



Summary of key issues from previous UPR cycles

During the third cycle of the UPR (May 2021), Belgium received eight recommendations calling for the implementation of concerted policies to reduce poverty among families and children (recommendations 35.169, 35.194 to 35.199, 36.52). In response, Belgium adopted the **European Child Guarantee** (ECG), committing to ensuring that children in need have access to essential services such as :

- free, high-quality and inclusive early childhood education and childcare ;
- free, high-quality and inclusive education ;
- free, high-quality and inclusive healthcare ;
- healthy food ;
- adequate housing.

National framework

In Belgium, poverty remains a major obstacle to children's fundamental rights. **Recent social policies, which tend to individualise poverty rather than treat it as a social and structural problem, have a direct impact on the poverty of families and children.** Time limits on unemployment benefit, stricter conditions for accessing social assistance, increased monitoring of beneficiaries' expenditure, reductions in replacement income and the postponement of the indexation of social allowances, including child benefit, are weakening existing protection mechanisms and increasing the vulnerability of families and children.

Challenges and impact

- **One in five children** in Belgium **is at risk of poverty and social exclusion**, with important regional disparities : 10% in Flanders, 24% in Wallonia and 44% in Brussels.
- **The national action plan drawn up by Belgium in 2022 as part of the European Child Guarantee, and the 2024 interim report are unambitious**, do not meet the requirements of the Child Guarantee imposed on European Union Member States, and are not sufficiently used to improve access to essential basic services for children in vulnerable situations.

In the French Community of Belgium specifically, previous measures aimed at gradually guaranteeing free and effective access to education, as well as free school meals, have been insidiously and drastically defunded. With regard to free access to quality childcare services – an issue never addressed in previous UPR cycles – we note a lack of structural measures to guarantee accessible, inclusive and quality care for all young children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, resulting in a **shortage of daycare spots and early childhood professionals**.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop, by 2028, an inter-federal framework for combating poverty that ensures consistency between federal, community and regional plans, as well as with the European Child Guarantee, and incorporates common objectives and indicators relating to child and family poverty.
- Raise incomes and social allowances above the European poverty threshold to take into account all household costs (energy, healthcare, education, housing, food, etc.).
- Integrate the European Child Guarantee into all public policies related to children to ensure universal and equitable access to basic services: childcare, education, health, healthy food and decent housing.

Online file :

<https://lancode.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.