



### Summary of key issues from previous UPR cycles

During the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, Belgium received 19 recommendations relating to the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly in terms of discrimination, social inclusion and access to essential services. Although few recommendations specifically addressed children, they reiterated Belgium's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), particularly with regard to access to inclusive education, participation and protection against all forms of segregation.

Belgium accepted most of these recommendations and adopted several strategic frameworks, including the Federal Disability Action Plan 2021–2024 and the Interfederal Disability Strategy 2021–2030, which recognise the importance of inclusion and a human rights-based approach. **However, children with disabilities remain insufficiently visible in these frameworks and progress in their practical implementation remains limited.** In Flanders, a plan to move towards a more inclusive education system is being prepared, with notable advances compared to the previous legislature.

### National framework

In Belgium, children with disabilities continue to face **structural barriers that hinder the effective exercise of their rights**. The dominant model remains largely based on a medical and institutional approach, frequently directing children towards specialised or separate facilities, particularly in the field of education.

The social and economic context exacerbates these difficulties. The gradual dismantling of social policies, which has resulted in the reduction, limitation or conditionality of social security, directly affects children, particularly when their parents are carers or face poverty.

Insufficient coordination between levels of government and sectors complicates access for children and their families to coherent and appropriate pathways. The lack of reliable and disaggregated data also limits the ability of the authorities to develop, monitor and evaluate public policies based on real needs. Finally, the **Federal Disability Action Plan 2025–2029 has not yet been finalised or adopted by the government**, which is delaying the definition of clear priorities and concrete measures to improve the inclusion of children with disabilities.

### Challenges and impact

The main challenges identified have direct and lasting impacts on the lives of children with disabilities, exacerbated by the decline of social policies and the delay in adopting the 2025–2029 plan:

- Persistent **relegation in education**, with high use of specialised education and barriers to inclusion in mainstream education ;
- Increased risk of **institutionalisation**, often linked to the lack of adequate support services for families ;
- Significant regional inequalities in **access to services, support and adapted infrastructure** ;



- Disproportionate burden borne by **families**, who face administrative complexity and insufficient support;
- Limited access to social, cultural and recreational activities, reinforcing the **isolation** of children from an early age;
- **Insufficient participation of children**, whose voices are rarely taken into account in decisions that affect them (schooling, leisure activities, health, place of residence, etc.).

These challenges compromise the effectiveness of the rights of children with disabilities and hinder the transition to an inclusive society, in line with Belgium's international commitments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen the human rights-based approach to disability by systematically placing inclusion and the best interests of the child at the heart of public policy, using the tools of disability mainstreaming and child rights impact assessment.**
- **Accelerate the transition to an inclusive education system (in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) by providing mainstream education with the necessary human and financial resources, strengthening initial and continuing training for education staff, and gradually reducing the use of specialised education.**
- **Prevent the institutionalisation of children with disabilities by developing local support services, family support and respite care from early childhood onwards.**
- **Strengthen coordination between the levels of government and sectors concerned within the Interministerial Conference on Disability to ensure coherent and accessible pathways for children and their families.**
- **Finalise and adopt the Federal Disability Action Plan 2025–2029 without delay, incorporating concrete and priority measures for the inclusion of children with disabilities.**

### 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.

