for organisations funded through the Cultural Heritage Decree.<sup>[4]</sup>

Some Federal institutions hold important collections of (art) historical objects from all over the world, such as the [Art & History Museum](#), [The Royal Museum for Central Africa](#), or the museums mentioned throughout the other subsections of section 3.

Immovable heritage falls under the responsibility of a separate minister of the Flemish government.<sup>[5]</sup> In the Brussels-Capital Region, it is a competence of a Secretary of State of its Regional Government. (For an overview of relevant legislation in both Regions, see 4.2.2.) Immovable heritage refers to monuments, buildings, landscapes, archaeological sites, and nautical heritage in public and private space. The responsibility for maintaining immovable heritage can therefore reside either with public authorities, church authorities, or private persons.<sup>[6]</sup> Flanders Heritage, the Flemish government agency for Immoveable Heritage, provides an [online overview](#) of sites and their legal statuses in the Flemish Region (see also 1.3.2).

[Herita](#) is the main umbrella organisation in the field of immovable heritage in Flanders. They organise the annual '[Open Monumentendag](#)' ('Heritage Day Flanders') in the Flemish Region. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the Department of Cultural Heritage has made [inventories](#) of immovable heritage sites. They also organise the annual '[Open Monumentendagen](#)' ('Heritage Days'). The [Royal Commission for Monuments and Landscapes](#)

provides independent advice on the protection of immovable heritage in the Brussels-Capital Region.

In the wake of debates on the colonialism of Belgium and its lasting effects on culture and society (see also 2.5.1), the presence in public space of memorials and sculptures relating to the colonial occupation of the Congo has become an increasingly problematic issue — the recurring reappropriation of monuments for Leopold II being a case in point. Some local governments have taken steps to dismantle monuments and memorials, which has raised the question if this is the best strategy for handling contested heritage.<sup>[7]</sup> The reopening of The Royal Museum of Central Africa in 2018 re-sparked debate on collections from the colonial period. Issues were raised about the way these collections and their (historical and current) context of racism and repression are represented and about restitution of looted art. Though institutions and politicians have spoken in favour of restitution, a clear legal framework on the matter is still lacking and concrete steps are yet to be taken.<sup>[8]</sup>

Art that was looted during WWII — especially art works originally in provenance of Jewish people — has been on the agenda of politicians several times on both the Federal and the Flemish level.<sup>[9]</sup> A Federal database of stolen art works that can be reclaimed is yet to be finalised.

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<sup>[1]</sup> FARO made an [online overview](#) of organisations and projects dealing with cultural and immaterial heritage in Flanders and Brussels. An [online inventory](#) of immaterial heritage practices is provided by Workshop Intangible Heritage Flanders. See also 1.3.2.

<sup>[2]</sup> Walterus, Jeroen. 2014. *Cijferboek cultureel erfgoed 2012*. Brussels: FARO, 12.

<sup>[3]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 3.

<sup>[4]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleids- en begrotingstoelichting Cultuur. Begrotingsjaar 2020'.

<sup>[5]</sup> Minister of Culture Jambon announced he would collaborate with the minister of Immovable Heritage on certain topics, see: Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 15.

<sup>[6]</sup> In this regard, we should mention [Monumentenwacht](#), an initiative by provincial governments aimed at endorsing the maintenance of immovable heritage.

<sup>[7]</sup> See for example: D'Hamers, Katrijn, and Elien Doesselaere. 2020. 'Van Hun Sokkel Getrokken. Controversiële Standbeelden Onder Vuur'. [faro | Tijdschrift over Cultureel Erfgoed](#), 2020.

<sup>[8]</sup> See, for example: Van Beurden, Jos. 2018. 'De toekomst van koloniale collecties. Nationale of Europese uitdaging?' [faro | tijdschrift over cultureel erfgoed](#), 2018; or the following open letter on the topic: Adam, Ilke, Karel Arnaut, Berber Bevernage, Marnix Beyen, Leen Beyers, Daniël Biltereyst, Joris Capenberghs, et al. 2018. 'Let's talk about colonial collections and restitution'. FARO; or [this statement of The Royal Museum for Central Africa](#). Also note that it took until 2009 for the Belgian State to adopt the UNESCO 1970 convention on the prevention of illicit trade of cultural goods (see 4.2.1).

<sup>[9]</sup> See for example recent discussions in the [Belgian Senate](#) and the [Flemish Parlement](#). See also the [work](#) of journalist Geert Sels on art that was looted in Belgium during WWII.



## 3.2. Archives and libraries

Archives and heritage libraries (i.e. [libraries](#) with valuable historical collections) in Flanders and Brussels are considered part of the domain of cultural heritage as described in 3.1 — thus residing with the Flemish Community. The National Library ([KBR](#)) and the [State Archives](#) are regulated at the Federal level.

Almost every municipality in Flanders and Brussels has a (Dutch-speaking) public library (see also 1.3.2). This is largely a consequence of former legislation that obliged local authorities in Flanders to establish one. The ‘Internal State Reform’ (see 1.2.4) introduced a number of important changes for public libraries. Since 2016, the decision on if and how to organise a library now fully resides with the local authority. Local authorities are also no longer obliged to share data on their libraries with the Flemish government — which still plays a part in knowledge transfer on the topic<sup>[1]</sup>. Since 2018, provincial authorities — which provided support to local libraries, e.g. by supplying digital systems for lending out books — no longer have responsibilities in policy on public libraries. Through the new Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities (see 1.2.4), libraries can apply for funding from the Flemish government for cultural projects on a regional scale.

In 2017, the Flemish government initiated in collaboration with [Cultuurconnect](#) a project on creating a unified library system (‘Eengemaakt Bibliotheeksysteem’ or EBS). This should allow to replace the different local and provincial systems for lending out books with a single digital infrastructure. The project, dubbed [WISE](#), is being piloted throughout 2019-2021. Cultuurconnect supports local governments in tackling digital challenges in their cultural policy. Their services, workshops, research projects, and network are focused on public libraries, culture centres, and community centres (see also 2.4).

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<sup>[1]</sup> A team within the Department of Culture, Youth and Media specialises in ‘[supralocal library policy](#)’. The Flemish government still receives data on public libraries (and culture and community centres) by local authorities, but these are shared on a voluntary basis. These data can be consulted through an [online interface](#).

## 3.3. Performing arts

The Arts Decree (see 4.2.3) is the main legislative framework in Flanders and Brussels for supporting the professional arts. This means the Flemish government is the main body providing funding for the performing arts (theatre, dance, music theatre, multidisciplinary arts, etc.), although local governments sometimes take on an important role (e.g. in funding companies with a local venue infrastructure, such as the city theatres). Playwrights can also apply for support from [Flanders Literature](#), a separate fund for literature (see 3.5.1). The Flemish government supports [Flanders Arts Institute](#) — in which the former Vlaams Theaterinstituut (VTi) merged — as the independent centre of expertise for professional performing arts, visual arts and (classical) music in Flanders. Flanders Arts Institute (see 5.5 and 7.2.1) provides support and networking opportunities for and shares expertise and data with artists and performing arts organisations. Flanders Arts Institute organises the international promotion of arts from Flanders (see also 1.4.3) and — managing a large collection of historical documents and books — takes up a role in performing arts heritage. [CEMPER](#) (which is funded through the Cultural Heritage Decree) is the expert hub for performing arts and musical heritage in Flanders. They collaborate with Flanders Arts Institute and others in [TRACKS](#), a network for archive and collection management



in the arts.

Circus has its own legislative framework, the Circus Decree, providing funding for circus companies, schools, workshops, and the expertise centre [Circuscentrum](#), which offers support to and promotes circus from Flanders. It is also the documentation centre of the Flemish circus sector.

The Federal culture institutions [BOZAR](#) (centre for fine arts) and [La Monnaie/De Munt](#) (the national opera house) should also be mentioned as players in the performing arts field in Flanders and Brussels. On the Federal level, there is also a tax shelter scheme for performing arts (see 4.1.4).

A number of issues have been the topic of debate in the performing arts sector and in public arts policy in the past five years (some of which are aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis).<sup>[1]</sup> These include the precarious position of (performing) artists and the importance of fair practices (see 2.3 and 2.5.5), the position of (large) cultural institutions — a debate that was sparked in 2019 by an open letter of the city theatres of Ghent, Brussels, and Antwerp with the request to the Flemish government for becoming a major art institution (see also 1.3.3)<sup>[2]</sup> —, budget cuts in funding for the arts (see 7.1.3), and the changing conditions for producing and presenting work in Flanders and abroad. The changes in local cultural policy (see 1.2.4) — creating a different context for culture centres, which play a major role in programming performing arts productions (see also 6.4) — and signs that the traditionally strong dissemination of (publicly funded) performing arts throughout Flanders and Brussels has begun to falter<sup>[3]</sup>, has caused concern among arts professionals and organisations. Performing arts from Flanders also have a strong international reputation, which results in intense international collaboration and touring.<sup>[4]</sup> There are signals that this narrative of growth (more transnational collaborations, more stagings abroad) has reached its limits, and that artists are reconfiguring their international practice.<sup>[5]</sup>

The Decree on Amateur Arts (see 6.4) is the policy framework for amateur performing arts on the level of the Flemish Community. It arranges funding for [OPENDOEK](#) and [Danspunt](#), which provide support for amateur artists and associations in, respectively, theatre and dance. OPENDOEK organises the annual [Landjuweelfestival](#), a contest among amateur theatre companies from Flanders. Danspunt is one of the partners in the annual [Dance Day](#) ('Dag van de Dans'), which is organised by Kanaries in actie vzw, a collaboration between dance organisations.

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<sup>[1]</sup> See also Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 36-49.

<sup>[2]</sup> For a discussion of the position of major art institutions in the field of arts in Flanders, see Overbergh, Ann, Katrien Kiekens, and Dirk De Wit. 2019. 'First among equals? The art institution today'.

<sup>[3]</sup> Janssens, Joris. 2018. 'De theaterprogrammering in de cultuurcentra (2006-2015). De productie en spreiding van podiumkunsten: een derde bodemonderzoek'. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 233-40.

<sup>[4]</sup> Leenknecht, Simon. 2018. 'The only way is up? Cijferanalyse van de internationalisering van de productie en de spreiding van de Vlaamse podiumkunsten (2000-2016)'. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 41-70.

<sup>[5]</sup> Janssens, Joris. 2018. *(Re)framing the International. On new ways of working internationally in the arts*. Brussel:

## 3.4. Visual arts and crafts

The Arts Decree (see also 4.2.4) is the main legislative framework in Flanders and Brussels for supporting the professional arts. This includes artists and organisations in contemporary visual arts (sculpture, painting, drawing, photography, multimedia, sound art, etc.) and audiovisual work for multiple screens (which is usually shown in the exhibition circuit). Single screen audiovisual production and the production of television series is supported through a separate fund (see 3.5.2). The Arts Decree also arranges the support for [Flanders Arts Institute](#) — in which the former organisation BAM merged — as the independent centre of expertise for professional performing arts, visual arts and (classical) music in Flanders. Flanders Arts Institute (see 5.5 and 7.2.1) provides support and networking opportunities for and shares expertise and data with artists, curators and arts organisations. It also organises international promotion of arts from Flanders (see also 1.4.3). [Kunst in Huis](#) is a funded organisation with a collection of 5 000 contemporary works of art that can be given on loan (and sold) to private persons and companies.

Both museums for fine arts and contemporary art<sup>[1]</sup> — as institutions maintaining a collection, contrary to exhibition halls — receive support through the Cultural Heritage Decree. This is also the case for the Flemish Centre for Art Archives ([CKV](#)), which provides expertise to (private) archives and legacies of contemporary artists. CKV collaborates with Flanders Arts Institute and others in [TRACKS](#), a network for archive and collection management in the arts.

A separate Decree ('Topstukkendecreet') regulates the protection and trafficking of rare and valuable artistic and cultural assets from Flanders.<sup>[2]</sup> The Flemish government itself owns — together with the Federal State — a collection of 18 000 works of art of different periods ('[Collectie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap](#)') and has an annual budget for further acquisitions. There is also regulation on the Flemish level that governs art in public space. The Decree on Public Art Commissions (formerly known as the 'Percentage Decree') stipulates that, when building or renovating a public building, a specific share of the building costs should be invested in a commission for a work of art.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Federal level harbours some major institutions for fine arts (with a range until the twentieth century), such as the [Royal Museums of Fine Arts](#) and the Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage ([KIK-IRPA](#), dedicated to the study and conservation of artistic and cultural assets of Belgium).

Local governments are important in stimulating local contemporary art scenes (for example by investing in workshop facilities). With regard to the visual arts, however, these are primarily the governments of larger cities in Flanders. These city governments have been the historic drivers of establishing some of the main museums for visual arts in Flanders. Nonetheless, professional visual arts have had a rather marginal role in local cultural policy — contrary to the performing arts and music, which have benefitted from the establishment of culture centres throughout Flanders. The distribution of exhibitions in Flanders is largely centred in Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent.<sup>[4]</sup> There are some interesting visual arts initiatives, though, by culture centres and local authorities outside the larger cities, which might foster a new dynamic.

Other issues on the agenda of the visual arts sector and arts policy include the precarious position of artists (which is aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis) and fair practices (see 2.3 and 2.5.5), the role of art awards (see

7.2.3), and the development of visual arts policy and professionalism in the sector in general — which had a different historical trajectory than other disciplines.<sup>[5]</sup> In his recent Strategic Vision Statement on the Arts, current Minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) remarked that visual arts have been rather overlooked in funding for the arts.<sup>[6]</sup>

Next to public authorities, private collections, art galleries and (non-)profit project rooms take on an important role in Flanders and Brussels, for example by providing support to exhibition spaces, lending out art works, and contributing to the development of artists' careers. (See 3.5.1 and 7.3 for policy initiatives directed at private players in the cultural sector.) Current Minister Jambon has announced that he would look into the possibilities of stimulating collaboration between public authorities and private collectors.<sup>[7]</sup>

The Decree on Amateur Arts (see 6.4) is the policy framework for amateur visual arts on the level of the Flemish Community. It arranges funding for [KUNSTWERKT](#) (visual arts) and [BREEDBEELD](#) (photography, audiovisual and multimedia arts), which in turn provide support for amateur artists and associations.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Museums for fine arts unite in the platform [Flemish Art Collection](#), while museums for contemporary art unite in [Contemporary Arts Heritage Flanders](#) (CAHF).

<sup>[2]</sup> The Flemish government keeps a (non-exhaustive) [list of valuable artistic and cultural assets](#) ('Topstukkenlijst') from Flanders.

<sup>[3]</sup> '[Platform Kunst in Opdracht](#)' is a network and a team within the Department of Culture, Youth and Media dedicated to art commissions.

<sup>[4]</sup> Janssens, Joris, Dirk De Wit, and An Seurinck. 2018. 'Actuele beeldende kunst in Vlaanderen. Tentoonstellingsaanbod in kaart (2013-2014)'. In [Cijferboek Kunsten 2018](#), Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 279-98.

<sup>[5]</sup> For a more detailed discussion of issues in the contemporary visual arts field in Flanders and Brussels, see Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. [Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019](#). Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 24-35.

<sup>[6]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2020. '[Strategische Visienota Kunsten](#)', 10-11.

<sup>[7]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. '[Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024](#)', 24.

## 3.5. Cultural arts and creative industries

### 3.5.1. GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS

Research on the economic impact of culture in Flanders has focused on the whole of cultural and creative sectors (CCS), including architecture, the audiovisual industry, communication and advertising, cultural heritage, design, fashion, gaming, music, new media, performing

arts, publishing, and visual arts.<sup>[1]</sup> The definitions of CCS used in this research are similar to what the [European](#)

Commission defines as ‘cultural and creative sectors’. The results therefore encompass all sectors discussed under section 3 — which cover the different stages of the cultural value chain and not solely the ‘cultural and creative industries’.<sup>[2]</sup>

The latest figures refer to 2016 and apply to the Flemish Region (excluding the Brussels-Capital Region). CCS represent 10.45% of the number of self-employed people and 6.3% of the number of full time equivalents (FTEs) in the Flemish Region. They account for 5.6% of total gross value added and 13.39% of total turnover. These figures refer to both fully fledged creative activities and activities that have an important contribution to the creative value chain, but are not themselves a specifically creative activity. ‘Core’ creative activities account for 8.35% of self-employed people, 3.69% of FTEs, 3.23% of gross added value, and 3.21% of total turnover in the Flemish Region.

The figures on the Flemish Region do not allow for a direct comparison to the figures available on Eurostat.<sup>[3]</sup> Eurostat provides data for the whole of Belgium with regard to cultural employment, cultural enterprises, and import and export of cultural goods.

Cultural employment in Belgium in 2018 makes up 4.3% (or 205 000 working persons) of total employment, which is more than the EU-28 average of 3.8% and is an increase compared to 2013 (3.8% or 170 000 working persons).

Eurostat’s structural business statistics on cultural enterprises (with only market-oriented activities) show that in 2017, these represent 6.5% of the non-financial business economy in Belgium — the fourth largest share of all current 27 EU member states. Each enterprise employed, on average, 1.9 persons in 2017 — which is below the estimated average for the EU-28 (3 persons per enterprise). Cultural enterprises constitute 1.4% of the total turnover and 2% of total value added in the Belgian non-financial business economy in 2017 (which are both slightly lower than the averages for the EU-27). We can further divide the value added of cultural enterprises per sector:

- Publishing of books, newspapers, journals, periodicals, and computer games: 0.45%
- Motion picture, video and television programme production, sound recording and music publishing activities: 0.29%
- Programming and broadcasting activities: 0.11%
- News agency activities: 0.02%
- Architectural activities: 0.38%
- Specialised design activities: 0.07%

With regard to the international trade of cultural goods (works of art, jewellery, antiques, books, film, etc.), exports of these goods comprises 0.3% of total exports from Belgium in 2018 (compared to 0.28% in 2013). Imports of cultural goods accounts for 0.36% of total imports in 2018 (a decrease when compared to 0.43% in 2013).

The policies and legal frameworks directed at the different CCS are discussed throughout sections 3, 4, and 7. These include instruments that offer support to cultural and creative industries (CCI) — or to what the European Commission has referred to as “the further stages of the value chain — including the production and dissemination stages of industrial and manufacturing operations”. The Arts Decree (see 3.3, 3.4, 3.5.4, 3.5.5, 4.2,

and 7.2.2), for example, provides options for grants and project funding for legal bodies with a commercial character. The funds for literature (see 3.5.2) and audiovisual arts (see 3.5.3) subsidise independent productions in their respective disciplines. As stipulated in its current [management agreement](#) with the Flemish government, the Public Broadcaster (VRT, see 2.5.3) must participate in independent Flemish audiovisual productions. Former minister of Culture Sven Gatz (2014-2019) launched a number of initiatives for stimulating private funding in culture and cooperation with private and commercial partners (see 7.3). Other examples are the federal tax shelter agreements (see 4.1.4) for investors in audiovisual or performing arts productions.

Enterprises in the CCI can also apply for support schemes in the policy field of Economy, Science and Innovation (which reside with the Regions, not the Communities). The government agency [Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship](#) (VLAIO) helps companies and research centres to realise their research and development projects by providing funding, advice and a network of potential partners in Flanders and abroad.<sup>[4]</sup> [Flanders Investment and Trade](#) (FIT) is another government agency — part of the separate Flemish policy field of Foreign Affairs — offering schemes for international entrepreneurial activities, including the CCI. As an investment firm of the Flemish government, [PMV](#) provides financing solutions for entrepreneurs in the CCI and other industries. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the government agency [hub.brussels](#) has similar functions as VLAIO in the Flemish Region. [1819](#) is the point of contact for entrepreneurs in the Brussels-Capital Region.

The Flemish government supports [Flanders DC](#) as a point of contact for entrepreneurs in the CCI and CCS in Flanders, offering expertise, coaching, promotion, and network development. Persons working in the CCS and CCI can also take advice from [Cultuurloket](#) on business related and juridical questions. Another relevant, government funded organisation is the [Social Innovation Factory](#), which promotes, guides and supports social and societal innovative entrepreneurial (including cultural) projects.

Specific challenges and policy issues in the respective cultural sectors and industries (caused by, for example, technological disruptions) are discussed in the other subsections of 3.5.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Van Andel, W., and A. Schramme. 2015. *Creatieve industrieën in Vlaanderen. Mapping en bedrijfseconomische analyse*. Leuven: Antwerp Management School/Flanders DC; Departement EWI, VLAIO, and Flanders DC. 2019. 'De creatieve sector in Vlaanderen'. *creatievesector.be*. Note that there are differences between these reports in the methodology applied.

<sup>[2]</sup> It should be noted that researchers have used “sectors” interchangeably with “industries”. See, for example: Van Andel, W., and A. Schramme. 2015. *Creatieve industrieën in Vlaanderen. Mapping en bedrijfseconomische analyse*. Leuven: Antwerp Management School/Flanders DC, 17.

<sup>[3]</sup> The cited [figures on the Flemish Region](#) include, for example, some NACE divisions that are not included in [Eurostat's](#) cultural employment statistics or structural business statistics on cultural enterprises. A more detailed comparison falls outside the scope of this country profile.

<sup>[4]</sup> A partial [overview](#) of support measures for cultural and creative industries in the Flemish Region is provided by Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

### 3.5.2. BOOKS AND PRESS

[Flanders Literature](#) provides subsidies for the Flemish literature and books sector. As a funding body that enters into an agreement with the Flemish government, it functions separately from the Arts Decree, which arranges the support for other artistic disciplines (see the other sections in 3, except single screen audiovisual production (see 3.5.3)). Flanders Literature focuses its funding on the first and last stages of the books and press value chain. They supply grants and project funding for authors, translators and illustrators and subsidies for publishing Dutch literature and theatre texts. They also grant subsidies to organisers of literary events, literacy programmes, literature organisations, and literary journals. Other journals on cultural subjects receive funding through either the Arts Decree, Cultural Heritage Decree, and Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF). Former minister of Culture Sven Gatz (2014-2019) initiated plans for integrating support for cultural journals into a single policy. Current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024) announced to take further steps in the coming years.<sup>[1]</sup>

As a result of the 'Internal State Reform' (see 1.2.4), Flanders Literature took over the funding for literature by provincial governments. Next to being a funding body, Flanders Literature organises international promotion of Flemish literature, often in collaboration with the [Dutch Foundation for Literature](#). Promotion of Flemish authors and collaboration with the Netherlands were mentioned in the coalition agreement of the current Flemish government (2019-2024) as ways of "reinforcing the Flemish identity". This was the motivation behind an increase of the budget of Flanders Literature.<sup>[2]</sup>

Flanders Literature also administers the 'BoekenOverleg', an advocacy network that gathers organisations that each represent different groups within the books and press sector (authors, publishers, book sellers, libraries and archives (see 3.2), and literature and literacy organisations). One of these is the [Letterenhuis](#), the literary archive of Flanders and one of the partners of [TRACKS](#), a network for archive and collection management in the arts. The Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature ([KANTL](#)) is also a member of the BoekenOverleg. This independent association was appointed by the Flemish government to study and discuss Dutch language and literature. This includes the selection of a [canon of Dutch literature](#) that is considered as "essential" by experts in Flanders.

A number of issues have been the topic of debate in the literature and books sector (some of which are aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis).<sup>[3]</sup> These include the precarious position of authors, translators, and illustrators, economic disruptions and uncertainty in the market of book publishing and book sales, the limits of international promotion and distribution of Flemish literature, concern about (a lack of) inclusion in the literature and books sector (which resulted in a [Charter](#)), and concern about waning literacy skills among the population of Flanders.

The Decree on Amateur Arts (see 6.4) is the policy framework for amateur literature on the level of the Flemish Community. It arranges funding for [Creatief Schrijven](#), who provide support for amateur authors.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Meremans, Marius. 2019. '[Schriftelijke vraag: Culturele tijdschriften en publicaties - Geïntegreerd beleid](#)'. Vlaams Parlement.

<sup>[2]</sup> Vlaamse Regering. 2019. '[Regeerakkoord 2019-2024](#)', 128-129.

<sup>[3]</sup> See also Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 60-70.

### 3.5.3. AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF) manages three funding bodies for co-financing respectively film productions (Film Fund), television series (Media Fund), and video games (Game Fund) in Flanders and Brussels. VAF enters into an agreement with the Flemish government and functions separately from the Arts Decree, which arranges the support for other artistic disciplines (except literature, see 3.5.2) — among them audiovisual work for multiple screens (which is usually shown in the exhibition circuit). Next to funding productions, VAF supplies grants, advice and workshops for screenwriters, directors, animators, game developers, and other (young) professionals in the audiovisual industry. It also subsidizes distributors, art house cinemas, film education, film festivals, film magazines, and other organisations, collaborations or projects that enhance film culture in Flanders. Some of these support schemes were until recently supplied by other organisations, funding bodies, or government levels (such as the provinces), but have now been centralized in VAF.

As *Flanders Image*, VAF organises the international promotion of Flemish audiovisual productions. Promotion of Flemish productions was mentioned in the coalition agreement of the current Flemish government (2019-2024) as a way of “reinforcing the Flemish identity”. This was the motivation behind an increase of the budget of VAF and a request to collaborate more with the Netherlands.<sup>[1]</sup>

VAF furthermore advises Screen Flanders in the selection of project applications. *Screen Flanders* is a separate economic support measure for (Belgian and foreign) audiovisual productions that spend budget in the Flemish Region. Their budget is supplied by the government agency *Flanders Innovation & Entrepreneurship* (VLAIO, see also 3.5.1), which means it is a competence of the Flemish Region (not the Flemish Community, as is the case with culture). The Brussels-Capital Region has its own economic film fund, the *Screen.brussels Fund*. On the Federal level, there is a tax shelter scheme for audiovisual productions (see 4.1.4).

*CINEMATEK*, the Royal Belgian Film Archive, holds an extensive collection of film copies and documents on cinema. It is primarily funded by the Federal State and the National Lottery.

A number of issues have been the topic of debate in the audiovisual sector.<sup>[2]</sup> These include the danger of monopolies in distributing and screening cinema films, concern about changing spectator behaviour and its consequences for the distribution of Flemish audiovisual content and its revenue, concern about the options screenwriters, directors, and other professionals have to develop qualitative content and to innovate, and (the limits of) the international prominence of the Flemish audiovisual industry.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Vlaamse Regering. 2019. ‘Regeerakkoord 2019-2024’, 128-129.

<sup>[2]</sup> For issues with regard to the film and television series, see also Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 71-80.



### 3.5.4. MUSIC

The Arts Decree (see 4.2.3) is the main legislative framework in Flanders and Brussels for supporting the professional arts. This includes composers, musicians and organisations (ensembles, concert houses, opera houses, music theatre companies, music clubs, management bureaus, music education outside schools, etc.) in classical music, folk, jazz, pop and rock music. The Arts Decree also arranges the support for [Flanders Arts Institute](#) — in which the former Flanders Music Centre merged — as the independent centre of expertise for professional performing arts, visual arts and (classical) music in Flanders. Flanders Arts Institute (see 5.5 and 7.2.1) shares expertise and data with artists and music organisations. It also supports professionals in classical music through the organisation of (international) promotion and networking opportunities (see also 1.4.3). Since 2019, [VI.BE](#) (formerly known as Poppunt) provide similar services for professionals in folk, jazz, pop and rock music, next to support for amateur pop and rock musicians and DJs.

The Flemish policy framework for amateur music is provided by the Decree on Amateur Arts (see 6.4). It arranges funding for [Muziekmozaïek](#) (folk and jazz), [Vlamo](#) (instrumental music), [Koor&Stem](#) (vocal music), and VI.BE, which in turn support amateur artists and associations. Professional concert organisers also collaborate for initiatives that provide career opportunities and counselling for (young) musicians.

[CEMPER](#) (which is funded through the Cultural Heritage Decree) is the expert hub for performing arts and musical heritage in Flanders. They collaborate together with Flanders Arts Institute and others in [TRACKS](#), a network for archive and collection management in the arts. Other important institutions concerned with musical heritage in Flanders include the Study Centre for Flemish Music ([SVM](#), dedicated to 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century music), [MATRIX](#) (which has a library and documentation centre on contemporary classical music) and the libraries of the conservatoires of the Schools of Arts (see 5.3). Both Flanders Arts Institute and the Flemish Public Broadcaster ([VRT](#)) hold extensive collections of music recordings from Flanders and Brussels.

On the Federal level, [BOZAR](#) (centre for fine arts) and [La Monnaie/De Munt](#) (the national opera house) are important music venues. This level of government also provides support to the [Belgian National Orchestra](#) and the [Musical Instruments Museum](#). The tax shelter for performing arts is also a Federal matter (see 4.1.4). Classical music, music theatre, and opera productions can make use of this scheme.

A number of issues have been the topic of debate in the music sector and in public arts policy in the past five years (some of which are aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis).<sup>[1]</sup> These include the precarious position of artists and the importance of fair practices (see 2.3 and 2.5.5), the danger of monopolies in different stages of the music value chain (such as the increasing power of streaming services in music distribution), budget cuts in funding for the arts (see 7.1.3), and the conditions for touring in Belgium and abroad. The changes in local cultural policy (see 1.2.4) — creating a different context for culture centres, which play a major role in programming concerts (see also 6.4) — and the effects of stricter rules on volume levels (in effect since 2013) have caused concern among music professionals and organisations.

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<sup>[1]</sup> See also Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 50-59.



### 3.5.5. DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

The Arts Decree (see 4.2.7) is the main legislative framework in Flanders and Brussels for supporting the professional arts. This includes architects and designers in different disciplines, who can apply for funding non-commercial, artistically oriented activities. Also included are theoreticians and organisations that reflect on architecture and design. Museums and archives dealing with architectural or design heritage can receive funding through the Cultural Heritage Decree.

The Flemish government supports Flanders Architecture Institute (VAi) as the centre for information about Flemish architecture. They also hold architectural archives, publish on the subject, organise exhibitions, and do international promotion. VAI is one of the partners of [TRACKS](#), a network for archive and collection management in the arts.

The official [Flemish Government Architect](#) and his team (part of the Flemish government Department of Public Governance and the Chancellery) is appointed for a four-year period and advises public patrons in the design and realization of built spaces in Flanders, as part of a policy to enhance their architectural quality. Among other things (see also 7.2.3), the Flemish Government Architect organises open calls for architects (from Belgium and abroad) to design projects by regional and local authorities, and stimulates reflection on architecture and urban planning (e.g. through disseminating publications on interesting visions and experiments). The Brussels-Capital Region has its own government architect ('[Bouwmeester](#)' or bMa). Cities such as Antwerp and Ghent also have their own 'bouwmeesters'. Certain local and provincial authorities in Flanders fund organisations that support (local) designers through guidance, promotion and networking.

With regard to commercial activities, designers can apply for (general) support schemes in the policy fields of Foreign Affairs and Economy, Science and Innovation (see 3.5.1). Note that the latter — unlike Culture — are competences of the Regions and not the Communities. This means the Flemish Region and the Brussels-Capital Region have different policies. Each Region respectively subsidizes an organisation that supports designers of all sorts in developing their (commercial) career: [Flanders DC](#) (in which the former Design Flanders merged, see also 3.5.1 and 7.2.1) and [MAD Brussels](#).

A number of issues have been the topic of debate in the architecture and design sector.<sup>[1]</sup> These include the limited time and means that architects and designers can invest in researching and developing their praxis throughout their career, (the limits of) the international promotion and prominence of Flemish architecture and design, the (dis)connection between specialists' and laymen's views on what constitutes architectural quality, and the rethinking of the traditional role of the architect (from being a mere designer to trying to be a catalyst for social and ecological changes).

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<sup>[1]</sup> See also Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 81-99.

### 3.5.6. CULTURAL AND CREATIVE TOURISM

Tourism is a competence of the Regions in Belgium. In the Flemish Region, [VISITFLANDERS](#) is the responsible government agency. They devise specific (support) programmes with the aim of promoting Flanders as a tourist

attraction in Belgium and abroad. These include events, promotional campaigns, project funding, and market research in which arts, heritage, design, and fashion are the central themes. Examples are the projects on “Flemish Masters” (centred around the life and work of historical painters) and WWI. EventFlanders is a collaboration between VISITFLANDERS and other departments of the Flemish government with the goal of attracting large-scale (cultural) events to Flanders (such as the World Choir Games). [Visit.brussels](#) is the tourist agency of the Brussels-Capital Region. “Culture & City Life” is one of the main themes around which the agency is organised.

## 4. Law and legislation

### 4.1. General legislation

#### 4.1.1. CONSTITUTION

The [Belgian Constitution](#) (i.e. “De gecoördineerde Grondwet” of 17 February 1994; see also 2.2) guarantees a number of fundamental rights for Belgian citizens, which include the freedom of expression (art. 19), the right to cultural development (art. 23, 5°), the freedom of press and prohibition of censorship (art. 25; see also 2.5.3), and the freedom of language use (art. 30; see also 4.1.8).

The Constitution determines cultural affairs as competences of the Communities, as well as cultural cooperation between the Communities and international cooperation on cultural affairs (art. 127, §1 and art. 130, §1; see also 1.2.3, 1.2.6, and 1.4.1). The exact scope of ‘cultural affairs’ was defined in other legislation. The current definition is to be found in art. 4 of the “[Bijzondere wet tot hervorming der instellingen](#)” (8 August 1980).

As a result of the [Sixth State Reform](#) (2012-2014), ‘Bicultural Matters of Regional Significance’ in the Brussels-Capital Region (see 1.2.3) are now under the remit of its regional government (art. 4bis of the “[Bijzondere wet met betrekking tot de Brusselse Instellingen](#)” of 12 January 1989). Art. 11 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination and is the basis of the Culture Pact (see 4.1.2).

#### 4.1.2. ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The [Culture Pact](#) (“Cultuurpact”, which was codified in the law of 16 July 1973) is an important part of Federal legislation with regard to the allocation of public funding for culture. It was also set out in a Flemish [decree](#) (28 January 1974) and has served as a fundament for other decrees on the level of the Communities.

Building on art. 11 of the Belgian Constitution (see 2.2 and 4.1.1), the Culture Pact was intended to protect “ideological and philosophical factions” (the official title of the Culture Pact Law is “Wet van 16 juli 1973 waarbij de bescherming van de ideologische en filosofische strekkingen gewaarborgd wordt”). This is related to Belgium’s history being shaped by political and philosophical divisions (the so-called ‘zuilen’, see 1.1.). The Culture Pact stipulates different modes and levels of participation in the implementation of cultural policies, such as prior consultation of advisory bodies that represent the professional field. This has shaped later Flemish regulations on supporting the cultural field (see 1.2.3 and 4.2.1). Complaints about the violation of the regulations of the Culture Pact can be filed with the national [Culture Pact Commission](#).

Legislation on the Flemish level has been an important factor in the history of local policies on culture, for example with regard to support for local culture centres and libraries. A significant part of these support measures eventually converged in the Decree on Local Cultural Policy of 2001, which underwent a number of changes in the following years — the [current Decree](#) is dated 6 July 2012. Some fundamental modifications happened in the wake of the ‘Internal State Reform’, including changes to the regulations on the funding of local authorities with regard to culture. Since 2016, this funding has been integrated into the Municipal Fund, in which it is no longer earmarked (see 1.2.4).<sup>[1]</sup> The divestment of the cultural competences of the provincial authorities (since 2018) in Flanders is another consequence of the Internal State Reform. This is codified in art. 2 (§ 3) of the

<sup>[1]</sup> In communes with linguistic facilities (see also 2.5.4) bordering Brussels-Capital Region, this reform took place in 2018.

#### 4.1.3. SOCIAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

Social Security is a competence of the Federal State (see 1.2.2). At the beginning of the new millennium, older social security measures aimed at artists were reformed. This resulted in legislation (see chapter 11 of the “[Programmawet](#)” of 24 December 2002) that enabled artists that receive unemployment benefits to practise their art more freely. Some specific regulations to this legal framework were added in later years (especially 2014).

This framework (also referred to as ‘social status of the artist’ or “*sociaal statuut van de kunstenaar*”) consists of a number of exceptions and adjustments to general regulations on social security that take into account the reality of an artist's career. It includes the following provisions:

- Artists are treated either as employees or as self-employed from the perspective of social security.<sup>[1]</sup> To stimulate salaried work for artists — which entitles them to a better social protection than is the case with working self-employed — employers are given a discount on their share of social security contributions to compensate for these additional costs. If artists cannot sign an employment contract with a client, they can still work as an employee if they possess an ‘artist visa’ (“*kunstenaarsvisum*”).
- Because working in short contracts for different employers would cause a lot of delay in the administration, payment of child and holiday allowances for artists (which are covered by the regulations for employees), have been simplified
- Clients who hire artists on an infrequent basis (e.g. for an occasional show in a bar or for a single commission) can call on the so-called ‘social bureaus for artists’ (“*sociale bureaus voor kunstenaars*” or SBKs) to take care of the employer's share of administrative procedures. These SBKs are specialist interim offices that are officially recognised by the Regional authorities.<sup>[2]</sup>
- There is also a ‘small expense compensation system’ (“*kleine vergoedingsregeling*” or KVR), in which, under certain conditions, artists can receive a fixed expense reimbursement that is exempt from social security contributions. As of 2007, this reimbursement is also tax free.

This system of measures has been the subject of recurrent criticism in the wake of debates on the socio-economic position of artists (see 2.3; the administrative complexity being one of the issues) or on alleged abuse.<sup>[3]</sup> The repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis reinvigorated the debate, [also among politicians](#). The current Federal government mentioned a possible reform of the system in its coalition agreement.<sup>[4]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> There are only three social statuses in Belgium: employee, self-employed, and civil servant. The ‘social status of the artist’ is therefore not a separate social security status.

<sup>[2]</sup> Cultuurloket (see 7.2.1) compiled a [list](#) of SBKs recognized by the Flemish government. [SMart](#) is a well known

provider of relatively similar services, but is officially not an SBK.

<sup>[3]</sup> See, for example: Vanheusden, Els. 2016. 'Het sociaal statuut van de kunstenaar: van algemeen vangnet naar een visum voor "the happy few"?' *Auteurs & Media*, nr. 2: 200–212; or the [articles](#) cultural magazine Rekto:Verso published on the topic in 2014.

<sup>[4]</sup> De Croo, Alexander, and Paul Magnette. 2020. '[Verslag van de formateurs](#)', 36.

#### 4.1.4. TAX LAWS

In the complex fiscal system of Belgium (with competences divided among the different levels of government), diverse tax regulations can be advantageous for artists, private donors or sponsors, or people owning art collections.

The standard VAT-rate, for example, is 21%, but there are exceptions in which the rate is 6% or 0%. These include the VAT on certain cultural goods and services (Cultuurloket provides an [overview](#)). Furthermore, we could mention lower taxation rates on income through royalties, or the treaties the Federal State has signed with other countries with regard to avoiding double taxation of non-residents working in Belgium. (Both [Flanders DC](#) and [Cultuurloket](#) (see 3.5.1 and 7.2.1) provide guides to the fiscal system for cultural professionals.)

There are a number of tax incentives that provide beneficial conditions for corporate or individual giving to cultural causes (although, compared to other countries, there is no widespread practice of private financing of culture, see 7.3).<sup>[1]</sup> Tax shelters exist for companies investing in audiovisual productions (since 2003) and performing arts<sup>[2]</sup> productions (since 2017), which allows them to get tax exemptions on these investments.<sup>[3]</sup> Companies can get tax deductions through sponsorship activities. [Donations](#) of more than EUR 40 to recognized (cultural) charities entitle individuals to a tax reduction. Under certain conditions, this also applies to the donation of works of art to public institutions. With regard to inheritance taxes, we should mention that succession duty can be fulfilled through the donation of works of art. This was the subject of Federal legislation, until it was ceded to the Regions in 2015.<sup>[4]</sup> In Flanders, bequeathing money to a charity is currently taxed at a lower rate (8.5%). Additionally, people can opt for a 'duo legacy', which means that heirs can donate (a part of) the inheritance to another beneficiary (including a non-profit organisation), in exchange for paying the succession duty. On 18 September 2020, a [preliminary draft of a decree](#) was approved by the Government of Flanders that will abolish the duo legacies in 2021. At the same time, the tax rate on bequeathing inheritances to charities will be reduced to 0% and a new tax exemption for donations to charities will be introduced

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<sup>[1]</sup> For a comprehensive overview of options for private funding of culture in Flanders and Brussels (up until 2015), see De Voldere, Isabelle et al. 2015. [Onderzoek naar de mogelijkheden van aanvullende financiering voor de culturele sector](#). Brussel: IDEA Consult/Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Sport en Media van de Vlaamse Overheid.

<sup>[2]</sup> Here, 'performing arts' refers to theatre, circus, street theatre, opera, classical music, and music theatre.

<sup>[3]</sup> The Department of Culture, Youth, and Media of the Flemish government provides an [overview](#) of relevant legislation and reports with facts and figures on these tax shelter regulations.

<sup>[4]</sup> A 2017 [proposal](#) of the N-VA group in the Flemish Parliament on adjusting these regulations provides an overview of legislation relevant to this topic.

#### 4.1.5. LABOUR LAWS

Labour policies reside with the Federal State. Social partners (unions and employer associations) are intensely involved in the process of installing regulations on labour. They meet in [joint committees](#) (“paritaire comités” or PC) with the aim of gathering organisations that work in a particular area of activities and developing and implementing labour agreements on those activities. To which PC an employer belongs, is determined on the basis of their activities. There is an extensive [list of PCs](#), and the following pertain to large parts of the cultural sector:

- PC 227: audiovisual arts and media sectors
- PC 303: film: production, distribution, movie theatres
- PC 304: music and performing arts, live entertainment
- PC 329: non-profit cultural sector

These PCs make collective labour agreements (“collectieve arbeidsovereenkomsten” or CAO), which determine individual and collective relations (including wages, work flexibility, or establishing a fund for subsistence security, see 7.2.2) between employers and employees in companies and in respective branches. When an employer is bound by a CAO, the resulting rights and obligations apply to all employees. CAOs can be declared binding to the entire range of activities in a certain area. The CAO on music (which is arranged in PC 304), for example, applies to everyone employing a musician in Belgium.

Furthermore, we should mention that the culture sector is subject to exceptions to standard labour legislation, for example with regard to night work or the official status of Sundays as rest days.

[Volunteering](#) in non-profit cultural organisations is possible and bound to specific rules. Volunteers cannot receive a wage for their activities, but can get their expenses (limited to a certain amount per day) reimbursed. In 2018, a [regulation for ‘side jobs’](#) (“bijklussen”) came into effect. This regulation allowed people to do paid services (until a certain limited amount of wage) for cultural and recreational organisations as a side job. The person providing the services should either be employed (at least 4/5), self-employed, or retired and these services should fall under a specified list of ‘non-professional’ activities. This regulation was abolished by the Constitutional Court in 2020, however, which means it will no longer be in effect as of 2021.

#### 4.1.6. COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS

Legislation on [intellectual property](#) resides with the Federal policy field of Economy. Since 2015, regulations on intellectual property — including copyright (“auteursrecht”, which then encompasses resale rights, lending rights, reprography rights, etc.) and related rights (“naburige rechten”) — are [subsumed](#) under Book XI of the Code of Economic Law, which replaces the older [law of 30 June 1994](#) (“Wet betreffende het auteursrecht en de naburige rechten”). Through the years, these regulations have been adapted to European (and other international) Directives.

Artists can become a member of collective management organisations (“collectieve beheersvennootschappen”) to take care of the management of their copyright or related rights. These include [Sabam](#) (which gathers

authors, composers, and publishers of different disciplines), [Sofam](#) (specialised in visual artists' intellectual property rights), [PlayRight](#) (specialised in related rights of musicians, actors, dancers, and circus and vaudeville artists), [deAuteurs](#) (which gathers authors in performing arts, literature, and media), [Simim](#) (specialised in related rights of music producers), and [Semu](#) (which gathers publishers of sheet music).

#### 4.1.7. DATA PROTECTION LAWS

The [Law of 30 July 2018](#) ("Wet betreffende de bescherming van natuurlijke personen met betrekking tot de verwerking van persoonsgegevens") stipulates regulations on the processing of personal data. This law takes into account the EU Regulation known as the General Data Protection Regulation ([GDPR](#)). The Federal Chamber of Representatives established an independent [Data Protection Authority](#) in 2017, which has the mission to ensure that the ground rules on the protection of personal data are respected in Belgium.

#### 4.1.8. LANGUAGE LAWS

The [Belgian Constitution](#) (see 4.1.1) guarantees the freedom of (private) language use (art. 30). However, a historical corpus of laws has provided further stipulations on language communities, language areas, and language usage in, e.g., schools, law suits, services of public authorities, or at the workplace (see 2.5.4). Steunpunt Taalwetwijzer provides an [online guide](#) to legislation on language in the Dutch-speaking area of Belgium.

[Flemish Sign Language](#) (see 2.5.4 and 2.5.6) was officially recognized by Decree of 5 May 2006 ("[Decreet houdende de erkenning van Vlaamse gebarentaal](#)").

#### 4.1.9. OTHER AREAS OF GENERAL LEGISLATION

Section 5 deals with arts and cultural education. Policies on education are a competence of the Communities in Belgium (with a only small part of legislation residing with the Federal State). Legislation and policy documents on the Flemish education system can be consulted through [Edulex](#). The education goals ("onderwijsdoelen") in secondary education are currently in a process of reform. The legal documents in which these new attainment targets and other goals are grounded, can be consulted at [onderwijsdoelen.be](#). The new [Decree on out-of-school childcare](#) ("Decreet houdende de organisatie van buitenschoolse opvang en de afstemming tussen buitenschoolse activiteiten" of 3 May 2018) will come into effect in 2021. Part-time education in the arts was recently reformed by the [Decree of 9 March 2018](#).

Several subsections of section 2 refer to equal opportunities policies, which are divided among different levels of government (Communities, Federal State, provincial, and local authorities) and different policy areas. The website of the [Flemish policy field of Equal Opportunities](#) provides an overview of Flemish, Federal, and international legislation. An important part of legislation is the [Decree of 10 July 2008](#) ("Decreet houdende een kader voor het Vlaamse gelijkheids- en gelijkebehandelingsbeleid").

## 4.2. Legislation on culture

## 4.2.1. GENERAL LEGISLATION ON CULTURE

In Belgium, Culture is foremost a competence of the Communities (see 1.2.3). We therefore focus in this section on legislation (decrees) on culture in the Flemish Community. Table 2a presents a selection of decrees that are currently in effect and that provide the framework for cultural policies and trends discussed throughout the other sections.<sup>[1]</sup> The table mentions the section(s) in which (the reform of) these decrees and related policy instruments are elaborated. Some of these decrees apply to specific sectors (arts, cultural heritage, circus, etc.) and are therefore referred to in the other subsections of 4.2. Other decrees have a scope that spans the entire cultural field or even other policy fields (e.g. with regard to participation or (supra)local policies).

A great deal of the regulations codified in the mentioned decrees pertain to the procedures and the scope of funding instruments for cultural initiatives. Though political primacy (see 1.2.3) is an important principle in funding for culture, these regulations often contain procedures on consultation of advisory bodies — which is in line with the principles laid down in the Culture Pact legislation (see 4.1.2).

Note that Immovable Heritage is a separate policy field, within the remit of the Regions (not the Communities). Relevant legislation is therefore not included in Table 2a, but is dealt with in 4.2.2.

*Table 2a. Selective list of decrees providing cultural legislation in the Flemish Community*

Title of the decree	Date of adoption	Read more in:
Arts Decree ("Kunstendecreet" or "Decreet betreffende de ondersteuning van de professionele kunsten")	13/12/2013	1.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 2.9, 3.3-3.5.6, 5.4, 7.2.1
Cultural Heritage Decree ("Cultureel Erfgoeddecreet" or "Decreet houdende de ondersteuning van cultureelerfgoedwerking in Vlaanderen")	24/2/2017	1.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5.2, 3.5.4, 3.5.5, 5.4, 7.2.1
Decree on Amateur Arts ("Decreet betreffende de amateurkunsten")	22/12/2000	3.3, 3.4, 3.5.2, 3.5.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.2.1
Participation Decree ("Participatiedecreet" or "Decreet houdende flankerende en stimulerende maatregelen ter bevordering van de participatie in cultuur, jeugdwerk en sport")	18/1/2008	1.1, 2.5.1, 2.5.6, 2.6, 6.1
Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults ("Decreet houdende de subsidiëring en erkenning van het sociaal-cultureel volwassenenwerk")	7/7/2017	1.1, 1.3.2, 5.4, 6.4
Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities ("Bovenlokaal Cultuurdecreet" or "Decreet betreffende de bovenlokale cultuurwerking")	15/6/2018	1.1, 1.2.4, 3.2
Decree on Local Cultural Policy ("Decreet betreffende het Lokaal Cultuurbeleid")	6/7/2012	1.2.4, 3.2, 4.1.2
Province Decree ("Provinciedecreet")	9/12/2005	1.2.4, 4.1.2
Circus Decree ("circusdecreet" or "Decreet houdende een circusbeleid")	1/3/2019	3.3, 7.2.1
Masterpieces Decree ("Topstukkendecreet" or "Decreet van 24 januari 2003 houdende bescherming van het roerend cultureel erfgoed van uitzonderlijk belang")	24/1/2003	3.4
Media Decree ("Mediadecreet" or "Decreet betreffende radio-omroep en televisie")	27/3/2009	2.5.3
Decree on Youth Accommodation ("decreet Jeugdverblijfcentra" or "Decreet houdende subsidiëring van hostels, jeugdverblijfcentra, ondersteuningsstructuren en de vzw Algemene Dienst voor Jeugdtoerisme")	6/7/2012	6.4
Decree on the establishment of the SARC ("Decreet houdende de oprichting van de Raad voor Cultuur, Jeugd, Sport en Media")	30/11/2007	1.2.3

The so-called 'Collection Decree' ("Verzameldecreet" or "Decreet houdende diverse bepalingen in het beleidsveld



cultuur” of 29 March 2019) is not mentioned in other sections. This recent legislation adjusted some regulations (e.g. on the centres of expertise and on technical matters) of the decrees in Table 2a, partly as an attempt to streamline certain policies within the whole policy field of Culture.

Legislation on the level of the Federal State that is relevant for cultural affairs, is discussed throughout 4.1 (including the ‘social status of the artist’, see 4.1.3).

*Table 2b. International legal instruments implemented in the cultural field in Belgium*

Title of the act	Year of adoption
UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1983
Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe	1993
UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	1994
Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production	2003
UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	2006
UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property	2009
UNESCO Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict	2010
UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage	2010
Council of Europe European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised)	2010
UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions	2011
UN Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	2011
Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society	2012
Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production (revised)	2018

Belgium is a member state of international bodies such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO (see 1.1 and 1.4.2). The Flemish government is involved in these bodies, either through the Belgian membership or through independent relations. Table 2b presents a list of culture-related treaties of these international bodies that were adopted by the Belgian State and apply to Flanders.<sup>[2]</sup>

For a discussion of treaties signed between the Flemish government and other regions or countries, see 1.4.1.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The texts of these decrees can be consulted in the legal database [Vlaamse Codex](#) or in the database of the [Belgian Official Gazette](#). For a history of changes to the regulation of the Arts Decree until 2019, see this [timeline](#).

<sup>[2]</sup> This list is based on the [overview](#) of multilateral treaties on culture provided by the Flanders Departement of Foreign Affairs.

## 4.2.2. LEGISLATION ON CULTURE AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Cultural heritage — i.e. archive documents, manuscripts, works of art, old utensils, immaterial heritage, etc. — is a matter falling under the policy field of Culture, which is a competence of the Flemish Community. Immovable heritage is a separate policy field, residing with the Regions (see 1.2.3).

The [Cultural Heritage Decree of 24 February 2017](#) is the most important legal framework for cultural heritage in the Flemish Community, arranging project-based support and grants (see 7.2.1) or multi-year funding for organisations such as museums (also art museums), archives, heritage libraries, or heritage societies (see especially 3.1 and 3.2). The [Masterpieces Decree \(“Topstukkendecreet”\) of 23 January 2003](#) provides regulation on the protection and trafficking of rare and valuable artistic and cultural assets from Flanders (see also 3.4). [Legislation](#) on archive management of public institutions resides with both the Federal level and the level of the Communities and Regions. Belgium has signed a number of international treaties with regard to cultural and immaterial heritage (see 4.2.1).<sup>[1]</sup>

The [Decree on Immovable Heritage of 12 July 2013](#) (“Onroerenderfgoeddecreet”) provides the legal framework for monuments, landscapes, and archaeological sites in the Flemish Region. With regard to nautical heritage there is the [Heritage Fleet Decree of 29 March 2002](#) (“Varenderfgoeddecreet”). Together with international treaties (see 4.2.1), these decrees are the basis for assigning legal statuses to [immovable heritage](#) (see 1.3.2 and 3.1). Regulation on immovable heritage in the Brussels-Capital Region is subsumed under the [Brussels Code of Spatial Planning of 9 April 2004](#).

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<sup>[1]</sup> See also the [overview of policy documents on cultural heritage](#) by centre of expertise FARO.

## 4.2.3. LEGISLATION ON PERFORMANCE AND CELEBRATION

The [Arts Decree of 13 December 2013](#) is the main legislative framework for supporting the professional arts in the Flemish Community (see 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 3.3, 3.5.4, 5.4, and 7.2.1). This includes project support, grants, residencies, and multi-year funding for performing arts (theatre, dance, music theatre, performance art), music, visual arts, (‘multiple screen’) audiovisual arts, design, architecture, and multi- and transdisciplinary arts. The Arts Decree is currently being reformed (see 2.9).

The [Circus Decree of 1 March 2019](#) provides separate regulations for circus arts. As of 2021, it will replace older legislation that is still in effect in 2020.

The [Decree on Amateur Arts of 22 December 2000](#) arranges support for amateur artists in different disciplines, including performing arts and music.

The Federal legislation on the tax shelter for the performing arts is discussed in 4.1.4.

## 4.2.4. LEGISLATION ON VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

The [Arts Decree of 13 December 2013](#) is the main legislative framework for supporting the professional arts in the Flemish Community (see 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 3.4, 5.4, and 7.2.1). This includes project support, grants, residencies,

and multi-year funding for performing arts, music, visual arts (sculpture, painting, drawing, multimedia, sound art, photography, etc.), ('multiple screen') audiovisual arts, design, architecture, and multi- and transdisciplinary arts. The Arts Decree is currently being reformed (see 2.9). The Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) provides funding for ('single screen') audiovisual productions. Museums for fine arts and for contemporary arts receive support through the Cultural Heritage Decree (see 4.2.2).

The Masterpieces Decree ("Topstukkendecreet") of 23 January 2003 provides regulation on the protection and trafficking of rare and valuable art works from Flanders (see also 4.2.2).

The Decree on Public Art Commissions of 1 March 2019 (formerly known as 'Percentage Decree') stipulates that a part of the renovation or building costs of public infrastructure must be invested in the commission of a work of art.

The Decree on Amateur Arts of 22 December 2000 arranges support for amateur artists in different disciplines, including (audio)visual arts.

#### 4.2.5. LEGISLATION ON BOOKS AND PRESS

Funding for the literature and books sector is provided by Flanders Literature (see 1.2.3 and 3.5.2), which functions separately from the Arts Decree. This funding body was established by the Decree of 30 March 1999.

The Decree of 23 December 2016 introduced a regulated book price in Flanders. This means that publishers (or importers) set the price of a book (both paper and e-book), which has to be respected by book vendors for a period of at least six months. Limited price reductions are possible under certain conditions and the rules do not apply to certain genres of books (such as scientific or educational works). Publishers or importers can register the price of books in the online database Boekenbank.

The Decree on Amateur Arts of 22 December 2000 arranges support for amateur artists in different disciplines, including amateur authors.

There is also important legislation on the Federal level. The Law of 8 April 1965 on the Legal Deposit stipulates that copies of every publication that is published on Belgian territory or that is written by an author domiciled in Belgium must be submitted to the National Library of Belgium (KBR). The Royal Order of 13 December 2012 specifies the fee that authors receive when their books are on loan in public libraries (the general provisions for lending rights are codified in copyright legislation, see 4.1.6).

#### 4.2.6. LEGISLATION ON AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Funding for audiovisual productions (film, television series, games) is provided by the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF; see 1.2.3 and 3.5.3), which functions separately from the Arts Decree. The latter, however, does provide funding options for audiovisual work for multiple screens (which is usually shown in the exhibition circuit). The VAF was established by the Decree of 13 April 1999.

There are also economic funds for audiovisual production outside the policy field of Culture. These are linked to competences of the Regions. Screen Flanders operates in the Flemish Region and the Screen.brussels Fund in the Brussels-Capital Region.

The [Media Decree of 27 March 2009](#) is the main legal framework for broadcasting in the Flemish Community. The Flemish Regulator of the Media (see 2.5.3) provides an [overview](#) of additional stipulations and regulations on broadcasting.

#### 4.2.7. LEGISLATION ON DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

The [Arts Decree of 13 December 2013](#) is the main legislative framework for supporting the professional arts in the Flemish Community (see 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 3.5.5, 5.4, and 7.2.1). This includes project support, grants, residencies, and multi-year funding for performing arts, music, visual arts, ('multiple screen') audiovisual arts, design, architecture, and multi- and transdisciplinary arts. The funded architecture and design activities should be non-commercial (thus excluding commissions for designing buildings, for example) and artistically oriented or focussed on reflection. The Arts Decree is currently being reformed (see 2.9). Support for commercial activities is arranged by legislation in other policy fields than Culture (see 3.5.1).

The profession of architects is officially protected in Belgium. (Access to) this profession is regulated by [Federal legislation](#) — including an obligatory registration with the [Order of Architects](#).

## 5. Arts and cultural education

### 5.1. Policy and institutional overview

Both culture and education are competences of the Flemish Community, but each resides under a different policy area and government department. Compulsory education (see 5.2), higher arts education (see 5.3), and part-time education in the arts (see 5.4) are subsumed under the [Ministry of Education and Training](#). Support for independent cultural organisations that offer (both formal and informal) arts and culture education is part of the policy field of Culture. These include the organisations for socio-cultural work for adults, amateur arts organisations, participatory artistic initiatives (see 6.4), educational services of cultural heritage organisations, and local circus schools. Next to Culture and Education, cultural education also spans the Flemish policy fields of Youth (through which youth organisations and projects for cultural education are supported; see 6.4), and Media (through which [Mediawijz](#), an expertise centre on media and digital literacy, is supported) (see also 2.5.3).

The relationship between culture and education has received quite some attention in policy statements and studies (ordered by the government) in the past decade.<sup>[1]</sup> In 2016 and 2018, the (now former) ministers of Culture and Education launched joint action plans, with the aim of enhancing the role of culture in education programmes in Flanders.<sup>[2]</sup> The action plans resulted in the creation and revision of a number of policy instruments — some of them devised to stimulate collaboration between schools, cultural organisations and artists (see 5.2). As initiatives on cultural education cross different policy fields, networks have been set up, involving people and organisations in culture and education and government departments. There are teams dedicated to the topic of cultural education in the Ministry of Education and Training ([CANON Cultural Unit](#)) and in the [Department of Culture, Youth and Media](#).

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<sup>[1]</sup> For an overview, see Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019. *Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 117-119.

<sup>[2]</sup> Crevits, Hilde, and Sven Gatz. 2016. 'Cultuur en onderwijs – Samen voor meer en beter'; —. 2018. 'Cultuur en onderwijs: samen voor nog meer en beter II - Integreren en verankeren'.

### 5.2. Arts in schools

Compulsory education in Flanders is subject to attainment targets, which constitute a binding framework on what to teach. These [attainment targets](#) contain artistic and cultural competences, which is also true of some of the development goals in nursery school. Nonetheless, these targets and goals still offer schools a large degree of freedom in organising and implementing the curriculum. As a result, the range and quality of artistic and cultural education within the curriculum can vary among schools. Moreover, teachers and cultural organisations have shown concern about the current reform of the attainment targets and other goals in secondary education.<sup>[1]</sup> Although artistic and cultural competences feature prominently in the designs of the new goals (see 4.1.9), there are worries that their prominence is strongly reduced in the final, approved versions and in the effective adoption of the goals by Catholic Education Flanders (the largest network of schools in Flanders).

In secondary school (beginning in the third year), pupils can choose a course of study within secondary education in the arts ('kunstsecundair onderwijs' or KSO), which combines a broad general education with an active practice of art.

The Flemish government aims to stimulate the relation between culture and education in schools through a set of initiatives. Most of these are managed by [CANON Cultural Unit](#), which is part of the Ministry of Education and Training. These initiatives include:

- Cultuurkuur.be, an online platform which offers information on how to organise cultural education and provides an overview of cultural education activities that can be booked by schools in Flanders and Brussels (see also 6.1)
- funding schemes, such as DynamoPROJECT (for creative projects at school, involving a cultural partner) and Kunstkuur (for collaborations between schools and academies for part-time education in the arts)
- Expert training courses on cultural education for teachers and other people working at schools

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<sup>[1]</sup> See, for example, [this petition](#) launched by teachers or [this open letter](#), which was signed by a number of representatives of the artistic sector.

## 5.3. Higher arts and cultural education

Higher arts education (and higher education in general) in Flanders has a bachelor-master structure. Bachelor (both professional and academic) and master courses are available in two different fields of study: 'Music and Performing Arts' and 'Audiovisual and Visual Art' (which also includes courses in product design).<sup>[1]</sup> These courses are held at Schools of Arts, which form separate (and largely autonomous) structures within university colleges.<sup>[2]</sup> Schools of Arts collaborate with universities for PhD-programmes and research in the Arts.<sup>[3]</sup>

Beside the Schools of Arts, there are five Higher Institutions for Fine Arts, which offer specialised (mostly postgraduate) courses in the arts. These are [A.PASS](#) (performing arts and scenography), [HISK](#) (visual arts), [International Opera Academy](#) (opera), [Orpheus Instituut](#) (music), and [P.A.R.T.S.](#) (contemporary dance).

Other study programmes for higher cultural education include (interior) architecture, urban planning, conservation and restoration studies, archival studies, product development, digital arts and entertainment, and social-agogic work<sup>[4]</sup>. These are offered as bachelor, master, or graduate<sup>[5]</sup> courses at university colleges and universities. These institutions also offer study programmes in the humanities (archaeology, art history, musicology, literary studies, etc.) and teacher training courses in the arts and humanities. Obtaining a degree in the latter is a prerequisite for teaching arts or humanities courses in compulsory education (see 5.2) and part-time education in the arts (see 5.4).<sup>[6]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> The number of enrolled students in each field of study and at each institution for higher education can be consulted [online](#). Since 2020, these statistics also include the number of diplomas awarded. For a discussion of the relation between higher arts education and the professional arts sector, see Kunstenpunt, ed. 2019.

*Landschapstekening Kunsten: Ontwikkelingsperspectieven voor de kunsten anno 2019*. Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 155-156.

<sup>[2]</sup> Beside their Schools of Arts, these university colleges also organise non-artistic study programmes. The sole exception is LUCA School of Arts, which is a university college that comprises different Schools of Arts and therefore only offers arts education.

<sup>[3]</sup> It should be noted that there are no study programmes specialised in circus in Dutch-speaking higher education.

<sup>[4]</sup> Professionals in socio-cultural and youth work often follow courses in social-agogical work.

<sup>[5]</sup> Graduate courses ('graduaatsopleidingen') have been introduced in 2019 as a new category of higher education in Flanders (replacing the older 'HBO5' training programmes). These offer more hands-on training than bachelor courses.

<sup>[6]</sup> Lecturing in higher (arts) education requires a bachelor's, master's, or PhD degree (depending on the type of job), but not necessarily a degree of teacher. Many job offers at School of Arts, however, stipulate a teacher training qualification.

## 5.4. Out-of-school arts and cultural education

There are 165 schools and academies in Flanders and Brussels providing [part-time education in the arts](#). Together, these offer over 1 450 locations where children (from the age of six), youngsters, and adults can follow courses in performing arts, wordcraft, music and/or (audio)visual arts as leisure-time activity. The majority of municipalities in Flanders and Brussels has a (Dutch-speaking) academy for part-time education in the arts. In the school year of 2017-2018, there were over 196 000 people enrolled in these academies.<sup>[1]</sup> Courses are bound to a framework of targets ('einddoelen'), which nonetheless offer academies and teachers a great deal of freedom in how to organise their courses.<sup>[2]</sup> Part-time education in the arts resides under the competence of the Ministry of Education and Training. Next to this government-funded offer, there are courses by private players. Training in dance (ballet, clip dance, ballroom, folk dances, etc.) is provided by almost 1 600 [sport clubs](#) throughout Flanders and Brussels.

There are also many cultural organisations offering formal or informal (out-of-school) arts and cultural education (see also 6.4), such as organisations for socio-cultural work for adults, amateur arts organisations, participatory artistic initiatives, youth organisations, educational services of cultural heritage organisations, and circus schools<sup>[3]</sup>. These span different policy fields and receive support through different legal frameworks (see also 5.1). Experts from this heterogeneous field can meet each other through [Vitamine C](#) (hosted by publicq, see 6.1), a network of providers of cultural education as leisure pursuit (including Lasso, a Brussels network organisation, see 6.1).

In 2021, a new Decree on Out-of-School Childcare will come into effect. This decree grants local authorities in Flanders more freedom in organising out-of-school childcare, which might generate new opportunities for local collaboration between childcare organisations and others, including cultural (education) organisations.

Lastly, we should mention the [adult education centres](#) and the campuses of the [SYNTRA network](#). These offer job-oriented courses for adults in — among other spheres of professional activity — branches of the creative industries, such as design, fashion, or multimedia.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The Ministry of Education and Training provides [detailed data](#) on the number of pupils enrolled at academies for part-time education in the arts.

<sup>[2]</sup> This is especially the case since the new Decree on Part-Time Education in the Arts came into effect (see 4.1.9).

<sup>[3]</sup> Circuscentre provides an [overview of circus schools](#) ('circusateliers') in Flanders and Brussels.

## 5.5. Vocational and professional training

Vocational training for professions in arts and culture is mainly provided by the institutions for higher education described in 5.3. Several arts organisations provide masterclasses or guidance for young artists in the making, sometimes in collaboration with Schools of Arts. Continuing education — such as workshops or informal learning trajectories — is offered by a range of private and public organisations. Examples of the latter are the centres of expertise (see 7.2.1) and the funds for subsistence security (see 7.2.2).



## 6. Cultural participation and consumption

### 6.1. Policies and programmes

Access to culture and cultural development in Flanders has been a recurring topic in the policy priorities of subsequent ministers of Culture — though with differing intensity and accents.<sup>[1]</sup> Whereas, for example, participation of people in poverty is featured in policy documents of the four most recent ministers of Culture (see also 2.6), participation of people with culturally diverse backgrounds lacks mention in documents of the current minister (see also 2.5.1). Likewise, specific attention to participation of people with disabilities has waned in the strategic goals of the last two ministers of Culture (see 2.5.6).

On the Flemish level of government, the [Participation Decree](#) (since 2008) offers a policy framework for initiatives that focus on facilitating access to culture (but also sports and youth activities) and that are aimed at people in poverty, convicts, people with disabilities, people with a culturally diverse background, and/or families with children. Policy instruments of this decree include support for hobby associations and co-funding of local networks for people in poverty — in which local governments' services and associations of people in poverty collaborate to enhance access to leisure time activities. The Participation Decree used to provide more opportunities for support, but some initiatives have ceded to exist or are no longer taking applications. A recent example is the funding for projects aimed at participation of disadvantaged groups, which has been shut down under current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024).

The Participation Decree also arranges the support for two participation institutions ('participatie-instellingen'), [Dēmos](#) and [publiq](#). Dēmos acts as research and advocacy organisation on policies and practices (in the spheres of Culture, Youth, and Sport) that focus on groups that are under-represented and underexposed in society. They also organise [VRIJUIT](#), a network of organisations that provides reduced entry fees for cultural and sport events to people in poverty.

The aim of [publiq](#) is to stimulate participation to cultural and other leisure time activities through communication, marketing, and information services (see also 2.4). Their principle tool for this is [UiTinVlaanderen.be](#), where people can search for activities in and around the place they live. Organisers of events themselves provide the information for its database. The information on events can be reused on other digital platforms. [Publiq](#) also manages the [UiTPAS](#). Holders of this pass can earn points by participating in leisure activities in Flanders and Brussels and exchange them for benefits. Holders with low or fixed incomes are entitled to concessionary rates for activities linked with the [UiTPAS](#) – information which remains discreet. The idea is that this would make it easier for them to take part in leisure activities, without the risk of being stigmatized. [Publiq](#) collaborates with other organisations in Belgium in managing the system of [museum passes](#). Holders of this pass are granted free or reduced entry rates to museums all over Belgium, during one year. Furthermore, [publiq](#) is involved in [UiTmetVlieg](#) — a database of and label for leisure time activities suited for families and children —, in [BILL](#) — an event database and information platform on cultural activities for young people —, and in [Cultuurkuur.be](#) — which, in collaboration with CANON Cultural Unit (see 5.2), offers an overview of cultural education activities that can be booked by schools in Flanders and Brussels.

[Lasso](#) is the platform for cultural participation in Brussels. It devises projects on cultural participation, shares knowledge on the subject, and acts as a network for professionals and volunteers in culture, education, welfare,

and youth. It receives support from the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) and the Brussels-Capital Region.

Some policy makers have stressed the importance of participatory artistic practices as drivers of enhancing cultural participation.<sup>[2]</sup> These are described in 6.4.

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<sup>[1]</sup> See, for example: Anciaux, Bert. 2004. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009', 15-17; Schauvliege, Joke. 2009. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2009-2014', 16-18; Gatz, Sven. 2014. 'Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur', 36-38; Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 14.

<sup>[2]</sup> Anciaux, Bert. 2004. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2004-2009', 45; Gatz, Sven. 2015. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten. Naar een dynamisch, divers en slagkrachtig kunstenlandschap in Vlaanderen', 64-66; Jambon, Jan. 2020. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten', 18-19.

## 6.2. Trends and figures in cultural participation

An important source on cultural participation in Flanders is the [Participation Survey](#) ('Participatiesurvey'). Since 2004, this survey is commissioned every five years by the Flemish government (the current survey has met delay and is scheduled for 2021-2022). It is each time carried out according to a similar [methodology](#), which allows for [comparison over time](#). Table 3 presents data on receptive participation in cultural activities by the Flemish population (between ages 15 and 86), in 2004, 2009, and 2014. Table 4 presents data on active participation in artistic hobbies in Flanders in the same period.

*Table 3: People who participated in or attended a certain cultural activity during the last 6 months in the Flemish Community (in % of the population, over 3 available years)*

	2004	2009	2014
Theatre	21.1	24.6	22.2
Opera performances	2.1	2	2.1
Operetta	1.2	1.3	1
Ballet	3.5	2.5	3.8
Concerts of classic music	5.2	5.9	6
Contemporary dance	6.4	6.7	4.6
Popular performing arts (circus, revue, etc.)	30.2	32	28.1
Concerts of non-classic music (pop, rock, jazz etc.)	9.8	15.7	19.8
Art museums and exhibitions	19.2	18.3	20.1
Museums and exhibitions (other than art)	16.8	18.6	21.3
Monuments and other cultural heritage activities	38.7	48.1	40.5
Cinema	41.9	39.3	38.8
To read literature (novels and poetry)	33.2	38.4	39.5

Source:

[Participation Survey and related web tool](#) (2015)

The data of subsequent editions of the Participation Survey show that the share of visitors of many cultural activities has remained stable throughout 2004-2014.<sup>[1]</sup> There are some significant exceptions:

- there is a strong increase of the share of visitors to non-classical music concerts throughout the whole period
- the share of readers of novels and poetry clearly increases between 2004 and 2009, remaining stable afterwards
- the number of 'one-time' visits to monuments and other cultural heritage events has a steep rise in 2009, resulting in a temporary surge in the total share of visitors
- the number of 'one-time' visits to concerts of classical music rises, resulting in a slight increase of the total share of visitors
- the share of visitors to popular performing arts events drops in 2014, which is mainly an effect of less young and middle-aged visitors
- the number of frequent cinema visitors drops, resulting in a slight decrease in the total share of cinema visitors throughout 2004-2014
- When lumped together, the share of 'artful' performing arts (by which the researchers denote theatre, ballet, contemporary dance, and folk dance) remains relatively stable over the whole period. There is, however, a drop in frequent participation in these activities by young people

*Table 4: People who have carried out artistic amateur activities in the Flemish Community in the last 6 months by type of activity, in % of total population, period 2004-2014*

	2004	2009	2014
Writing	5	4.7	3.3
Painting, drawing or graphic work	6.6	7.4	6.4
Other visual arts (sculpting)	1.6	1.1	1.5
Making videos	6.3	8.3	4.6
Drama	1.3	1.2	1.6
Dance and ballet	4.3	6	4
Playing an instrument	7.1	6.3	8.1
Singing	6.8	6	5.4

Source: [Participation Survey and related web tool](#) (2015)

The data on active participation in artistic amateur activities show a rather capricious pattern, prompting the researchers of the Participation Survey to conclude that no clear upward or downward trends can be discerned. The overall data do show that, between 2004 and 2014, one out of four people in Flanders carried out an artistic hobby at least once a month.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Participation Survey also probes into the background of respondents. The results of the analyses of these data are in line with the outcome of international research, pointing out that age, gender, level of education, place of residence, and the environment in which respondents grew up play a role in cultural participation. There also seems to be a positive correlation between the size of the cultural offer in a certain place and the degree of cultural participation. The data gathered for the Participation Survey are insufficient to make claims about the role of culturally diverse backgrounds of respondents.<sup>[3]</sup> When looking at non-participation in Flanders, respondents mainly indicate a lack of interest as cause — rather than, for example, practical or financial thresholds.<sup>[4]</sup>

Though it has confronted the researchers with methodological issues, the Participation Survey has also tried to track the impact of digitisation on cultural participation.<sup>[5]</sup> Here, the data show a very clear increase between 2009 and 2014 in the use of the Internet as a medium in both receptive and active cultural participation, as an information channel on cultural events, and as a platform for distributing and obtaining cultural artefacts.

In general, the Participation Survey concludes that, contrary to other regions and countries, cultural participation in Flanders has remained quite stable between 2004-2014. The researchers nonetheless highlight some signals that indicate this situation might change in the long run. Especially cultural participation of younger generations might prove to become an issue in later surveys. We should, however, also refer to the results of the [SCV-survey](#). This survey was carried out on a yearly basis between 1996 and 2018 by [Statistics Flanders](#). The methodology is different from the Participation Survey and it does not provide as detailed information, but its most recent data on receptive cultural participation does not suggest a general downward trend (and even a slight increase in the share of participants in certain artistic activities).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Unless stated otherwise, this and following paragraphs are based on Lievens, John, Jessy Siongers, and Hans Waeye, eds. 2015b. *Participatie in Vlaanderen 2. Eerste analyses van de Participatiesurvey 2014*. Leuven: ACCO Uitgeverij, 13-64.

<sup>[2]</sup> A [new study](#) on active participation to culture by amateurs in Flanders and Brussels was being prepared at the time of writing.

<sup>[3]</sup> In general, there is few quantitative research on cultural participation in Flanders that takes culturally diverse backgrounds of respondents into account.

<sup>[4]</sup> Lievens, John, and Hans Waeye, eds. 2011b. *Participatie in Vlaanderen 2. Eerste analyses van de Participatiesurvey 2009*. Leuven: ACCO Uitgeverij, 323-324.

<sup>[5]</sup> Lievens, John, Jessy Siongers, and Hans Waeye, eds. 2015b. *Participatie in Vlaanderen 2. Eerste analyses van de Participatiesurvey 2014*. Leuven: ACCO Uitgeverij, 157-181.

## 6.3. Trends and figures in household expenditure

Statbel, the Belgian statistical office, carries out a [Household Budget Survey](#) (HBS) every two years (within the framework of the [EU-HBS](#)). These contain detailed data on mean household expenditure for the whole of

Belgium, of which a selection for 2012 and 2018 is presented in Table 5. Separate overviews for the Flemish, Brussels-Capital and Walloon Regions are also available, but these do not contain the same level of detail.

Between 2012 and 2018, there is a decrease in the mean household expenditure on books and press — which is primarily an effect of less expenditure on press — and audiovisual equipment and accessories — but not with regard to musical instruments, which remains stable. We also see a drop in the shares of radio and television subscriptions and costs for material for information processing (such as laptops) in the budgets of Belgian households.

By contrast, cultural services take on a larger share in 2018, with a clear increase of mean household expenditure on tickets and subscriptions for cinema, theatre and concerts, and even a doubling of the expenditure on museums, libraries and parks.

*Table 5: Mean household cultural expenditure in Belgium by expenditure purpose, 2012 and 2018*

Items (Field/Domain)	Mean household expenditure (in million EUR and percentage of total)				Average per capita expenditure (EUR)	
	2012	%	2018	%	2012	2018
I. Books and Press	409	1.15	352	0.98	173	157
Books	146	0.41	139	0.39	62	62
Press	160	0.45	122	0.34	68	54
II. Cultural Services	260	0.73	291	0.81	110	130
Cinema, theatre and others	78	0.22	125	0.35	33	55
Museums, libraries, parks and similar	20	0.06	40	0.11	8	18
Photographic services and other	17	0.05	20	0.06	7	9
III. Audiovisual equipment and accessories	370	1.04	225	0.63	157	100
Support for recording image, sound and data	107	0.30	64	0.18	45	28
Audiovisual equipment and accessories	43	0.12	33	0.09	18	15
Musical instruments	15	0.04	14	0.04	6	6
IV. Subscriptions of television, information processing						
Rental and subscriptions of radio and television						
<i>Subscriptions of radio and television</i>	122	0.34	72	0.20	52	32
<i>Rental of cultural equipment and accessories</i>	3	0.01	0.3	0.00	1	0.15
Information Processing and Internet						
<i>Material for information processing</i>	162	0.46	88	0.25	69	39
<i>Mobile devices</i>	63	0.18	61	0.17	27	27
<i>Mobile and Internet services</i>	925	2.61	1 011	2.83	393	450

Source:

Statbel, [Household Budget Survey](#) (2019)

## 6.4. Culture and civil society

Flanders has a strong tradition of socio-cultural work, which has its historical origins in cultural and social emancipation movements of different ideological backgrounds. A part of the field is supported by the Flemish government through the Decree on Socio-Cultural Work for Adults (which falls within the policy field of Culture). These organisations can be divided in [four types](#)<sup>[1]</sup>:

- Associations ('verenigingen') are networks of local societies that organise activities for their members and other people. Some of these societies focus on specific audiences (such as families or seniors) or specific subjects (such as cultural activities, human rights, or ecological awareness). There are currently over fifty of these associations, grouping around 14 000 local societies.
- 'Vormingplus-centra' (formerly known as folk high schools), of which there are thirteen. Each of these organisations covers a specific region and organises courses for adults on diverse (mostly social and cultural) themes.
- National training institutions ('landelijke vormingsinstellingen') offer education for adults. There are over twenty active over the whole of Flanders. They focus on a specific theme (nature and environment, care, relationships, etc.) or a specific audience (people with physical disabilities, employees, etc.).
- Movements, organised around a specific topic related to civil society (such as mobility, peace, citizenship, the fight against poverty, etc.) and operating all over Flanders. There are over thirty of these movements.

Next to socio-cultural organisations aimed at adults, there also many youth organisations and youth houses all over Flanders (which reside under the separate policy field of Youth). Local governments or the Flemish government offer support for [certain organisations and infrastructure](#). Those eligible for support of the Flemish government include youth associations; organisations for cultural education; organisations offering information on personal and civil themes, and children's rights, or offering participatory trajectories in policymaking; youth houses organising activities within the scope of the priorities of the Flemish policy on children's rights; and certain youth accommodation. Political youth movements no longer receive funding through the youth policy of the Flemish government.

Amateur arts receive support from the Flemish government, within the framework of the [Decree on Amateur Arts](#) (which falls under socio-cultural work, a subdomain of the policy field of Culture). Through this decree, funding is provided to one organisation per artistic discipline: [BREEDBEELD](#) (photography, audiovisual and multimedia arts), [Creatief schrijven](#) (literature), [Danspunt](#) (dance), [Koor&Stem](#) (vocal music), [KUNSTWERKT](#) (visual arts), [Muziekmozaïek](#) (folk and jazz), [OPENDOEK](#) (theatre), [VI.BE](#) (pop and rock music, DJs, see also 7.2.1), and [Vlamo](#) (instrumental music). In their turn, these organisations provide support — i.e. providing information and promotion, organising workshops, showcases, or contests — for amateur arts associations and individual amateur artists all over Flanders (for statistics on participation in artistic hobbies in Flanders, see 6.2). Associations and individuals can also apply for project funding through the Decree on Amateur Arts (see also 7.2.1).

Local governments also offer support for amateur arts. The cities of Ghent, Antwerp, and Brussels each have their own support centre for local amateur arts — respectively [CIRCA](#), [Fameus](#), and [Zinnema](#) (which is also funded by the Flemish government). As a result of the 'Internal State Reform', provincial governments in Flanders have ceded their support for amateur arts (see 1.2.4). We should also mention the [academies for part-time education in the arts](#) ('Deeltijds Kunstonderwijs', which falls under the policy field of education and training,

see 5.4), which provide training in visual arts, music, literature, and performing arts for children and adults in the majority of municipalities in Flanders and Brussels.

Most municipalities in Flanders have cultural infrastructure such as community centres, culture centres, and/or libraries. Since 2016, all of these organisations fully reside under the competence and funding facilities of local governments (also a consequence of the Internal State Reform, see 1.2.4).<sup>[2]</sup> Before, when they were regulated by the Flemish government, culture centres (over sixty in number) had three official tasks: spreading culture, community development, and promoting cultural participation. Together with community centres, culture centres are an important organiser of (or provider of infrastructure for) cultural events throughout Flanders.<sup>[3]</sup>

Lastly, we should mention initiatives and organisations operating at the intersection of arts and civil society in Flanders. These include participatory art practices (which, for example, offer innovating art education or work closely together with specific audiences such as people in poverty or people with disabilities) and transdisciplinary initiatives (which proceed from an artistic practice to tackle questions of, for example, technology, science, ecology, etc.). Urban areas in Flanders and Brussels prove to be fertile grounds for projects and organisations (many of them of transitory nature) that transgress the boundaries between arts, (sub)culture(s) and other spheres of society.<sup>[4]</sup> Both the Flemish government (via, for example, the Participation Decree, the Arts Decree, and the Decree on Socio-Cultural Work for Adults) and the local level offer opportunities of support for these initiatives.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Socius, support organisation for socio-cultural work for adults, made [an overview](#) of these organisations.

<sup>[2]</sup> Overviews of cultural centres and libraries before this transition can be found in Departement Cultuur, Jeugd, Sport en Media van de Vlaamse overheid. 2016. *Cultuurcentra in cijfers gevat. Focus op: publieksbereik*. Brussels; and —. 2017. *Bibliotheken in cijfers gevat. Focus op: bibliotheekinfrastructuur*. Brussels.

<sup>[3]</sup> Research has shown that culture and community centres play an important role in the distribution of concerts and stage performances in Flanders, see: Leenknecht, Simon. 2018. 'Podiumkunsten in Vlaanderen en Brussel. Het aanbod in 2014 in kaart gebracht'. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 299–326; and Janssens, Joris, and Nico Kennes. 2018. 'Livemuziek in Vlaanderen. Het aanbod in kaart gebracht'. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 255–78.

<sup>[4]</sup> Between 2017 and 2019, Flanders Arts Institute did a mapping of the different artistic networks in the urban fabric of [Brussels](#), [Ghent](#) and Antwerp.

## 7. Financing and support

### 7.1. Public funding

#### 7.1.1. INDICATORS

The following data refer to public culture expenditure in the whole of Belgium in 2018. Each figure is the sum of expenditure on cultural services and on broadcasting and publishing services.<sup>[1]</sup> Public culture expenditure (for all levels of government together) represents:

- EUR 283.4 per capita
- 0.7% of the GDP
- 1.4% of total public expenditure

These data were taken from [Eurostat](#), the [National Bank of Belgium](#), and [Statbel](#). Compared over the period 2009-2018, the percentage of public expenditure on cultural services in the GDP has remained stable (0.5%), while that of expenditure on broadcasting and publishing services dropped from 0.3% in 2009-2010 to 0.2% in 2011-2018. The share of expenditure on cultural services in the total of public expenditure amounted to 0.9% in 2009-2015, after which it rose to 1% in 2016-2018. The share of expenditure on broadcasting and publishing services has remained stable (0.4%) from 2011 onwards (compared to 0.5% in 2009-2010). For details on culture expenditure by the Flemish government and other levels of government, see 7.1.2.

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<sup>[1]</sup> I.e. COFOG-categories 08.2 ('cultural services') and 08.3 ('broadcasting and publishing services'). Category 08.2 includes, for example, the administration of cultural affairs, the operation or support of libraries, museums, theatres, exhibition halls, monuments, etc., the production or support of cultural events such as concerts, stage and film productions or exhibitions, and subsidies to support artists and cultural organisations. Category 08.3 includes, for example, the regulation and operation of broadcasting and publishing services, support for the gathering of news or the distribution of published works, and support for the construction of broadcasting facilities or equipment for newspaper, magazine or book publishing. See the [Eurostat manual on COFOG](#).

#### 7.1.2. EXPENDITURE ON GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Table 6 presents figures on culture expenditure by the different levels of government in Belgium.<sup>[1]</sup> Each figure is the sum of expenditure on cultural services and on broadcasting and publishing services (see 7.1.1 for detailed explanation).

With regard to Flanders, especially the data on the Flemish government (which combine data on Community and Region), the Flemish Community Commission in Brussels, and the Federal Government are important. The row of 'Lower government levels' includes the expenditure on culture by local and provincial governments in Belgium. As of 2018, provincial governments in Flanders are largely divested of competences on culture. These competences (and part of the related expenditure) were transferred to both the local governments and the Flemish government (see 1.2.4).



According to data provided by [Statistics Flanders](#), lower government levels in the Flemish Region spent EUR 2 108 272 754 on 'culture and recreation' in 2018 — or 10.6% of their total expenditure that year. These budget figures follow a different (broader) categorisation than those presented in Table 6 and have not yet been consolidated. Therefore, they were left out. Before 2016, a part of the funding that local governments received from the Flemish government was designated for spending on culture. Today, these means are transferred in a different way and are no longer earmarked for culture (see 1.2.4).

Given the complex governmental structure of Belgium and transfers of budgets between and within levels of government, detecting trends in data on culture expenditure can be difficult. We should also bear in mind that the Flemish minister of Culture is not responsible for immovable heritage. The data on culture expenditure mentioned in Table 6 therefore stretch different policy fields within the Flemish government. This further complicates the act of linking decisions by policy makers to expenditure figures.

The drop in the share of culture in the total expenditure of the Flemish government from 3.3% in 2013 to 2.1% in 2018 can be partly explained by political reform. Due to the sixth State Reform, the Communities and Regions took over competences from the Federal level (none of them directly related to culture). Total expenditure by Communities and Regions rose in 2015, causing a relatively smaller share of expenditure on culture. The budget cuts in, for example, subsidies for cultural organisations or the public broadcasting services are very likely another cause of fluctuations in the expenditure figures.

*Table 6. Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2013 and 2018*

Level of government	Total expenditure in EUR* in 2013	% share of total in 2013	Total expenditure in EUR* in 2018	% share of total in 2018
Federal Government	94 300 000	0.1	195 800 000	0.2
Flemish government	1 237 500 000	3.3	1 124 900 000	2.1
French Community	560 100 000	3.8	664 200 000	3.3
German Speaking Community	7 900 000	2.4	14 400 000	3.6
Walloon Region	48 300 000	0.5	42 700 000	0.3
Brussels-Capital Region	15 400 000	0.4	34 700 000	0.6
French Community Commission in Brussels	7 000 000	1.7	13 100 000	2.6
Flemish Community Commission in Brussels	3 740 000	24.6	39 500 000	19.1
All lower government levels	1 103 400 000	3.8	1 248 100 000	3.9
Total of all government levels in Belgium	2 902 100 000	1.3	3 239 300 000	1.4

Source:

[National Bank of Belgium](#) (2020)

\* At the date of expenditure

<sup>[1]</sup> The Common Community Commission in Brussels is not represented in table 6, because there is no expenditure on culture on this level of government. However, the total expenditure of the Common Community Commission was taken into account when calculating the share of culture in the total expenditure of all governments in Belgium.

### 7.1.3. EXPENDITURE PER SECTOR

Table 7 displays expenditure by the Flemish government on culture in 2019 (EUR 510 238 000, or 1.1% of total expenditure by the Flemish government in 2019<sup>[1]</sup>). Here, ‘culture’ designates a specific range of activities and sectors, including arts (such as the disciplines falling under the Arts Decree and the funds for literature and film, see 7.2.1), cultural heritage (such as museums, archives, and intangible heritage), and socio-cultural work for adults (including circus and amateur arts).<sup>[2]</sup> This, however, excludes expenses on media (such as broadcasting services) and immovable heritage (such as monuments and protected sites), which each reside with separate areas of competences — and, in some cases, with different ministers.

In 2009, [expenditure figures](#) for culture amounted to EUR 472 million. Over a ten-year period, these figures were at its lowest in 2016 (EUR 447 million) and peaked in 2018 (EUR 524 million). Under former ministers of Culture Joke Schauvliege (2009-2014) and Sven Gatz (2014-2019), a series of budget cuts took place. Each of these affected parts of the culture budget in a different way. More detailed figures on the evolution of parts of the culture expenditure are available for project funding for the arts<sup>[3]</sup> and [multi-year funding for arts organisations](#). Within the arts we see a steady increase over the years in the budget for large art institutions (‘kunstinstituten’), while multi-year funding for other arts organisations has remained relatively stable.

Beside budget cuts, transfers between the Flemish and other levels of government (e.g. the local and provincial levels) also affect the figures of total expenditure on culture (see also 7.1.2).

New budget cuts were announced for 2020 by current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024), among them a 6% cut in funding for socio-cultural organisations and many arts organisations. Initially, this also meant a severe decrease in project funding for the arts. At the time of writing, this has been partially undone (see also 2.3). The budget for funding cultural heritage organisations, on the other hand, was raised.

*Table 7: Expenditure by the Flemish government on culture: by sector, 2019, in 1000 euro*

Field/Domain/Sub-domain	TOTAL in 1000		TOTAL in %
Cultural Heritage	64 369		12.6
Arts	190 162		37.3
<i>Flanders Literature</i>		6 663	
<i>Flemish Audiovisual Fund (Film Fund)</i>		17 845	
<i>Other (funding for arts organisations, project funding, other)</i>		165 654	
Socio-cultural work for adults	69 251		13.6
Interdisciplinary	158 604		31.1
Administration	27 852		5.5
Total for area of competence of culture	510 238		100

Sources:

[Department of Finance and Budget](#) & [Department of Culture, Youth and Media](#) of the Flemish government

<sup>[1]</sup> This calculation takes into account direct government expenditure on its own administration (EUR 27 852 000). It should be noted that this [government administration](#) deals with the areas of competence ‘culture’, ‘media’ and

'youth'.

<sup>[2]</sup> Note that these figures differ from those presented in 7.1.2 and in table 6, which display expenditure in 2018, within COFOG-categories 08.2 and 08.3. The Flemish policy field of Culture, to which table 7 refers, uses different categories.

<sup>[3]</sup> Hesters, Delphine, Joris Janssens, and Simon Leenknecht. 2018. 'De projectenparadox. De evolutie van projectsubsidies en beurzen via het Kunstendecreet (2006-2017)'. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 367–87.

## 7.2. Support programmes

### 7.2.1. STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMES AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Different government levels in Flanders and Brussels have support programmes aimed at (individual) artists and cultural workers. On the Federal level, there are specific regulations concerning social security for artists, discussed in 4.1.3.<sup>[1]</sup> The main funding schemes are located at the level of the Flemish Community, where most forms for supporting professional artists are integrated into the Arts Decree.

Artists can apply for (short term and longer term) grants, which allow for the research and development of new ideas, residencies abroad or reflection on one's oeuvre. Project funding is available for individual artists (max. three years), which can serve for developing or producing work, presenting it, artistic reflection, participatory work or a combination of these goals. 'Breakthrough projects', on the other hand, are aimed at supporting tailor-made trajectories of artists on the verge of an international breakthrough. The Flemish government also meets travel and subsistence costs for artists presenting their work abroad and offers support for a number of international residencies. Artists who unite and organise (e.g. in theatre companies or music ensembles) can equally apply for project funding (the modalities for organisations are similar to those for individual artists) or structural funding (max. five years).<sup>[2]</sup>

The mentioned types of funding apply for artists active in different disciplines. The exception are professionals working in the fields of literature and audiovisual content, who can apply for grants through respectively [Flanders Literature](#) and [Flanders Audiovisual Fund \(VAF\)](#), funds that function independently from the Arts Decree. Another exception are circus artists, for whom the Circus Decree provides individual grants for developing their oeuvre (max. one year) and project funding for creating and presenting work (max. three years).

Furthermore, we should mention the grants for passing on craftsmanship through a teacher-pupil trajectory. These support craftspeople and (applied) artists (for max. two years) when passing over their expertise — considered as a form of intangible cultural heritage — to a pupil. Amateur artists can apply through the Decree on Amateur Arts for refunding travel costs when participating in an international project.

Beside funding programmes, the Flemish government has also taken measures to stimulate entrepreneurship among artists and facilitate them in gaining a private income (see 7.3). Another form of support for artists and cultural and creative workers comes from funded organisations, such as the centres of expertise ('steunpunten') for the professional arts ([Flanders Arts Institute](#)), for cultural heritage ([FARO](#)), for socio-cultural work for adults

([Socius](#)), for circus arts ([Circuscentrum](#)) and supralocal cultural activities ([OP/TIL](#)), who offer information and networking opportunities to individuals and organisations active in the cultural sector. [Flanders Architecture Institute](#) fulfils a similar role for architects and [VI.BE](#) for musicians (except classical musicians). [Cultuurloket](#) offers artists and culture workers advice on business related and juridical questions. [Flanders DC](#) offers guidance to entrepreneurs in the creative industries.

Some local governments offer (project) funding for local artists and cultural workers (such as the Cities of Antwerp, Ghent or Mechelen). The Flemish Community Commission ([VGC](#)), the representative of the Flemish government in the Brussels-Capital Region, offers funding possibilities for projects and artist career trajectories.

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<sup>[1]</sup> This section only discusses recurring support programmes for artists and cultural. For a discussion of the temporary measures for mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on individuals in the cultural sector, see the separate [COVID-19 overview on Flanders](#).

<sup>[2]</sup> For an overview of funding schemes, see the [website of the Department of Culture, Youth & Media of the Flemish government](#). For a discussion of evolution of project funding through the Arts Decree, see Hesters, Delphine, Joris Janssens, and Simon Leenknecht. 2018. 'De projectenparadox. De evolutie van projectsubsidies en beurzen via het Kunstendecreet (2006-2017)'. In [Cijferboek Kunsten 2018](#), Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 367-87; Leenknecht, Simon. 2019. 'Waarom zijn projectsubsidies belangrijk in de kunsten?' [Kunsten.be](#).

## 7.2.2. ARTIST'S FUNDS

Section 7.2.1 provides an overview of the current public funding for artists, including Flanders Literature (which supports writers, translators and illustrators) and the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF, which offers funding opportunities for individuals working in the audiovisual sector). Aside from these, Flanders does not have government funds specifically oriented towards artists.

Belgium has a system of funds for subsistence security ('fondsen voor bestaanszekerheid'), which, for example, set up additional training, provide guidelines for secure working conditions or manage additional social benefits for employees of companies and organisations. These are organised according to collective labour agreements in officially delineated sectors (see 4.1.5), such as the 'performing arts' (which in this case include theatre, dance and music), the 'socio-cultural sector' (which in this case includes museums and visual arts organisations), and the audiovisual sector. Funds active in these sectors are, respectively the [Performing Arts Social Fund](#), Sociaal Fonds voor het Sociaal-Cultureel Werk ([SFSCW](#)), and [Mediarte](#). Note that their benefits are directed at employees (e.g. musicians receiving wages from ensembles or actors employed by theatre companies), not at independent freelancers.

For a discussion of private foundations, whose contributions directly or indirectly support artists' activities, see 7.3.

For a discussion of the (temporary) public and private funds aimed at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on individuals in the cultural sector, see the separate [COVID-19 overview on Flanders](#).

### 7.2.3. GRANTS, AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS

Grants and bursaries supplied by public funding bodies are discussed in 7.2.1. Some of these public funding bodies have support programmes aimed at young or recently graduated talents, such as the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (VAF), which, for example, offers wildcards for upcoming directors and screenwriters.

The Flemish government yearly awards the Ultimas (the former 'Vlaamse Cultuurprijzen'), prizes for individuals and organisations with merits in different cultural disciplines (including an Award for General Cultural Merit and the BILL Award for promising young artists). The [Flemish Government Architect](#) awards and stimulates (together with Flanders Architecture Institute) innovating research and ideas by architects and other designers with a BWMSTR LABEL. Recently graduated architects and artists can tender for their 'Meesterproef'-contest, which provides the laureates a chance to realise a public project. Because provincial governments in Flanders no longer hold competences with regard to culture (since 2018; see 1.2.4), provincial awards for upcoming and established artists and architects have ceased to exist.

Next to public governments, publicly funded organisations and private foundations also organise awards and scholarships for artists (see also 7.3). Among those with a long-standing tradition, we could mention the Godecharle Prize (for young visual artists), the Queen Elisabeth Competition (for classical musicians), and the BelgianArtPrize (for visual artists; formerly known as 'Prijs Jonge Belgische Schilderkunst'). As in other countries, some awards have been criticized for a lack of decent remuneration, opaque procedures, or the activities sponsors are involved in. A recent example is the contestation over the BelgianArtPrize, which had its editions in 2018 and 2020 cancelled.<sup>[1]</sup>

Numerous other awards for established and upcoming artists are held in various disciplines, such as the Supernova Awards (classical music), the Music Industry Awards (pop and rock), Prijs van de Vrienden v/h S.M.A.K. (visual arts), the awards of Film Fest Gent, the Henry van de Velde Awards (design), the prizes of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Arts and Sciences (KVAB, for artists and researchers), etc. Some of these are organised in collaboration with Schools of Arts (see 5.3) or with the intermediary support organisations mentioned in 7.2.1. In theatre and literature,<sup>[2]</sup> it is not uncommon that awards span different Dutch-speaking territories. Examples of this are the Libris Literature Award or the Taalunie Toneelschrijfprijs (for playwrights).

Beside grants, bursaries, scholarships and awards, we should also mention the many residency programmes offered by organisations in Flanders and Brussels to young, mid- or later-career artists.<sup>[3]</sup> Some of the organisations mentioned in 7.2.1 also offer (international) networking opportunities for artists through holding events and meetings or participating in fairs.

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<sup>[1]</sup> De Wit, Dirk. 2020. 'Over de betekenis van prijzen in de beeldende kunsten. Welke kwesties spelen er en wat is eigenlijk de historiek van dit soort kunstprijzen?' [Kunsten.be](#).

<sup>[2]</sup> [Flanders literature](#) provides an overview of prizes won by Flemish writers and illustrators.

<sup>[3]</sup> [Flanders Arts Institute](#) provides a mapping of residencies and workplaces in Flanders and Brussels.

#### 7.2.4. SUPPORT TO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATIONS OR UNIONS

There are different federations and associations in Flanders and Brussels that represent the voice and interests of artists or (arts) organisations, such as [NICC](#), State of the Arts ([SOTA](#)), [De Acteursgilde](#), [ArtistsUnited](#), [VAV](#), [De Scenaristengilde](#), [oKo](#), MuziekOverleg, [Sociare](#), [RAB/BKO](#), or [cult!](#). Some federations and associations active in the field were or still are directly funded by governments (on various levels). In its previous term, the Flemish government has spoken out against this form of support. Former Minister of Culture Sven Gatz stated in his Policy Memorandum (2014-2019) that the government should not intervene in affairs of advocacy.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Belgian labour unions [ACV](#), [ABVV](#) and [ACLVB](#) have divisions focussing on the cultural sector. Labour unions receive public support through regulations of labour and employment (on the Federal level).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Gatz, Sven. 2014. 'Beleidsnota 2014-2019. Cultuur', 48.

### 7.3. Private funding

Artists and cultural organisations draw from a diverse range of sources of income, both public (funding from the Flemish, Federal, local, and/or international level) and private (such as ticketing, membership fees, patronage, sponsorship, etc.).<sup>[1]</sup> Series of figures on income structures exist for organisations receiving multi-year funding through the Arts Decree (for the period 2007-2016)<sup>[2]</sup> and organisations funded through the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults (for the period 2007-2014)<sup>[3]</sup>. In both cases, the mean ratio between public and private income remains relatively stable throughout the years.

Former Flemish minister of Culture Sven Gatz (2014-2019) ordered two studies (in [2015](#) and [2017](#)) to get an overview of private financing of culture in Flanders. These concluded that, although different opportunities for this do exist, there is no widespread 'culture' of private financing of the sector — especially so when compared to other regions and countries. The studies identified as causes a lack of expertise in the cultural sector about the opportunities for private financing, a limited interest in financing culture among private donors and sponsors, and a restricted scope of government policy on these matters.

Other research finds that cultural goals represent about 10 to 12% of individual donations to charity in Belgium.<sup>[4]</sup> The most recent data on [crowdfunding campaigns](#) for culture in Belgium suggest that 17% (or EUR 4.2 million) was spent on creative projects. Recent figures indicate that around 19% of corporate givings (by both small- and large-scale companies in Belgium) are aimed at culture and cultural patrimony, most of which go to causes in music, architecture, and visual arts.<sup>[5]</sup> Next to these companies, there are hundreds of philanthropic foundations active in Belgium, many among them in the domain of art and culture.<sup>[6]</sup> Prominent philanthropic foundations and corporate giving programs that provide support for culture are the [King Baudouin Foundation](#) (under which ca. 500 different foundations reside), [SPES](#) (which offers grants to artists in different disciplines), [CERA](#) (which focuses on social-artistic and participatory projects), the [National Lottery](#) (which also acts as sponsor), and [Sabam for Culture](#) (which offers grants for producing and presenting repertoire of Sabam-members, see 4.1.6).<sup>[7]</sup> With regard to sponsorship of culture in Flanders and Belgium, there are few figures available.<sup>[8]</sup>

Policy makers have shown interest in stimulating private funding of arts and culture for quite some time. Measures taken in earlier legislations included a tax shelter system (see 4.1.4) for audiovisual productions (since 2003) and performing arts (since 2017), the establishment of Cultuurinvest (an independent investment fund that existed between 2006 and 2017) and microcredits for artists (such as the ‘minitoelagen’ in 2008). Partly as a reaction to the mentioned studies, former minister Gatz published a concept note devoted to private financing and entrepreneurship (2017). This note announced a number of initiatives, such as establishing a network of financial institutions that supply tailor-made credit and financing opportunities for the cultural sector, initiating [Cultuurloket](#) (see 7.2.1) — an organisation that acts as information portal for the culture sector for all matters of entrepreneurship, administration, complementary financing, etc. — and enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration through a system of open calls — the ‘innovative partner projects’, which aim to both diversify the revenue streams in the culture sector and boost innovation in other sectors.

Current minister of Culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) declared he would continue (and possibly expand) some of the existing measures with regard to private funding and entrepreneurship.<sup>[9]</sup> It should be noted that initiating or adjusting fiscal measures for stimulating philanthropy and sponsorship in culture would in many cases require negotiation between the Flemish and the Federal level, where a large deal of the legal framework for these matters resides (as is the case with, for example, tax shelters; see also 1.2.6).

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<sup>[1]</sup> For an analysis of artists’ income and their socio-economic position, see Siongers, Jessy, Astrid Van Steen, and John Lievens. 2016. *Loont passie? Een onderzoek naar de sociaaleconomische positie van professionele kunstenaars in Vlaanderen*. Ghent University; Siongers, Jessy, Mart Willekens, Lucas Pissens, and John Lievens. 2018. *Wie heeft het gemaakt? Een onderzoek naar de sociaaleconomische positie van architecten en designers in Vlaanderen*. Ghent University. With regard to the diversity of income structures of arts organisations, see Van de Velde, Ward, Delphine Hesters, and Bart Van Looy. 2013. ‘Kunstenorganisaties op zoek naar inkomsten. Welke businessmodellen zijn haalbaar?’ In *Kunstzaken. Financiële en zakelijke modellen voor de kunsten in Vlaanderen*, Brussel: Kwarts, 4–25.

<sup>[2]</sup> Leenknecht, Simon. 2018. ‘De ins en outs revisited. Analyse van de opbrengsten en kosten van organisaties met meerjarige subsidies via het Kunstendecreet (2010-2016)’. In *Cijferboek Kunsten 2018*, Brussel: Kunstenpunt, 335–66; Janssens, Joris, and Dries Moreels. 2011. *De ins & outs van het Kunstendecreet. Een blik op de opbrengsten en uitgaven van Kunstendecreetstructuren (2007-2008)*. BAM/MCV/VAi/VTi.

<sup>[3]</sup> Deckmyn, Sam (ed.). 2008. *Boekstaven 2008*; —. 2009. *Boekstaven 2009*; —. 2010. *Boekstaven 2010*; —. 2011. *Boekstaven 2011*; —. 2012. *Boekstaven 2012*. Brussel: Federatie van organisaties voor Volksontwikkelingswerk (FOV); Post, Mathijs, and Joris Smeets. 2015. *Boekstaven 2015*. Brussel: Federatie van organisaties voor Volksontwikkelingswerk (FOV).

<sup>[4]</sup> Van de Cloot, Ivan. 2017. *Filantropie- index/klimaat*; —. 2020. *Barometer Filantropie*. Itinera Institute/Koning Boudewijnstichting.

<sup>[5]</sup> Sonocom, Prométhéa, and Observatoire de Politiques Culturelles de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. 2019. *Étude sur le Mécénat/Sponsoring d'entreprise*. Brussel. This report also considers tax shelter arrangements as corporate patronage.



<sup>[6]</sup> Mernier, Amélie, and Virginie Xhauflair. 2017. *De stichtingen in België - Rapport 2017*. Brussel: Philantropy & Social Investment Baillet Latour Chair, 14. This report examines two types of foundations with philanthropic goals ('stichtingen van openbaar nut' and 'private stichtingen met een doelstelling van algemeen belang') and concludes that 20% of these are active in arts and culture.

<sup>[7]</sup> Cultuurloket provides an [overview](#) of prominent philanthropic foundations for culture.

<sup>[8]</sup> One of those few figures is provided by the [National Lottery](#), which spent 14% of its total sponsor budget in 2019 on culture.

<sup>[9]</sup> Jambon, Jan. 2019. 'Beleidsnota Cultuur 2019-2024', 16-17; —. 2020. 'Strategische Visienota Kunsten', 16-17. For a more detailed discussion of private funding and entrepreneurship in Jambon's policy statements and their relation to the history of cultural policy in Flanders, see: Wellens, Nikol. 2020. 'Hybride economie'. Kunsten.be. 23 July 2020.

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[More information »](#)

Until 2018, Joris Janssens, Delphine Hesters and Nikol Wellens prepared the text for the Flemish Community (based on prior material by Els Baeten, Hilde Billiet and Bart Van Der Hertem), Isabelle DeVriendt and France Lebon for the French Community, and Edith Bong for the German-speaking Community.