

CHILD RIGHTS APPROACH  
IN PUBLIC POLICY

## Summary of key issues from previous UPR cycles

Combating discrimination, promoting inclusion, strengthening data collection, improving coordination between levels of government, mobilising the principle of the best interests of the child, etc.: the recommendations addressed to Belgium in all categories of action during previous UPR cycles are closely linked to the implementation of a human rights-based approach in the definition, implementation and monitoring of public policies.

Although progress has been made, notably through the adoption of multiple action plans, the creation of the National Commission for the Rights of the Child (CNDE) in 2005, and the Federal Institute for Human Rights in 2019, several recommendations remain only partially implemented. There have also been **significant setbacks, particularly with regard to the human rights-based approach**. Inter-federal coordination and the collection and use of disaggregated data to guide public policy remain important challenges.

## National framework

Belgium has three separate action plans for children's rights (Flanders, Wallonia, Wallonia-Brussels Federation), **with no coordinated action plan at national level**. This situation maintains fragmentation between territories and areas of competence, to the detriment of coherent action planning. This fragmentation complicates the consistent implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) throughout the country.

The National Commission for the Rights of the Child (CNDE), created to promote coordination between the federated entities and the federal state, operates with very **limited human and financial resources**, which are insufficient given the scope of its mandate.

The **lack of national and disaggregated data** on children aged 0 to 18 in key areas such as justice, migration, poverty, mental health, disability and violence contributes to the invisibility of certain realities experienced by children.

Finally, **children's participation in decision-making processes remains uneven and unstructured**, particularly for children in vulnerable situations.

## Challenges and impact

The absence of a human rights-based approach in general – and a child rights-based approach in particular – systematically applied in public policy development leads to:

- measures that are insufficiently adapted to the real needs of children, especially the most vulnerable ;
- disruptions for children and their families due to a lack of coordination between sectors and levels of government ;
- difficulties in identifying, preventing and correcting the negative impacts of policies on children's rights ;
- limited participation by children, which undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of policies that affect them.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen the integration of human rights into the development, implementation and evaluation of public policies by systematically using tools such as the Child Rights Impact Assessment, Handistreaming and other human rights impact assessments to prioritise measures, identify risks to vulnerable populations, consult stakeholders and monitor the impact of policies on the effective enjoyment of rights by all.
- Strengthen coordination between levels of government and relevant sectors to ensure coherent, continuous and accessible pathways for children and their families.
- Strengthen the collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data, including by age, gender, type of disability, socio-economic status, etc., in all sectors concerned with children and young people, in order to guide public policies, assess their impact and highlight situations of vulnerability.
- Ensure the effective participation of all children, including the most vulnerable, by setting up mechanisms and permanent tools, accessible and adapted information, communication and consultation, allowing them to be heard in every decision affecting them.

## Online file :

<https://lacode.be/projet/upr-2026-factsheets/>



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This fact sheet is part of a series of fact sheets written on the situation of children's rights in Belgium for information purposes in the context of Belgium's Periodic Review. Their drafting was coordinated by CSOs and NHRIs that are members of a working group on the UPR, led by the National Commission for Children's Rights.