

Els Witte

## Looking back on fifteen years of FCC policy (1989-2004)

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**Abstract**

*This contribution is a first impetus to explain the policy of the Flemish Community Commission during the period 1989-2004. To this end the discourse of the main actors is analysed, i.e. the ministers who together form the Board and the members of parliament who have a seat in the Council. The Policy statements and the minutes of the meeting are the basis of this analysis. This literature provides interesting information about how the main actors perceive the institution, its functions and its place in the Brussels model, and mainly the way how they want to interpret their social-cultural powers and the values that play a role in all this.*

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A political institution such as the Flemish Community Commission (FCC) which, in less than five years, has evolved from a small actor to a quite significant partner in the urban policy of Brussels, an international city with several metropolitan functions, is obviously an intriguing phenomenon. Therefore, it may be quite clarifying to look back on its policy. In this (short) overview I would like to give an initial impetus to that effect.

How will I go about it? The focus will be on the discourse of the main actors, the ministers who together form the Board and the Dutch-speaking Brussels members of parliament and the Brussels members of the Flemish Parliament who have a seat in the Council.. What are their expectations, what are the goals they want to achieve, which policy options have they formulated and which ideological-political opinions are these options based on? These questions can be answered by analysing their exposition. Expositions by ministers and councillors also indicate the line to be followed by the executive authorities. In order to make this analysis as representative as possible, I will rely on a series of adequate sources. Policy statements are obviously the texts par excellence which may lead to relevant discussions. I went through them systematically for the period between 1989-2004, as well as through the minutes of other council meetings where mainly general policy matters were addressed. This specific literature does not only provide information about the way how the main actors perceive the institution, its functions and its place in the Brussels model, but mainly the way how they want to interpret their social-cultural powers and the values that play a role in all this. Thanks to the scientific literature which has been generated about a number of these policy topics over the past couple of years, they can perfectly be seen within their context.

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This overview addresses the first fifteen years of the existence of the FCC and mainly focuses on the initial phase and its subsequent evolution. Therefore, the most recent period has not been integrated. The overview does not at all intend to be an analysis of the FCC policy. Only after comprehensive studies of the rich archives of the FCC, we will be able to answer questions about the concrete interpretation of the policy options, about the problems encountered in the field and in the administration, and most of all about the policy's effect in the different industries. In a word, this is only a first, concise retrospect on fifteen years of FCC policy, based on the discourse of major policy-makers.

### **An institution with growing powers**

The origin of the FCC on 14 July 1989, in implementation of the Brussels Act, was a major event for Flemish people in Brussels. The Flemish option to let Belgium develop towards a bipartite federalism with Brussels acting as the connecting link had also been obstructed in 1988 by the third regional demand of the French speakers in Brussels. At community level the bipartition had been accepted. The cultural matters were expanded to person-related matters and the Flemish-Brussels position of power had significantly increased: thanks to a certain kind of parity and the right to veto on a regional level, the Flemish people in Brussels became a minority with political power which could also define and implement its own community policy.

The new institution did not have to start from scratch. To the contrary. As a response to the victory of the FDF the seventies had been a period of Flemish unity, in which lots of associations, social-cultural councils, meeting centres and coordinating organisations had been founded. The foundation of the Dutch Culture Commission (NCC) gave this dynamism an extra incentive and ensured political continuity. The NCC presented itself as the coordinator and developed several policy domains to that end. The congresses organised by the Flemish speakers in Brussels between 1975 and 1985 also helped to prepare the Brussels Act in terms of its content. The FCC was able to elaborate on an existing well-developed tradition, making it possible to take care of the further professionalisation and scaling-up.

The composition of the Council has been the weak spot every since the start. The Brussels Act stated that the FCC Council had to consist of the members of the Flemish language group of the Regional Council; the executive function was vested in the Board elected among the councillors. After the Sint-Michiels agreements (1993) the Flemish Secretary of State from the Brussels Regional government also became a member of this Board. However, the number of elected councillors was rather meagre. The small Flemish immigration, the Flemish emigration and the strengthened position of French as *lingua franca* did not at all improve the minority position of Flemish people in Brussels. In 1995 the Council lost one seat and consisted of only about 10 members. Not enough people for the many functions which the councillors had to fulfil. In the meantime, the extreme right Vlaams Blok had not only strongly progressed in Flanders, but also in Brussels. The party put forward full separatism and recovery strategies for Brussels and aimed for an absolute majority position in the FCC Council. Now, the French speakers were also worried that this party would keep Brussels institutions hostage. The situation led to a settlement

with the French speakers, who in exchange for concessions to their own community, allowed for a better representation of the Flemish minority in the Regional Council, and therefore also in the FCC Council. After the Lambermont-Lombard agreements (2001-2002) the Council has 17 members, to which the Brussels people elected to the Flemish parliament are added as permanent observers. An anti Vlaams Blok construction was also set up: electoral lists of the same language group can be connected to each other in Brussels and therefore take advantage of their respective residual votes. In the substantially expanded Council the democratic parties clearly maintain the majority.

Financially, the FCC has done reasonably well. Initially resources were only granted via endowments of the Flemish Community. The Sint Michiels agreements gave the regions new powers and additional resources, and then drawing rights on regional budgets were installed for the community commissions in Brussels. A 20/80 relation was put in place. The Lambermont-Lombard agreements again expanded the powers and the taxation of the regions. The French Community Commission, the Cocof, demanded more drawing rights on the Region, which was obviously beneficial to the FCC as well. Together with the financial efforts made by the Flemish Community for its capital, the possibility was created for the FCC to develop a specific policy.

The support of Flanders to the Brussels minority is a major part of the Flemish political strategy. The Brussels Act made a provision for this: a full minister from Brussels was assigned a place in the Flemish government. The Brussels policy of the first ministers undeniably strengthened the Flemish presence in Brussels. The fact that the French-speaking Community Commission became an institution with its own decrees and, therefore, an autonomous policy in 1993, and that the municipal laws were to be transferred to the Regions, made the Flemish Council agree to tighten the relationship with Brussels. The electoral defeat of 1995 also incited the Flemish prime minister to continue this strategy. From now on FCC members would start participating in the Flemish Council. The Resolutions of the Flemish Parliament (1999) cleared a lot of room for Brussels. The idea that the Brussels members of the Flemish Parliament could best be directly elected and play a complementary role in the FCC was growing, but also the attention for the specificity of Brussels and the efficient consultation structures was significantly increasing. In the purple-green coalition agreement of 1999 Brussels was really taken into account and during the legislation 2000-2004 the successive ministers of Brussels Affairs gave a new zest to Brussels policy. The Brussels standard, which fixes 5% of the Flemish Community budget and addresses 300,000 people in Brussels was defined and was obviously a huge support to the FCC policy. The fact that elected people from Brussels are now permanent observers in the FCC Council also makes the cooperation more solid.

This complex evolution in different fields obviously made it possible for the FCC to expand its scope and broaden its policy perspectives. Its initial task consisted in being a substitute municipality, which had to compensate for the poor Flemish policy of the Brussels municipalities, and gradually it became a policy body which did not only conquer a place in the Region, but which also became a binding agent between the different structures. A well-manned administration helps it to fulfil these different functions in an expert manner.

### **The fight for a broader basis**

What is especially striking when going over the policy statements and council meetings, is the concern of the Council and the Board for the modest backing they are receiving. Since 1989 this concern has been constantly expressed in the discourse. Much attention and effort is dedicated to it, while the majority of the planned activities is closely related to it.

This concern is understandable. In 1989 67,000 votes went to Flemish lists; in 1995 this number had dropped to 57,000. The fact that young people are leaving the city and mainly settle in the Suburbs, the general downward trend of demographic figures, the loss of classes and departments in secondary schools: all this is looked upon with sorrow. And the answer is always the same: the FCC should pursue a more recruitment-oriented policy.

And a convincing plea for such a recruiting policy is therefore in place. Different strategies are presented, and as the years go by, are given different interpretations. Flanders is addressed to attract new Dutch speakers, first by means of either or not systematic campaigns, and later by means of the large-scale promotional campaign Living in Brussels, which has to make the housing capacity of Brussels more attractive. A next step is – in cooperation with the Flemish government – setting up a centrally located promotional centre, the Monnaiehuis, or Monnaie House. Media policy also bears the marks of this strategy: TV Brussels should also be authorised to broadcast outside of Brussels, that's what is wished for. The people in the Suburbs will become aware of how good life in Brussels is and be incited to return.

More attention is paid to a second strategy: keep the Flemish people who come to live in Brussels or who already live there happy. The idea is to assist and guide new Dutch-speaking inhabitants in their housing, working and living situation, provide information packages and information desks. However, this operation depends on an adequate addresses database. The municipal authorities are hardly responding to requests for these addresses, and therefore it takes until 1999 before the FCC, thanks to access to the National Register, is able to take stock of the newcomers. From then on a proactive reception and information policy can be started up. Giving young parents all the reasons to stay in the Region is one of the things that caused new financial means to be invested in day-care centres, playgrounds, youth work and sports policy. Education is a difficult domain. As the share of students from foreign-language families is increasing, more criticism of Dutch-speaking parents who think their children are at a disadvantage in terms of language is heard. The FCC is seriously handling these complaints. Special measures are taken both for students and for teachers. And if the equal opportunity policy of the Flemish government is posing problems for Dutch-speaking parents in Brussels, the FCC responds with adequate care.

Already in the first years the Board and the Council are making calls for more Flemish students. Involving the thousands of students in Brussels more in the city life may make a significant number of them eventually settle in Brussels and stay to live there. If a university takes initiatives in this respect, the FCC surely appreciates the gesture. Quartier Latin, a successful projects of university colleges and universities, can obviously count on the FCC's support and after some time the FCC contributed to spreading a positive image of Brussels among students.

The reactions to yet another strategy are less positive. Since its origin, the FCC has incited its staff and the Flemish public servants in general to come and live in Brussels. A few years later the poor outcome is lamented. Even a campaign which grants a bonus fails. However, this incentive strategy is here to stay.

From about 1993 the potential of people in Brussels from a foreign origin who speak Dutch and/or address Dutch-speaking institutions is discovered. This is a new target group. If you want to keep Flemish institutions liveable in multicultural Brussels, you also have to address other language families, is the straightforward statement in 1995. It is also better to integrate those children in our own institutions, than in French-speaking ones, even if it requires additional efforts to boost the linguistic skill of these children. Experience had already been acquired with the children from French-speaking families and for this growing group additional reference frameworks are also required in education.

In short, in its fight for a broader basis, the FCC has pursued a policy based on the expansion of target groups over the past fifteen years. It is not in the first place aimed at Flemish people in the capital, but is also targets foreign-language speakers who want to make use of its institutions. If the Flemish government sets the Brussels standard at 300,000, it is completely in line with the FCC strategy. The Board and the majority of the Council do not only fully back the initiative, they are also very excited about the results obtained over the past couple of years. The fact that Dutch-speaking schools are torn apart at the seams, are attracting large numbers of other language speakers, the flow to secondary and higher education is ongoing, Living in Brussels has worked and young people are settling in the heart of the city and that Brussels has a mature Dutch-speaking city television broadcaster, a successful weekly magazine and a city radio, is therefore very gratifying to the FCC.

### **Good partnership**

Establishing good cooperation with an increasing number of institutional partners is a second thread in the discourse. Of course, there is a preferred relationship with the Flemish Community. The FCC is indeed a part of the Flemish Community, a subordinated administration, a decentralised government body. The link is not only historical, but also a strategic choice and a trump in a city like Brussels which is turning into a major metropolis, is postulated in the first meeting. Still, until deep into the nineties what we mainly hear is a lamentation about the role of Flanders in Brussels. We have to get rid of the Flemish suspicion: Wallo-Brux belongs to the past, the Flemish minority has become a power which requires serious cooperation with Flanders. The fact that Flemish decrees are not taking the specific nature of Brussels enough into account – which is an ancient problem – is not helping. Brussels needs to get a fixed share in the decrees and they have to be tested on feasibility in Brussels. It is also distressing that Flanders is not taking the FCC entirely seriously. The fact that the FCC has to eat from its stepmother's hand, i.e. from Flanders, is also considered a huge impairment. The Flemish ministers and members of parliament are not very keen on constructive cooperation so it seems.

From the end of the nineties we can see a clear turning point. The Flemish policy in relation to Brussels is now called warm and generous, a great leap forwards, full of

hopeful perspectives. The satisfaction about the Brussels chapters in the coalition agreements is great. The vote of confidence for the FCC is also appreciated. Flanders is apparently accepting the increasingly strong institutions as co-executives of its Brussels policy. The Brussels paragraphs in the decrees, the Brussels standard and the Brussels test which have to underline the uniqueness of the capital and boost the financial commitment of Flanders are also highly appreciated. The privileged relation with Flanders will now be put into practice, it sounds hopefully.

Evolutions are also found in the relation between the FCC and the French speakers. In terms of community matters the Brussels Act provides a Common Community Commission. Only the analysis of the policy of that institution can shed more light on the relation between FCC and Cocof. And for community matters there is the Regional Council and government, where the FCC does not participate as an institution. At first, the Council does not speak of institutionalised contacts. But that also changes by the end of the nineties. The increase of the Cocof powers also increases the domains for which Flemish people are on the demand side. Tourism, sports and bilingual cultural projects are among them. The strategy to negotiate directly with the Cocof and not only through the GGC was already put forward in 1995 and leads to a number of cooperation agreements in the early 21st century. In other words, the FCC wants to invest in the bilateral dialogue, but cannot conceal that this is not an easy way. The common ground with the Region is also increasing now. The regional policy is situated more and more in the grey area between regional and community matters, while the social and employment policy are also creating common interests. The FCC decided to anticipate on this, focus on different policy aspects and work together with the Region in these fields. Therefore, the FCC wants to be actively involved in the European steering funds, the regional re-valuation programmes and projects on local community facilities.

The Brussels Act had not satisfied the Flemish people in terms of person-related matters on a communal level. Just like the NCC, the FCC continued to function as an intermediary body between the Flemish and local level. The frustrations can therefore still be heard in the discourse: municipalities are not cooperating enough, do not act on the invitation to implement Flemish decrees and there is not a lot of goodwill as appears e.g. from the address matter. The communities do have efficient contacts with the Cocof, but information from the FCC is hardly coming through. From 1995 the FCC decides to switch to a more offensive mode. It pleads to tighten the bonds with the Flemish communal and OCMW councils and is thinking about a global communal action plan. Thanks to the Lambermont-Lombard agreements a breakthrough is also achieved in this respect. Flemish aldermen or OCMW chairmen now have a chair in most municipalities and the FCC, which can offer quite some resources from now on, sees how the willingness to cooperate increases. Covenants about libraries, sporting accommodation, playgrounds, etc. are concluded. The FCC is also happy to find that it is becoming a partner in municipal policy. Where Flemish decrees are not yet implemented, it continues to play its substituting role.

However, what is also striking in the discourse about partnership is the absence of Europe. Every now and again someone mentions that Brussels is the Flemish window to Europe, but it does not mean much. The FCC has not really discovered the European institutions in Brussels yet. The fact that the relation with Europe is a more

regional matter obviously has a lot to do in this. The Council and the Board are paying a lot of attention to the collective action with the Netherlands to present the charisma of Dutch culture in the Brussels heart of Europe. Contacts are established with the Dutch ambassador and the pleas for a Flemish-Dutch House are numerous in the nineties, until the House is actually set up in 2004 and the FCC can act as a full partner.

### **Openness, pluralism, tolerance and solidarity in a multicultural city**

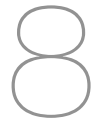
After the presentation of these two major policy strategies let's have a look at the ideological principles that support and legitimise them.

Cooperation across all philosophical and party-political movements is one of the focal points in the discourse right from the start. Openness is even considered an aspect of the Flemish identity. Flemish people in Brussels have a long tradition in this respect. The weakness in numbers has been a stimulus for more intense cooperation and cohesion for quite some time already. A connection to the Belgian denominationalised model is a direct consequence. Administrative bodies of government institutions have to have a pluralistic composition, but the same applies to the largest possible extent for civil initiatives and associations. Problems do not arise much in this domain. Only higher and university education, where the catholic prevalence is not so clear, as opposed to elementary and secondary education, become the topic of pluralistic pleas. The Christian Democrats do not want to touch the freedom of choice, even though – as claimed by the advocates of a far-reaching cooperation between the free-thinking VUB and the catholic university – the small (or too small) KUB will become the victim.

Tolerance linked to solidarity with the underprivileged is the second topic with a prominent place in the discourse and which has been strengthened through the years. The diversity and internationality of Brussels is a given which should be the basis for the policy. Multiculturalism is a process that is taking place and to which you should best adjust. Nowhere are poverty and migration problems more visible than in Brussels. The dual city is also a given to take into account in the policy.

A tolerant society, with respect for each other's identity, implies mutual enrichment. Tolerance and interculturalism therefore have to be parts of the FCC policy. European humanism is a leitmotiv in the above. Living together in uniqueness and diversity is the final objective. But the FCC has to do more. Poverty and dualism are casting an unacceptable shadow on the city. Therefore the FCC should have attention for underprivileged natives (and immigrants), break through the spiral of exclusion and pursue a social policy which counters dualism. Language lessons for migrants, self-help groups, street work, intermediaries in healthcare, employment initiatives, vocational training for migrant youths, exchanges in the context of community centres, neighbourhood-specific projects: all these measures are part of a social intercultural policy.

In the Board and the Council the majority parties also speak out in the fight against racism and extreme-right xenophobia. In 1995, when the Vlaams Blok mandatory manifests himself for the first time, Chabert and V. Anciaux take the lead. we will



again refer to Chabert's call later on. He labels that party as the children of darkness. Put your life at the service of humanity and solidarity; be an extremist, but of tolerance, because all the people in the world are worth the same as we, he says in his call. Vic Anciaux also opposes the "horrifying seventy-points programme". A nation is something other than race and blood descent, a culture is dynamic and takes over the achievements of others. Social justice and tolerance also have to be central issues for him. Other council members follow the same route in 1995, or later. Words like shame, deep shock, the enemy, crossing democratic boundaries, are not uncommon in the verbal fight against the extreme right. But it is not only about words. Contrary to the Flemish policy, the "sanitary cordon" is applied more strictly. In the institutions under the custody of the FCC no representatives of the Vlaams Blok/Belang are allowed and the Flemish-Brussels media are much more reluctant than the Flemish media. Public servants are also made responsible and the code of conduct is extended with fighting any form of xenophobia and racism.

In short, locking yourself up in your own society is also resolutely discarded on ideological grounds by the FCC. A predominantly foreign-language environment supposes foreign-language Bruxellois to be welcome in Dutch-speaking institutions. For that matter, it is impossible to determine in Brussels who belongs to one or the other community. Therefore, sub national thinking is unrealistic. As of 1999 the statement is that no distinction will be made on the basis of (linguistic) identity in the policy. Both in terms of information about, promotion for products of and the access to the organisation, the principle of total openness applies.

### **Dutchifying in a multilingual city**

The importance of knowing Dutch for one's own identity and as a part of the FCC policy in general has plentifully been demonstrated in the previous paragraphs. That a relatively high amount of attention is paid to language skill and language acquisition is therefore quite understandable. "Mainstream" education is, however, a matter of the Flemish Community, also in Brussels. The FCC can provide an additional impetus, that's right. The specific situation in the French-speaking education – lots of problems with the massive integration of migrant youths and little priority to knowledge of Dutch – results in the fact that a heavy task rests on the shoulders of the FCC and the Flemish Community. Teaching Brussels Dutch is their business to a large extent.

Their motives to put their back into it are convincing. An on the Brussels employment market knowing Dutch has become a must. Economically strong Flanders obviously stimulates this tendency. Promoting Dutch among French-speaking fellow citizens is much more successful than in the past. The FCC also wants to avoid that the growing migrant population becomes fully Frenchified. The day that more Bruxellois have a command of Dutch, the application of the language laws will be much easier, it is claimed. Attracting foreign-language students in education is also a question of survival of the Dutch-speaking schools. Bilingualism is an asset for all the people of Brussels. Leading the Dutchification – and therefore the bilingualism process – is therefore one of the main goals of the VGC. In their exposition the members of the Board and the Council do not restrict themselves to bilingualism

(Dutch-French), but they also focus on multilingualism, which is even presented as a part of the Flemish identity. In Brussels, which is becoming more and more international, multilingualism is an asset and a challenge, which education should capitalise on. The major world languages (English, Spanish, etc.) have to be carefully taught in Dutch-speaking education.

Following the NCC, the FCC is intensively working on developing, stimulating and supporting the institutions involved in spreading the Dutch language: promotional campaign for elementary education and, if required, an offensive policy to make secondary education more attractive, after-school care, the organisation of classes of Dutch as a second language for adults, the incorporation of the Huis van het Nederlands (House of Dutch) in 2004 which mainly focuses on that type of education, etc.

The FCC also sees it as its task to anticipate on the specific situation of Brussels and to act as a problem-solver through special efforts. Dealing with cultural heterogeneity in education requires efforts anyway. Especially if the number of students from Dutch-speaking families is rather low, problems arise for Dutch speakers and foreign-language speakers alike. Spreading students evenly over the different schools is, however, a delicate matter, in which the FCC tries to be a diplomatic negotiator. Good contacts with the schools is a first requirement in this respect. In addition, the FCC has been wanting to act on language activation of foreign-language children for several years and decided to fully invest in such projects. Training teachers to deal with non-native children is also part of its policy. And because the active help of parents is of great importance in the learning and educational process, the FCC also wants to focus on non-native parents. But French lessons also have to be of enough quality to guarantee the chances of students. So attention is also paid to that aspect. The FCC also pleads for a correct and proper use of Dutch in Brussels. I.e. no allotment Flemish. That is essential in a multilingual environment where foreign-language speakers do their best to learn Dutch and Dutch needs appreciation, they say.

Especially through the House of Dutch, in which the FCC plays a stimulating role, active cooperation is granted to language initiatives and problem sectors. The application of the Language Courtesy Agreement of 1996, which is troubled by the fact that not enough staff passes the language exam, receives incentives this way. Adjusted language lessons are organised in problem areas (fire brigade, medical emergency teams), but also in the private sector similar projects are organised. In the FCC discourse we hear hopeful expectations in this respect. The figures are not countering this hope as yet.

### **The inspiring force of culture and sports**

The charisma which can be emanated by culture to support the Flemish presence in the capital is continuously brought under the attention in the Policy Statement. It is a strategy that has been applied by Flemish people for years. A dazzling, high-quality cultural life is putting Flemish people on the map, is a general assumption. It can attract lovers of culture in Brussels, Flanders and even far beyond. Together with the Flemish Community we have to work on the spreading of culture. But besides cul-

ture for highly trained spectators, the concept has to be understood in a broader sense. This is how popular culture, including expressions of culture in the Flemish-Brussels dialect, acquires its own stage. The actual performing arts are indeed the authority of the Flemish Community, but the FCC has a complementary role. Promotion is clearly its field of action. Through the years a cultural passport and then culture vouchers have been issued to everyone living or working in Brussels who wants to get to know Flemish culture. The development of a network of local libraries is, as aforesaid, a major goal, while the support of the community centres serves other cultural aims. Under the heading of Culture a lot of attention is requested for sports in the policy documents. An own sports department, maximum use of existing sports infrastructure and sports cards show that the sports policy is taking in a significant place on the agenda.

In a pluricultural and dualised city culture is more than just an instrument for the highbrow user. Culture promotes the dialogue between inhabitants and stimulates harmonious cohabitation. Culture, but also sports bring and keep people together. A mutual enrichment unfolds. Artistic cooperation and exchange between the communities make interculturalism bloom. For the Dutch-speaking culture in Brussels that is a plus, no matter what. Through culture and sports the democratisation process can also be stimulated. The participation policy should therefore also be aimed at underprivileged groups. The dialogue with the broad basis is therefore a necessity in a pluricultural city. A policy of cooperation is the logical result. Therefore the FCC is putting in a good word for the support of bicultural projects such as the *Kunstenfestivaldesarts* and it is eager to engage in a cultural cooperation with the *Cocof*. By the end of the nineties culture also becomes an interesting instrument to revive cities. Stimulating new forms of popular urban cultural expressions and city animation is a part of this aspect of the open FCC cultural policy.

### **A Flemish welfare and health policy**

Welfare and healthcare, the FCC's problem child: that is the main complaint which was constantly heard over the past three lustres in the expositions of the Board and the Council. And still today, actually. There are lots of reasons. A city with lots of underprivileged people has a great need for welfare and healthcare. A major part of the own supporters is ageing and also the non-natives we want to address consist of a growing elderly population. Old age, loneliness and illness are increasing. Care provision in their own language has always been a problem for Flemish people in Brussels. An own hospital and a few hospitals where bilingualism is not just dead letter cannot cope with the problem. In the bicomunity hospitals and other care institutions, the care for Flemish people in their language remains a problem. Dutch-speaking doctors feel less attracted to the (less paying) Brussels hospitals and a setting up a doctor's practice in the capital is not usually very appealing to them. Organising care institutions themselves is often (too) expensive for the Flemish community. The sector is also denominationalised. The urban perspective would be a better perspective, they say. The Flemish welfare and health policy which has expanded since 1995 has been difficult to implement in Brussels. For the care insurance e.g. the Brussels offer is too small to be exchangeable against care vouchers.

A similar problem occurs in relation to volunteer aid, which is not paid in Brussels. Therefore, investing in an own care network is seen as a necessity.

In the meantime the FCC is making do with feasible proposals and options. We have already seen that the language policy was used to stimulate the bilingualism of hospital staff. Leaving the elderly at home as long as possible and maximising home care is another option. High-quality care for the elderly with flexible forms and intermediary forms between home care and non institution based care is the goal. Giving priority to first line care is important in that context. Gathering Dutch-speaking healthcare institutions and doctor's practices in a digital database is a first step in the strategy to provide network support to the medical sector. But despite the fact that the Board and the Council have proclaimed this sector a priority policy domain, the catching-up operation is far from completed. The existing strategies have to be further expanded and new ones have to be developed.

This is the end of the overview. As I presupposed in the introduction, it is only a first step in the analysis of the FCC policy. The policy documents and the Council meetings that have been studied do give a sense of direction, but they say little about the concrete implementation or the effects. Still, we have browsed enough relevant material to say that the FCC has achieved quite a lot over the past fifteen years. During the first years it had to work in rather difficult circumstances, constantly overshadowed by the fight for a broader support. But still it managed to become "incourtournable" in Brussels. Its success is definitely based on its own strength and dynamism and on an adequate policy, but also on a more efficient cooperation with the Flemish Community.

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