



Brussels Studies

La revue scientifique électronique pour les recherches sur Bruxelles / Het elektronisch wetenschappelijk tijdschrift voor onderzoek over Brussel / The e-journal for academic research on Brussels

Notes de synthèse | 2016

Brussels youth: between diversity and lack of security

BSI synopsis

Jeunesses bruxelloises : entre diversité et précarité. Note de synthèse BSI

De Brusselse jeugd: tussen diversiteit en kwetsbaarheid. BSI synthesesnota

Muriel Sacco, Wendy Smits, Bram Spruyt, Dimo Kavadias and Caroline d'Andrimont

Translator: Jane Corrigan



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1345>

DOI: 10.4000/brussels.1345

ISSN: 2031-0293

Publisher

Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles

Electronic reference

Muriel Sacco, Wendy Smits, Bram Spruyt, Dimo Kavadias and Caroline d'Andrimont, « Brussels youth: between diversity and lack of security », *Brussels Studies* [Online], Synopses, no 98, Online since 25 April 2016, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/1345> ; DOI : 10.4000/brussels.1345



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Number 98, April 25th 2016. ISSN 2031-0293

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BSI synopsis. Brussels youth: between diversity and lack of security

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Introduction ¹

1. This synopsis is the fruit of an analysis of the literature over the past decade centred on Brussels youth, carried out on the initiative of *Fondation Bernheim*, in collaboration with *Fondation Roi Baudouin*. Nearly 200 works were analysed. They come from different knowledge producers, academic or other (universities, foundations, public institutions, associations, etc.). Two workshops gathering stakeholders in the field allowed us to complement the information gathered and to better understand the challenges of working with a young public.

1. Youth: complex definition

2. Dealing with young people in Brussels proves to be complex for two main reasons: the difficulty to delimit this category on the one hand, and the institutional fragmentation which characterises Belgium and, particularly, Brussels, on the other hand. Young people are characterised by great diversity, in particular in terms of age and therefore the degree of autonomy. The boundaries of this category may vary from one study to another. In the framework of this synopsis, we have focused on residents of Brussels aged 12 to 25 (or 24, according to the studies concerned).

3. This work has provided an incomplete and fragmented picture of Brussels youth. The division of the competent institutions and the logic of academic work are probably the main causes. Thus, many of the studies analysed do not focus on Brussels youth as a whole, but on a linguistic community which covers a larger territory than the regional territory. This is the case in particular with publications dealing with education, which is organised at community level. This also applies to other sectors, in particular cultural (arts, cultural heritage, museums, audiovisual), as well as certain aspects of health policy and support for individuals (family policy). The Communities are also competent as re-

gards legal centres, family benefits and the use of languages. Furthermore, in Brussels, some of these community powers are managed by the Community Commissions (French Community Commission, Flemish Community Commission, Common Community Commission).

¹ This synopsis was possible thanks to the invaluable advice from Perrine Devleeshouwer, Maryam Kolly, Abraham Franssen, Florence Delmotte, Joost Vaesen and Benjamin Wayens. It also benefited from the expertise of Bernard De Vos (DGDE), Pierre Devleeshouwer (Febisp), Dr Muriel Mernier (Free Clinic Ixelles), Myriam Dahan (*Bruxelles-Formation*), Laetitia Nolet (*Forum sécurité urbaine*), Pascale Labiau (DAS), Frédérique Lemoine (*Fédération des Scouts de Belgique*), Dirk Deblieck (*Maison des cultures et de la cohésion sociale de Molenbeek*), Yannick Bochem (De Vaartkapoen), Ludo Moyersoer (Microstart).

2. A growing population in Brussels

4. Since the 1970s, the population of Brussels has become younger, making the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) the youngest region in Belgium [Rea *et al.*, 2009]. As illustrated in figure 1, Brussels, which is ex-

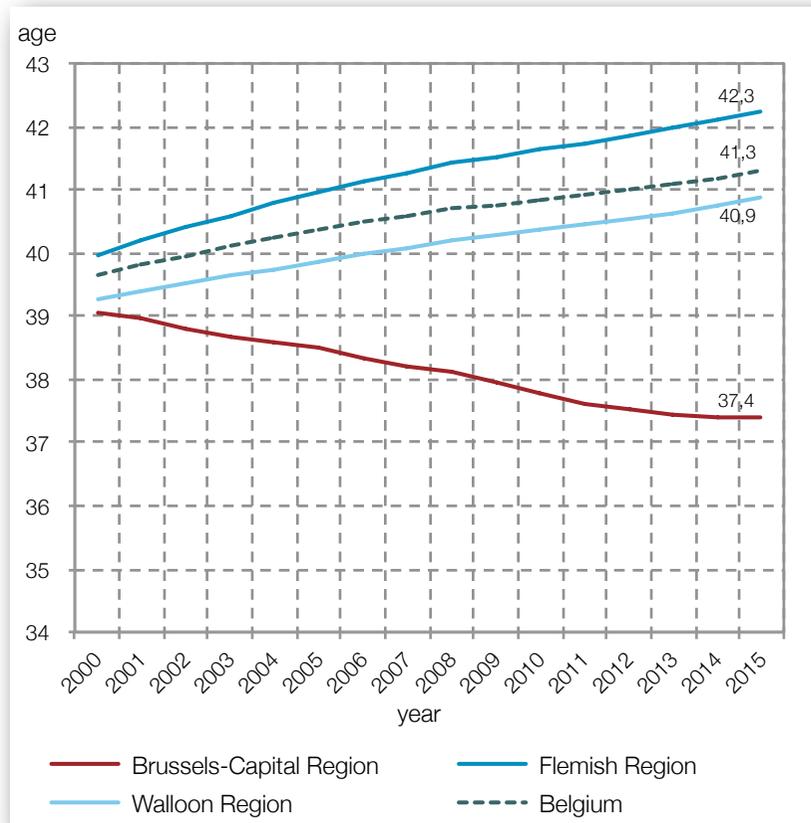


Figure 1. Evolution of the average age in Belgium and in the three Regions. Source: IBSA.

clusively urban, shows a very different trend from that of the other regions in Belgium, which are 'getting older'. In 2015, there were 177,722 young people between the ages of 12 and 24 in BCR, *i.e.* 15% of the population.

5. The average age of the population is not homogeneous throughout the regional territory (figure 2). The differences may be very pronounced between municipalities and especially the neighbourhoods in Brussels. Overall, a very marked difference is observed between the centre and the outskirts, with a young centre (especially the poor area, made up of many central neighbourhoods and the west inner ring), and older outskirts.

3. Education of young people

6. At regional level, there are extensive studies available which address the question of the overcrowding of schools [Wayens *et al.*, 2013; ADT, 2012], suggesting forms of coordination in the area of urbanism, school infrastructures and the fight against early school leaving, implemented in particular through the work of the Task Force [Janssens *et al.*, 2009; ADT, 2012; Wayens *et al.* 2013].

3.1. Secondary education

7. In 2013-2014, 94,230 students were enrolled in French- and Dutch-language subsidised secondary education in Brussels. Within the two education systems organised by each community (with 85% of students enrolled in French-language secondary education in 2013-2014 compared to 15% in Dutch-language education), three networks (official, subsidised official and private subsidised) and three streams coexist (general, technical and artistic² and vocational).

8. The high population growth observed in Brussels, as well as the significant number of students in schools in Brussels who are not residents of Brussels, result in a loss of enrolment capacity in the schools. For the moment, this overcrowding is observed especially at preschool and primary levels, but with the rising age of students, it will be seen

² These two streams are distinct in the Flemish Community.

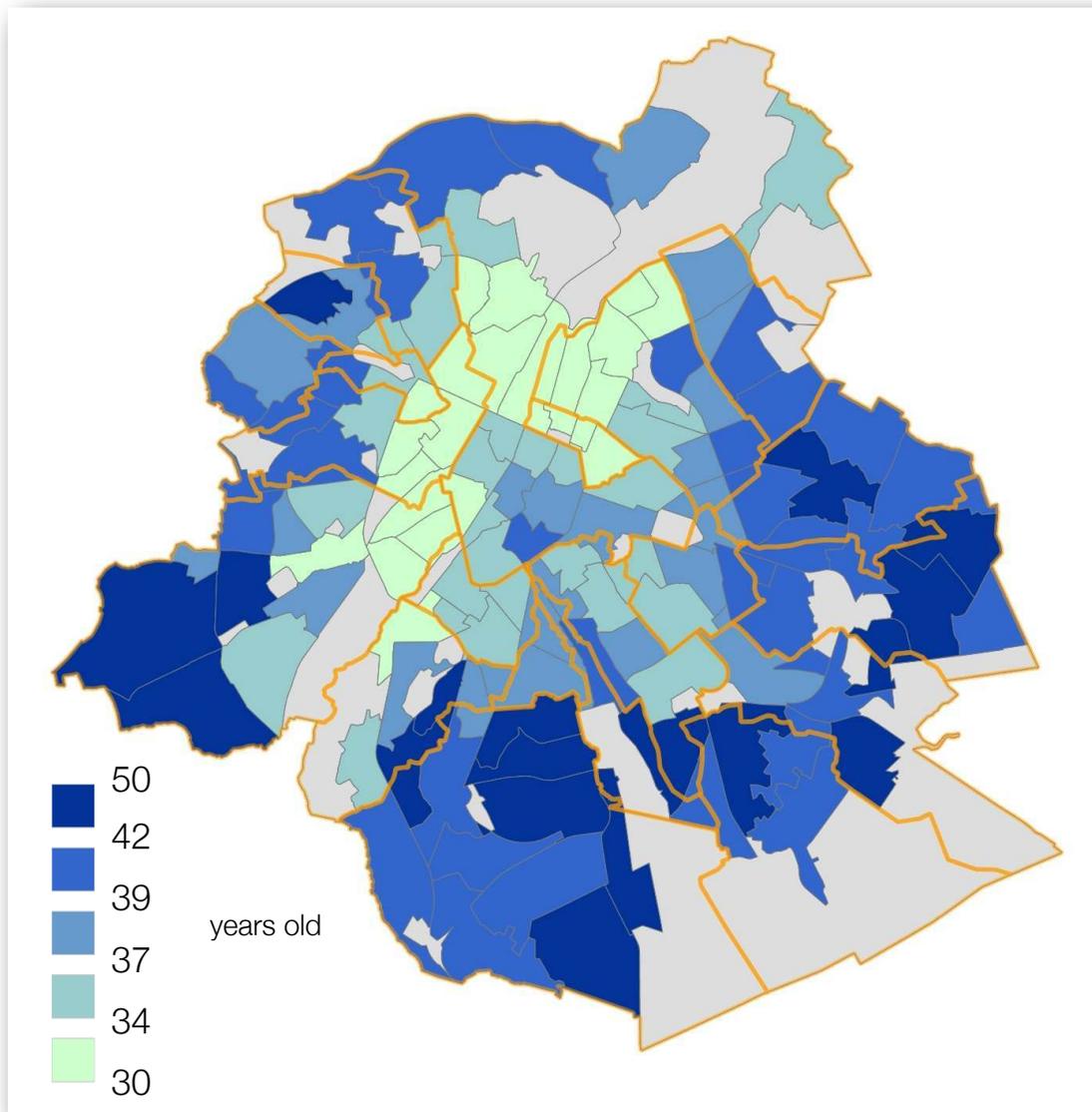


Figure 2. Average age per neighbourhood in 2013. Source: IBSA, *Monitoring des Quartiers*.

more and more in secondary education in the coming years. According to estimates made by IBSA, there will be an additional 46,000 students (+21%) in basic and secondary education between 2010 and 2020. [Wayens *et al.*, 2013].

9. Within the regional territory, a major imbalance is seen in terms of relative enrolment capacity, with municipalities providing less than one opening per secondary school age child who lives in their territory (Berchem-Sainte-Agathe and Molenbeek-Saint-Jean in the lead), and municipalities with almost or more than twice as many openings than young people concerned in the municipality. Let us note, however, that the volume of enrolment requests may be very different between municipalities, and especially between schools. Reputation or accessibility may explain this fact [ADT, 2012].

10. Furthermore, due to its high overcrowding, education in the Brussels region is characterised by very strong inequalities. While Brussels and the rest of Belgium have seen a strong increase in the education levels of the population over the past decades, the proportion of people with a low level of education has decreased less in Brussels than in the rest of the country. Conversely, there has also been a sharp rise in the proportion of people with a very high level of education. This reflects the social dualisation which is very present in Brussels [Wayens *et al.*, 2013; OSS, 2015].

11. Several indicators highlight the weakness of young people, including the proportion of students who are 'behind' in their schooling and the proportion of young people who are early school leavers. The figures regarding young people in Brussels who are behind in their schooling are alarming, as 50% of students in the first year of secondary are at least one year behind. This figure ranges from 35% to 42% in the other major Belgian cities [ULB-IGEAT and OSS, 2010]. And in 2014, almost 15% of young people in Brussels aged 18 to 24 had left school early, with a national average of 10% [OSS, 2015].

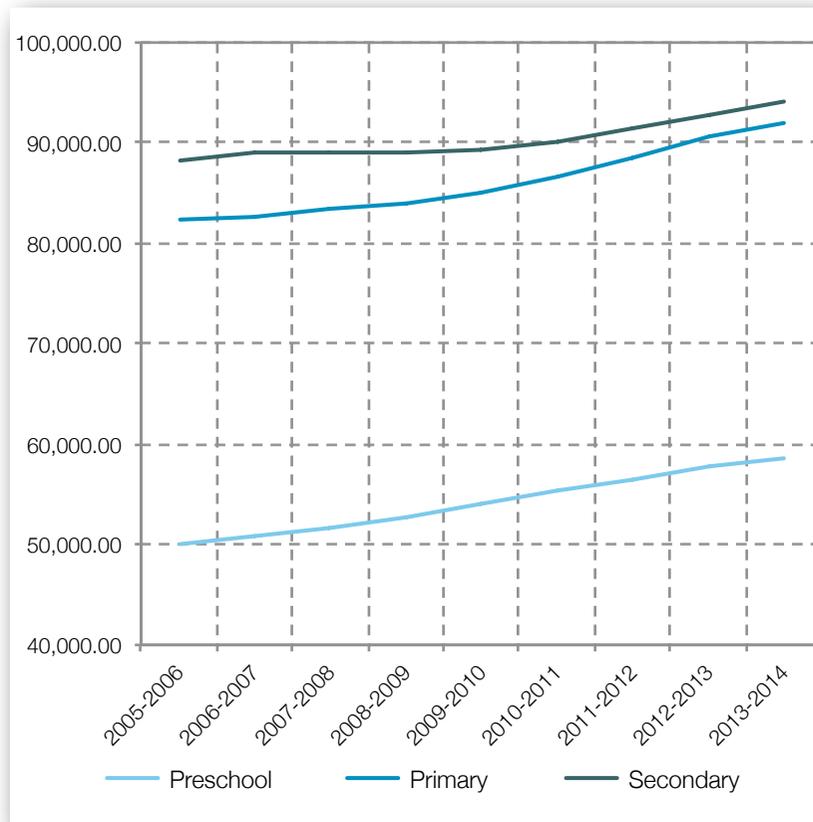


Figure 3. Evolution of the number of students in the Brussels-Capital Region, 2005-2014. Source: IBSA.

3.1.1. Dutch-language secondary education

12. The data published by the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) highlight the evolution of the linguistic profile of students enrolled in Dutch-language secondary education in Brussels. There has been a very sharp decline in the proportion of students whose parents are both Dutch-speakers. In 2013-2014, 22.5% were Dutch-speakers, 30.9% bilingual Dutch and French speakers, 25.1% French-speakers and

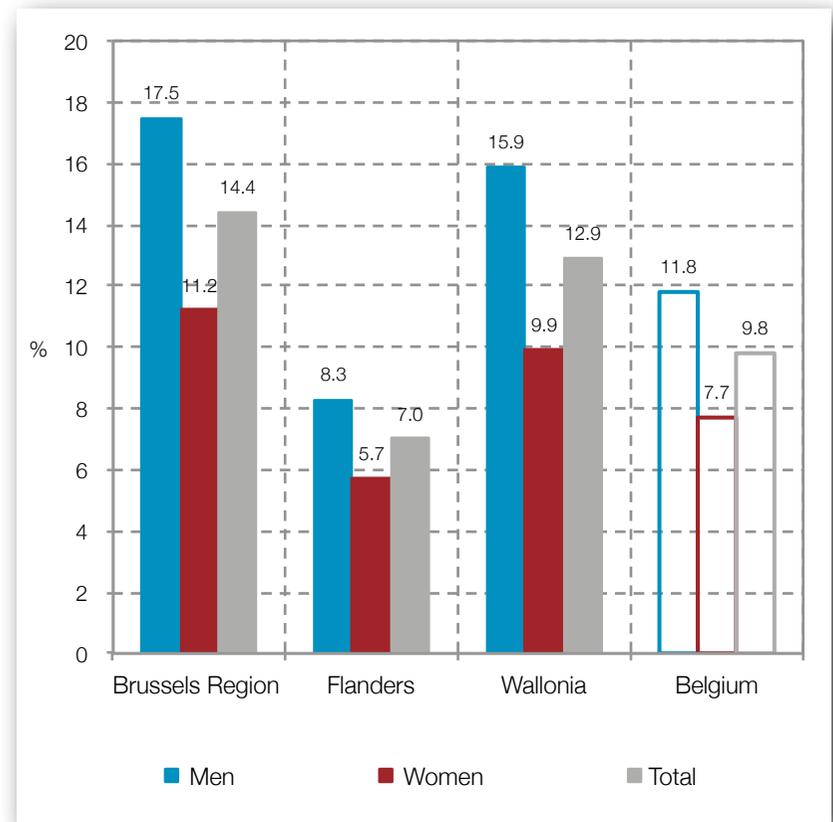


Figure 4. Percentage of young people aged 18 to 24 who have left school early, who are no longer in school or in a training course, and who have no more than a lower secondary diploma, according to gender, Belgium and regions, 2014. Source: DGSIE, EFT 2014, in OSS, 2015.

21.4% allophones. Furthermore, less and less young people who live outside of Brussels go to school in the Region. The recruitment of students has therefore greatly evolved, in particular following the enrolment regulation policies. The GOK decree (*Gelijksonderwijskansen*) is made up of three pillars, one of which concerns the regulation of school en-

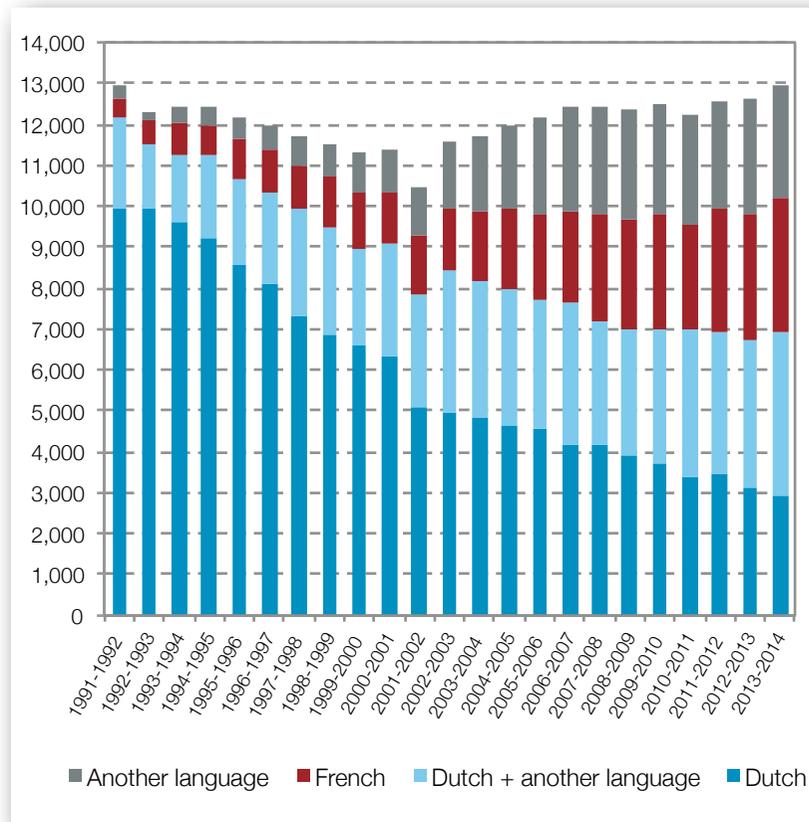


Figure 5. Evolution of the number of students and the language used at home for children in Dutch-language education in Brussels. Source: VGC.

rolment in Dutch-language education. Cantillon [2009] presents the enrolment regulation policy, in connection with the problems encountered in education in Brussels.

13. Van Mensel [2007] endeavoured to determine the profiles of non Dutch-speaking parents, the reasons which led them to make this choice and the impact of this decision on their linguistic uses and con-

tact with the school. Furthermore, the *Jeugd Onderzoek Platform* (JOP) provides information on the practices and representations of young people (from the third year to the sixth year of secondary school) who are enrolled in Dutch-language education in Brussels. Vettenburg [et al., 2011] makes the observation that the majority of students in Dutch-language secondary education in Brussels have a positive feeling (less positive, however, than in Flanders as a whole) with respect to their school, education and the relationship with their professors.

3.1.2. French-language secondary education

14. In line with the political agenda, the academic literature is much more abundant in the French-speaking part and is concentrated especially on the analysis of social, educational and ethnic inequalities produced by the school system through orientation and academic performance, as well as the distance covered by students between home and school [ADT, 2012; Devleeshouwer, 2013 and 2015]. It also focuses on certain elements of uneasiness experienced by the stakeholders in secondary education.

Institutionalised social inequalities in educational structures

15. Jacobs and Rea [2007] show that the level of education of the mother has an effect on the educational pathway and the type of education which the child is enrolled in. '76.5% of children whose mothers have no education are in technical and vocational education. However, 87% of children whose mothers have a university education are in general education. There is also an overrepresentation of students of foreign origin in technical and vocational education (perceived as being second-rate streams); ethnic segregation therefore juxtaposes social segregation.

16. The disaggregated statistics at municipal level highlight the strong dualisation of educational pathways within the territory of Brussels. The students who live in the most disadvantaged municipalities (Saint-Josse and Molenbeek in the lead) are those who have the greatest tendency to be enrolled in technical or vocational education, which is unlike what is seen in the more well-off municipalities in the southeast quadrant of the region, where general education is very widespread [ULB-IGEAT and OSS, 2010].

17. In Brussels, there is a hierarchical organisation of some of the types of education and a strong presence of 'ghetto' schools as well as elitist schools [Janssens *et al.*, 2009], which contributes to the ethnic and social segregation in the school system. The secondary schools carry out a social and ethnic selection of students especially in the general stream, in particular via the repeating of a year and educational redirection. This process contributes greatly to transforming social inequalities into educational inequalities [Rea *et al.*, 2009, Dumay and Dupriez, 2009]. On the one hand, this functioning is based on the freedom of parents to choose a school for their children and, on the other hand, until the French Community decrees on mix and enrolment, the total freedom of schools to choose their students. The logic of educational competition has led to the specialisation of certain schools in the refusal of certain students and others in the acceptance of these [Develeeshouwer and Rea, 2011]. According to the neighbourhoods where schools are located, the student 'catchment area' is more or less vast, with the schools in the east of BCR generally having bigger areas of influence than those of schools in the poor area. There is therefore a high level of mobility among students in Brussels, with almost two out of three students attending a secondary school located in a municipality other than the one they live in [ADT, 2012]. The public at schools is therefore far from being a simple reflection of residential segregation. The introduction of the enrolment decree in 2010, which replaced the social mix decree of 2008, was aimed at putting an end to the selection practices of secondary schools, by centralising the enrolment of students in the first year. Mechanisms for the selection of students still exist, however [Develeeshouwer, 2014].

The causes of the difficulties experienced by young people at school

18. The reinforcement of social inequalities by the school system is one of the causes of the difficulties experienced by young people in Brussels. The study conducted by Pitts and Porteous [2005, 2006] shows that Brussels youth from minority backgrounds experience many problems with respect to integration: a higher rate of early school leaving, poorer academic performance and a higher rate of unemployment.

19. This social determinism must be detailed further, as it is far from taking place in a mechanical and uniform manner. The migratory pathways and the residential projects of parents contribute to shaping varied and differentiated life projects. While the results of students from an immigrant background are not as good as those of the majority group, their aspirations are not non-existent or low, and are related to those of their parents [Teney *et al.*, 2013].

20. The attitude of teachers and the content of school curricula sometimes have a negative effect on how young people feel. Thus, the neutrality required of teachers is a problem for students who are at variance with the school system [Merry, 2005], via the question of religion in particular: certain young Muslims feel misunderstood and even despised with respect to their religious identity within the school [Maréchal *et al.*, 2014]. The growing importance of religious references has prompted some young people to refuse to take certain science or literature classes. Conflicts also emerge during debates regarding current affairs or history. Certain teachers have decided not to organise this type of discussion [Maréchal *et al.*, 2014]. Manço *et al.* [2013] also point out the dissatisfaction which some young people of Congolese origin feel with respect how Belgian colonialism in Congo is dealt with in the school curricula.

21. Furthermore, there is also some uneasiness on behalf of the teachers, which results in a high turnover. Many secondary school teachers leave the profession during the first five years [Wayens *et al.*, 2013].

3.2. Higher education

22. In Brussels, Dutch- and French-language higher education systems coexist, as they do at secondary level. All young people with an upper secondary diploma (CESS) have access to higher education. In each of the systems, three study options are possible: non-university short-cycle higher education, non-university long-cycle higher education and university education. Brussels is the biggest student city in the country in terms of the total number of students. The number of students continues to grow, with 86,000 subsidised students³ in higher

³ Including students over the age of 25. These figures do not include international and private schools.

education in Brussels in 2010-2011, which was well ahead of Ghent (63,000 students in 2010-2011), Leuven (40,000), Antwerp (38,000) and Louvain-la-Neuve (23,000). Brussels is where almost one quarter (23%) of the students in Belgium study. Brussels is also a city which attracts many foreign students. In 2011, 23% of students in the higher education institutions in Brussels were foreigners⁴ [Vaesen *et al.*, 2014].

3.2.1. A system which reproduces social and educational inequalities

23. Given the high level of unemployment of (young) residents of Brussels and the requirements for high-level qualifications of the labour market in Brussels, a secondary school diploma is often insufficient in order to find a job in Brussels. As mentioned above, a significant proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not go on to higher education, despite the proximity and the diversity of higher education institutions present in the territory of Brussels. Apart from the relegation process in secondary education, the cost of studies and the social and cultural capital of families may explain this phenomenon. [Jacobs and Rea, 2007; Rea *et al.*, 2009]. Maroy and Van Campenhout [2010, p. 93] carried out a study of students in French-language universities. It indicated that these institutions are attended especially by young people whose parents have a higher education degree. They concluded that, 'The quantitative democratisation of higher education in FWB is segregational: it is elsewhere than in universities that a qualitative democratisation of access to studies is seen, a democratisation which is the counterpart of a relative social closure of university institutions.'

3.2.2. Housing and living conditions of students in higher education in Brussels

24. According to the study on student life conducted by Agence de développement territorial [ADT 2014 and 2015] between 2013 and 2015 among students in Brussels,⁵ 40% of university students and 60% of non-university students still live with their parents.

25. While the student housing offer in the Brussels region is low, when students have a flat, they live near the main higher education poles in Brussels (Solbosch, Érasme, Plaine, Jette and Woluwé). The data from the housing services of universities show that students are not clearly concentrated in the city due to the multipolarity of the campuses of higher education schools. The neighbourhoods of choice of French-speaking students are Ixelles and Saint-Gilles, while those of Dutch-speaking students are in the Pentagon [Vaesen *et al.*, 2014].

26. In 2012, 9,682 residents of Brussels aged 18 to 24 received social integration revenue (RIS) or social assistance equivalent to the social integration revenue (ERIS). Among these young people, 2,999 were students⁶ [OSS, 2013]. The law regarding the right to social integration of October 2002 allowed young people under age 25 who were still students, who had no income and who were unable to rely on their parents, to be eligible for this social assistance. The figure below illustrates the strong growth in the proportion of beneficiaries of this assistance. It reflects the high instability of a significant proportion of young people who live in Brussels, and underlines the insufficiencies of a grant system intended to finance the cost of studies only [Vaesen *et al.*, 2014].

4. The access of young people to the labour market

27. While less than 30% of young people aged 15 to 24 who live in Brussels are present in the job market, these young people are particularly subject to unemployment, as they often have several disadvantages: they do not have a diploma, are from an immigrant background, live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and have parents who are unemployed themselves [Franssen *et al.*, 2014]. According to the 2015 *Baromètre social*, in 2014, the rate of unemployment of young people in employment aged 15 to 24 was 39.5%. In addition to young people who are students, unemployed with or without training, or employed, a

⁴ 7% non-EU foreigners.

⁵ The study was conducted in two phases: a first one with university students and a second one with non-university students.

⁶ Including students in secondary education.

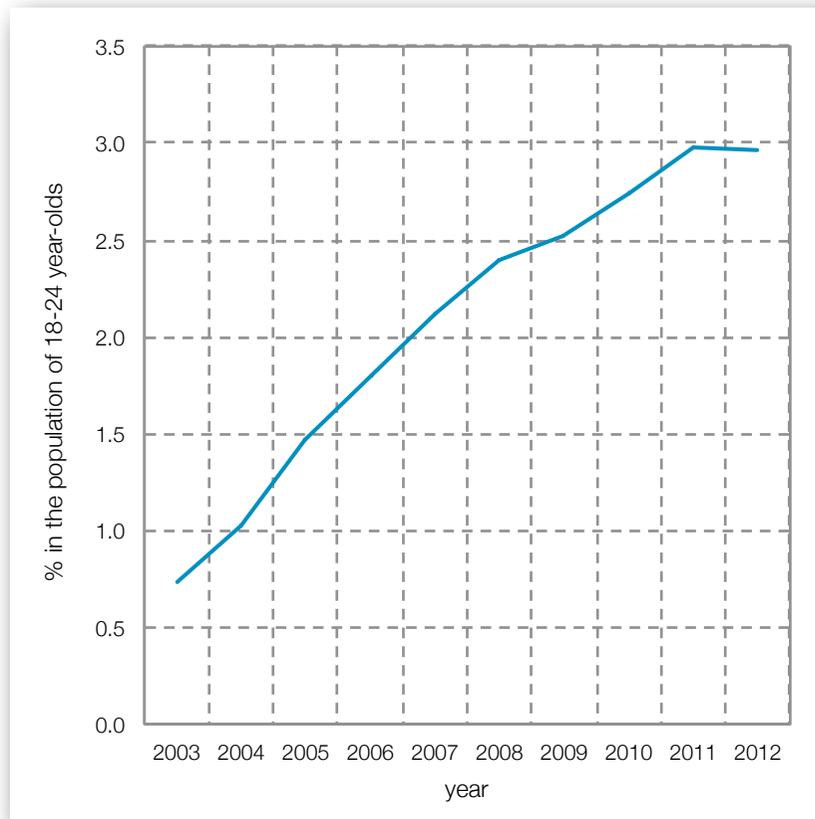


Figure 6. Evolution of the proportion of students who benefit from the social integration revenue (RIS) in the population of 18-24 year-olds in Brussels-Capital Region, January 2003-2012 (this also includes secondary school students). Source: SPP Social integration, data from 07/03/2013; Direction générale Statistique et Information économique (DGSIE) [OSS, 2013, p. 30]

new category of young people has emerged: NEETs (Neither in employment nor in education and training).

28. The geography of the unemployment rate of young people once again illustrates the marked difference between the centre and the outskirts, with very high proportions of young people registered as unemployed in the poor area of the city (48% in Saint-Josse compared to 26.7% in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre in 2012, for example).

29. Several elements have been suggested to explain this high rate of unemployment, such as the lack of training, qualifications and knowledge of foreign languages [Rea *et al.*, 2009]. Despite its confirmation by longitudinal studies [OBE, 2011; OSS, 2013], this theory overshadows the insufficiency in the number of jobs available and does not explain why, with equal qualifications, young people in the poor area have a higher unemployment rate. There is therefore a phenomenon of unequal access to employment between young people in Brussels [Vanderdormotten, 2008], as well as discrimination in recruitment. The lack of professional experience is also pointed out, as well as the lack of recognition on behalf of employers of skills which are not attested by a diploma. Among these unrecognised skills, stakeholders in the field identify the different languages and dialects spoken well, which are an indication of the ability to adapt to different contexts or the ability to maintain a social network [OSS, 2013]. The phenomenon of deskilling, whereby qualified young people – who also face competition in the search for employment – accept jobs for which they are overqualified, only reinforces these processes [OBE, 2013].

30. Given the increased restrictions in the right to unemployment benefits, there are more and more young people who benefit from social assistance, as mentioned above. The proportion of young people who receive social assistance benefits is particularly high compared with people in other age groups. Finally, the representations which employers have of young people are also questioned. They often consider that difficulties entering the labour market are due to a lack of motivation and will [OSS, 2013].

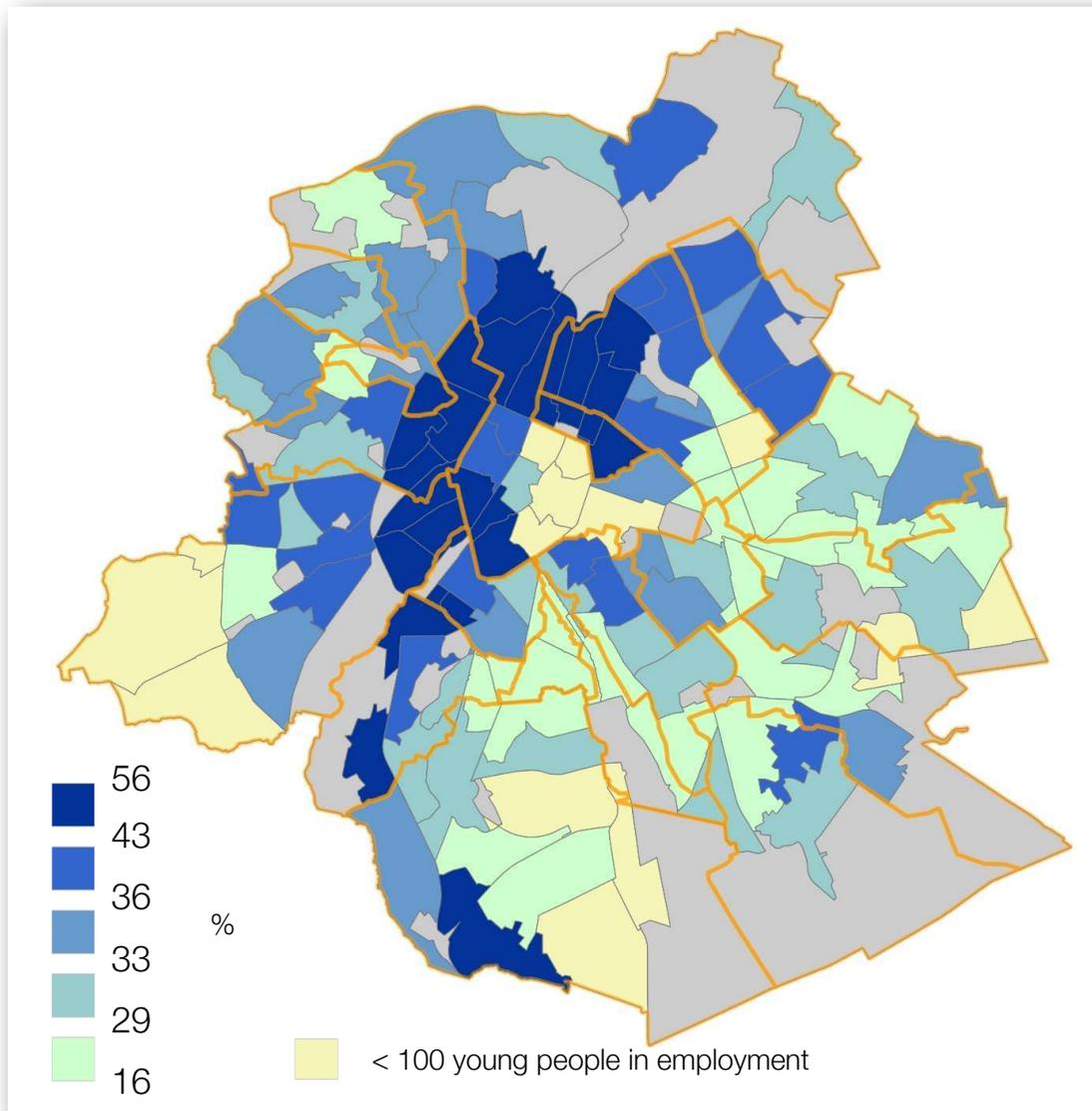


Figure 7. Unemployment rate of young people according to neighbourhood, in 2012. Source: IBSA, *Monitoring des Quartiers*.

5. The housing of young people

31. The increase in the number of young people who continue their studies and who have difficulty entering the labour market contributes to a later empowerment of young people than in the past [Nagels and Rea, 2007; Franssen *et al.*, 2014]. Figure 8 shows the sharp increase in the age at which young people leave the parental home in Brussels. Thus, 61.1% of young people in Brussels between the ages of 18 and 24 still live with their parents [OSS, 2013].

32. In addition to these elements, there is a shortage of housing and high rents. [De Keersmaecker, 2013]. The share of rent in the expenses of young people is especially significant, as their income is generally low. However, flatshare is not an option for most young people who receive benefits or social assistance, as it results in a decrease in the amounts received.

33. All of this contributes to the lack of choice of neighbourhood of residence, the prosperity of slum landlords and unscrupulous landlords, and the increasing risk of homelessness [OSS, 2013]. In 2010, *Strada*, an association which provides shelter to homeless people, recorded 445 young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who had spent at least one night in one of the 23 official centres [OSS, 2013, p. 25].

34. This lack of security does not impede the process of gentrification which is seen in certain neighbourhoods of Brussels, i.e. the (re)investment in working-class areas by groups which are socially more privileged than the inhabitants or users of these places [Van Crieelingen, 2006 & 2009]. There is an increasing presence of young adults (aged 19-34) who live alone, who are highly educated and very mobile, and who rent their housing. At residential level, this group is located in particular in the central neighbourhoods of Brussels (the Pentagon). They therefore compete with the working-class population on the housing market and contribute to the rise in rent. This process therefore contributes to the eviction of poor households from these areas, which are historically working-class and/or have been abandoned by the middle class in the past.

6. Mobility and public space

35. As shown in the study conducted by ADT, the majority of young people leave their neighbourhood of residence every day in order to go to school [ADT, 2012]. It should also be noted that, apart from the rooting in and attachment to the neighbourhood of residence, the spatial mobility practices of young people in Brussels are influenced by their social networks, their extra-curricular activities and their attitude to-

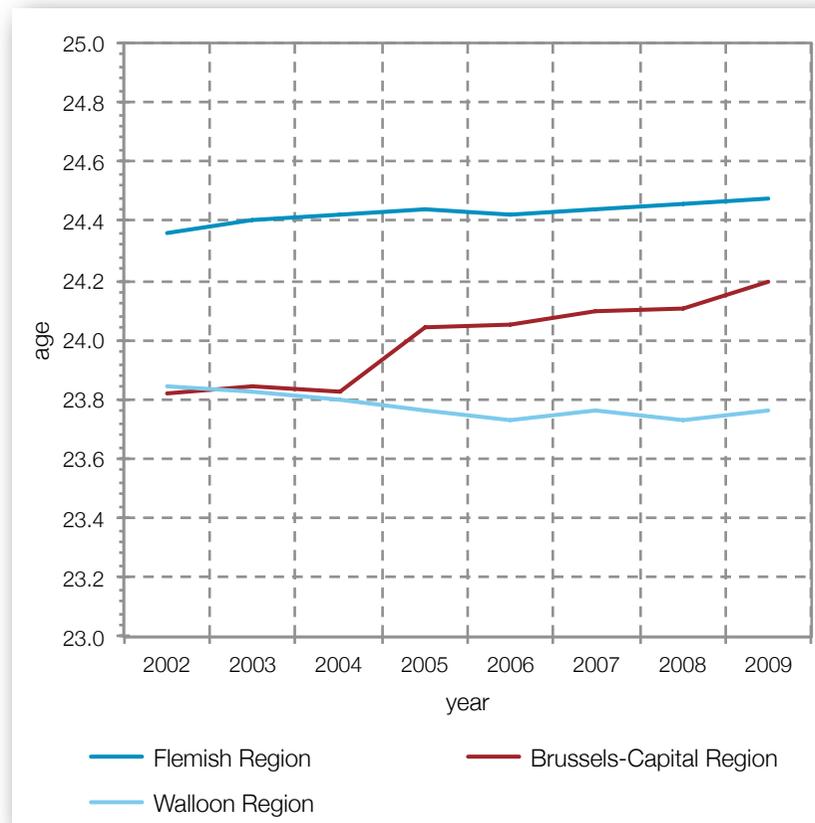


Figure 8. Evolution of the average age for leaving the parental home, according to Region. Source: Dessouroux et al., 2015.

wards travel, which qualify the extent of the neighbourhood effect [Develeeshouwer, 2013].

36. The degree of satisfaction of young people with respect to their neighbourhood of residence is quite variable and is linked to interpersonal and personal factors rather than to physical conditions [OSS, 2013]. Hanquinet and Teney [2015] show that the sense of belonging of young people who live in Brussels towards different spatial entities (neighbourhood, Brussels, Belgium and Europe) is complex, and that they identify with them in a complementary manner: 'A young person who identifies strongly with one of these four entities will have the tendency to identify strongly with the other three as well'. Young people of non-European origin are those who identify most with their neighbourhood, while not necessarily demonstrating a sense of attachment to it [Caillez and Bailly, 2008].

37. The use of public space differs greatly according to the social origin of young people. Meeting places between different types of young people are therefore rare. Caillez and Bailly [2008] analysed the spatial perceptions of young people in Etterbeek, Anderlecht and Woluwé Saint Lambert, three municipalities characterised by different levels of wealth. Young people from the most disadvantaged municipality (Anderlecht) tend to be less mobile and have more reduced leisure practices than the others.

7. Multiple identities of young people

38. The different waves of immigration have made Brussels one of the most cosmopolitan cities. Beyond the argument of urban marketing, this aspect of Brussels reality is analysed in order to understand how it shapes the identities of young people who live in Brussels.

7.1. Young people from an immigrant background

39. Brussels is a very international city: on 1 January 2015, one third (33.9%) of the population of Brussels was of foreign nationality. This figure only takes into account the current nationality of individuals and not their origin. The residents of Brussels of foreign origin, i.e. of a foreign nationality, born with a foreign nationality or with a parent who was

born with a foreign nationality represented two thirds of the total regional population on 31 December 2013 [OSS, 2015]. Once again, the distribution of nationalities is not homogeneous in the regional territory.

40. Brussels is a bilingual city at institutional level, but the presence of international institutions and many migrants has led to the daily use of many languages. The language which young immigrants or young people from an immigrant background adopt most is French [Janssens, 2007], without abandoning their usual languages.

7.2. Relationship with the country of origin

41. Not all young people from an immigrant background have the same relationship with their country of origin, in terms of how often they return and degree of knowledge. Heine *et al.* [2007] analyse the impact of contact with the country of origin on the identity strategies of young people with respect to the traditions and practices passed on by their parents. Young girls often perceive the society of origin as being more modern than the immigrant community, and react in a more or less positive way towards this modernity [Heine *et al.*, 2007; Vandezande *et al.*, 2011]. Boys feel that these contacts are an occasion to rediscover a certain cultural authenticity [Phalet *et al.*, 2013]. Finally, certain young people experience a 'territorial disconnection' with their parents' country of origin. This is the case with many young people of Congolese origin born in Belgium. The cost of travel, a precarious legal status at times, and reduced access to Congolese media make it more difficult to maintain contact with Congo [Jamouille and Mazzochetti, 2011; Manço *et al.*, 2013].

7.3. Family transmission

42. Family transmission has a strong influence on religious, citizen and cultural practices in particular.

43. Fleischmann and Phalet [2012] show that religious education during childhood prefigures the continuation of religious practice in adulthood. Thus, the second generation of Muslims whose parents went to a mosque regularly or who went to a mosque for Islamic religion classes as children tends to be more religious.

44. Foreign origin also influences the voting practices of young people from an immigrant background. Teney and Jacobs [2009] analysed the voting intentions of students for the French-language parties during the federal elections of June 2007. The study illustrates that students of foreign origin have specific voting intentions. On average, a large number of students of foreign origin state that they wish to vote for PS or CdH, with certain particularities according to nationality.

45. Finally, family transmission may explain certain identity problems. The work by Jamouille [2010], carried out in the north neighbourhood, indicates that some young people in these neighbourhoods and from an immigrant background, recent or not, experience a feeling of exile. 'This is exacerbated by relegation and discrimination, but it is also a feeling related to the fact that they are frowned upon there and here, with no place of their own, and are foreigners to themselves, to others and sometimes to their own families.' [Jamouille, 2010, p. 21].

7.4. Segregation and discrimination, vectors of withdrawal

46. The formation of identities of young people from an immigrant background, mainly North African and sub-Saharan, is nourished by a 'dual stigmatisation due to their skin colour, which locks them in an irreducible otherness and makes them too visible, and (...) socio-political and socioeconomic discrimination, which tend to make them invisible'. This dual stigmatisation produces four non-exclusive types of behaviour and ways of existing in the city: withdrawal, self-affirmation, the logic of gangs and territories, and religious logic [Mazzocchetti, 2012].

47. Racist or more widely discriminatory representations and practices exist among Brussels youth, whether or not they come from an immigrant background. A study conducted among students in Dutch-language secondary education shows that they have more positive relationships with young people of the same origin [Vettenburg *et al.*, 2011]. Elchardus [2011] points out the high level of anti-Semitism in Flemish schools. In addition, Jamouille and Mazzochetti [2011] highlight the fact that certain young people of different foreign origins implement avoidance strategies. Thus, young people of Moroccan origin and from sub-Saharan Africa avoid each other and nourish prejudices about each other. Finally, Teney and Subramanian [2010] analysed the atti-

tudes of students from an immigrant background with regard to homosexuals, and their attitude was more negative than that of students of Belgian origin.

48. A generational gap, in connection with the experiences of discrimination, is sometimes seen between sub-Saharan youth and their parents. On the one hand, the parents accuse their children of an 'altered Africanness'. On the other hand, young people consider their parents as not being recognised enough by the host society or as being too traditional. These young people see continuity between their parents' submission to white domination and the discrimination which they experience [Manço *et al.*, 2013].

8. Use of leisure time and socialisation

49. In their study conducted among French-speaking and Dutch-speaking students, Teney and Hanquinet [2012] show that social capital varies according to ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Formal social capital is more concentrated among students of Belgian origin who have a high socioeconomic status, with people of foreign origin and a lower socioeconomic status having an informal social capital.

50. Other studies [Smits *et al.*, 2015] have analysed the connection between the degree of urbanisation and participation in voluntary-sector activities. They have shown that large cities have the biggest proportion of individuals who are active in the voluntary sector. As regards Brussels young people from an immigrant background, their high level of cultural participation must be seen in connection with their membership in community centres or other structures of this type. On the contrary, a study conducted based on JOP data shows that the lowest rate of voluntary-sector activity is seen among students of foreign origin [Vettenburg *et al.*, 2011].

51. Finally, half of young people and children with a handicap in Brussels do not participate in leisure activities during the school year [Janssen *et al.*, 2008], despite the wishes of parents, as illustrated by the workshops.

9. Delinquency among young people

52. The association between young people and crime is strong in Brussels, especially with respect to young people of foreign origin [Nagels and Rea, 2007; Rea *et al.*, 2009; Cops *et al.*, 2011]. The knowledge regarding the delinquent practices of young people in Brussels is structured around two areas: the objectification of these facts and their explanation through the criminalisation of poverty.

9.1. Objectification of the phenomenon

53. Rea *et al.* [2009] show that certain events are reported and targeted more than others by police and legal authorities, especially when they are committed by young people from ethnic minorities. According to them, 'this selectivity contributes to the formation of a criminalisation of young people' [Rea *et al.*, 2009, p. 4]. Mahieu *et al.* [2015] warn that the figures regarding crime must be interpreted as a social reaction as much as an initial propensity to commit delinquent acts. While young people are overrepresented in the delinquent population, they are also overrepresented among victims [Cops *et al.*, 2014].

54. The police statistics also indicate a strong increase in infringements of legislation on the protection of young people. The number of these offences rose from 353 in 2005 to 1192 in 2013 [Bailly *et al.*, 2015, p. 139]. Finally, due to the uncertainty regarding the conformity of the enforcement of this measure among young people under the age of 16, few minors were subject to municipal administrative sanctions (SACs): 413 between 2013 and 2014, 89% of whom come from the municipalities of Ixelles, Brussels and Molenbeek [Bailly *et al.*, 2015, p. 200]. Most of the SACs concerning minors are warnings, but 25% lead to a fine.

9.2. Criminalisation of poverty

55. Young people are often at the heart of conflicts regarding the occupation of the urban space. The street is therefore the place for an economy of resourcefulness for those who are deprived of economic resources [Jamouille and Mazzocchetti, 2011]. Furthermore, it becomes a space for socialisation and recognition by peers when it is not received at school or at work [Nagels and Rea, 2007].

56. Mahieu *et al.* [2015, p. 77] observe that 'the greater the proportion of beneficiaries of social integration revenue in a municipality, the more minors who are reported to prosecutor's offices for offences'. Furthermore, there is a connection between the rise in juvenile delinquency among minors according to registered municipality of residence and unstable socioeconomic context between 2008 and 2011 based on taxable net income per inhabitant. Thus 'the lower the average income of the municipality, the higher the reporting rates observed for minors who reside in the municipality' [Mahieu *et al.*, 2015, p. 76].

57. Cops *et al.* [2014] investigated the relationship between the ethnicity of young people who live in Brussels and delinquent behaviour. Based on a sample of 2,502 young people in Flemish education in Brussels, it emerges that young people of Belgian origin commit more property related crimes than the others. The variables which seem to have the most impact are those related to the education stream: criminal offences are more common in technical and vocational education, for example.

9.3. Reaction to stigmatisation and discrimination

58. As regards urban gangs, while the nature of the phenomenon is not specific to Brussels, the origin of the members makes it an ethnically differentiated phenomenon. They are composed mainly of young people of sub-Saharan origin, aged 15 to 19 and armed with knives. Several factors have been suggested to explain this phenomenon. The first is family breakdown subsequent to desynchronised family migrations, which sometimes leaves young people to fend for themselves, leading to breaks in their socialisation [Manço *et al.*, 2013, p. 32]. The second is distress regarding identity due to discrimination and racism, which favours the formation of a reverse stigma.

59. The social work of youth workers, group leaders, social assistants and teachers with these young people allows them to renew ties with society [OSS, 2013], even if the in-between time which the social workers occupy is sometimes a source of tension [Kolly, 2012, 2015].

10. Health of young people in Brussels

60. The analyses of the health of young people who live in Brussels underline that social inequalities are transformed into health inequalities.

10.1. The state of health and its perception

61. Young people in Brussels declare more often than young people in other major cities in Belgium that they are in poor health [OSS, 2013]. Social inequalities in terms of health are partially the result of education level [OSS, 2013].

62. Young people in Brussels are two to three times more likely to postpone care than in the other regions [OSS, 2013]. The factors which explain the inequalities of access to medical care include cost, the lack of knowledge of systems for assistance such as a higher reimbursement rate or urgent medical assistance, as well as poor knowledge of the system as a whole.

63. In Brussels, the death rate for adolescents and young adults (aged 15-34) has decreased considerably in recent years [De Grande *et al.*, 2015]. However, in this case as well, education level is a powerful vector of social inequalities, especially among the male population [De Grande *et al.*, 2013].

64. Along with the state of health confirmed by a medical examination, people's perception of their state of health and their state of mind also influence their health.

65. The origin of young people influences their perception of their health. While north African and Turkish youth are less inclined to feel that they are in good health, sub-Saharan youth feel that they are in better health than Belgian youth do. Furthermore, young people who are second generation immigrants are in less good health than those from the first generation [De Grande *et al.*, 2014 b].

66. Finally, one third of young people present signs of psychological suffering [OSS, 2013]. In this case as well, social inequalities play a role and paint a picture which varies according to socioeconomic level and family situation [OSS, 2013].

10.2. High-risk behaviour

67. Following a survey of the knowledge which young people in Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles have of biology, assistance and healthcare services, their sexuality and their expectations, it became apparent that there was a need to distribute information to these young people regarding sexually transmitted diseases, as well as adolescent pregnancy [Cherbonnier *et al.*, 2009].

68. Youth is a phase of experimentation. Thus, many people start to consume alcohol and drugs at this stage of their lives. The literature on the reality in Brussels is scant, which results in very partial knowledge of these social phenomena in Brussels. However, two dimensions of the consumption of psychoactive substances are examined: the extent of their use in certain segments of the population of young people in Brussels, and the social trajectories of young users from very disadvantaged backgrounds. These works all underline that the lack of socio-economic security plays a role in the use of psychoactive substances.

69. Concerning the use of alcohol and cannabis by young people in Flemish secondary education based on a sample of 1,488 individuals from the third year to the sixth year of secondary school, 20% of respondents had drunk beer or wine on more than three occasions during the previous month, 10% had drunk spirits and 7% had consumed cannabis. Furthermore, the proportion of respondents who consume these products is significantly higher in vocational education [Berten *et al.*, 2012]. However, for respondents from an immigrant background, there is no difference between the types of education, except in the case of cannabis, which is consumed more among young people from an immigrant background in vocational education. Brussels youth consume more than those in Aalst and Ghent. Cardoen [*et al.*, 2011] explain that this greater consumption by young people who live in Brussels is due to the more unfavourable socioeconomic conditions in which they live.

70. Jamouille [2010] highlights the fact that part of this high-risk behaviour of young people involving the excessive consumption of alcohol or drugs takes place in a context of a great lack of security in which the father is absent.

71. Research is also under way to determine the effectiveness of treatments such as multidimensional family therapy [Rowe *et al.*, 2013; Schaub *et al.*, 2014] aimed at reducing dependency and addiction among adolescents to alcohol, cannabis and other drugs.

72. Concerning errant youth, Briké and Verbist [2013] show that these young people are often at odds with the institutions and do not believe that they can help them.

Conclusion

73. The portrait of young people in Brussels is quite heterogeneous and incomplete. On the one hand, there is a great diversity of authors who choose different methods of analysis and theoretical approaches to study these subjects. On the other hand, the logic of research funding is not necessarily aimed at constituting territorialised knowledge, which is therefore specific to Brussels. The diversity of principles and objectives which guide the actions of the institutions concerned often makes the data – which are focused on one part of the population concerned – difficult to compare among themselves.

74. This will probably change with the deepening of the regionalisation and the rationalisation of financial means allocated to public expenditure. Data and research centred on Brussels are necessary to define the social priorities and adjust the existing public actions to regional specificities. In this more prospective conclusion, we shall first pin together the elements of the different studies which the authors agree on. We shall then mention the themes which deserve to be looked into further. Finally, we shall examine the research themes which have yet to be explored.

Divided observations

75. The first element to remember is the significant increase in and diversity of young people in the Brussels region. This population growth constitutes a major challenge nowadays, in particular as regards the necessary infrastructures, job offers, level of education, reducing discrimination and the social obstacles which young people experience on a daily basis.

76. The second element which results from this analysis is the rather sombre picture of Brussels youth. The situation of many young people is quite insecure, as regards education, access to employment, housing conditions and access to healthcare.

77. The literature analysed highlights the strong dualisation of living conditions of Brussels youth. Two types of youth live in Brussels, living 'parallel' lives, not meeting in the school system or in leisure spaces, not practising the same type of mobility, and not having the same level of education or the same chances for access to employment. The attempts to reduce these phenomena of exclusion do not seem to have had much of an effect. These observations must be taken into account, at the risk of reinforcing social exclusion and the sociospatial dualisation in the Region.

Necessary investigations and prospects for further examination

78. Along with these observations, many themes deserve to be investigated further. Little is known about some areas of the private lives of young people, the determining factors in the choice of partner, and the effects of the gender dimension of choices, tastes, activities or acts in daily life. There are only a few analyses which focus on the theme of gender and relationships within certain ethnic communities in Brussels. A further investigation of these themes could help to better understand the difficulties of young people in the school environment as well as outside of school.

79. The use of leisure time for cultural and sports activities is partially known. However, a large part of this knowledge is produced via schools, which may provoke questioning. On the one hand, schools are approached more and more for surveys and research, which take place in an uncoordinated and disorganised manner. It is therefore necessary to consider a coordinating body for research in the school environment. On the other hand, the school setting is not necessarily the most favourable environment for getting young people to speak about the difficulties they have there and elsewhere. Other points of entry into the daily reality of young people who live in Brussels, such as leisure, spaces for seeking employment, training spaces and work spaces, could provide interesting knowledge about the processes of socialisa-

tion of young people, as well as the areas where social inequalities are overcome or perpetuated.

80. The different registers of social work are not well known and their concrete effects on the socialisation of young people, their citizenship practices and their life choices are not analysed often. This would allow the effects of social work to be understood more deeply and to better understand the initiatives for social and territorial decompartmentalisation, and the discovery of cultural and sports activities, as well as the results of early school leaving. These elements could provide keys to improve the well-being of Brussels youth. In order to do this, it would be necessary to reinforce collaborations between researchers and stakeholders in the field, to determine the research themes which are most in keeping with these aims. The works by Manço [2013] and Kolly [2015] in particular show the challenges, the difficulties and the tensions involved in social work with young people, as well as the need for reflection and detachment on behalf of professionals in order to understand these relationships.

81. With respect to the entry of young people on the labour market, while there is no shortage of data and quantitative studies, the spaces, methods, stakeholders and public in the area of training and the search for employment should be analysed more from a qualitative point of view. The qualitative approach would allow a better understanding of how young people become NEETS or accomplished workers, as well as how they experience the job search period (with no income) after their studies, the impact on how they see the future and their social relationships, the forms of engagement in Brussels society, and the objective and subjective impact of plans of action such as the youth guarantee [Can, 2015], which should help them emerge quickly from the period of unemployment.

82. During this time of the development of digital culture and the growing significance of screens, it is important to understand how these phenomena influence sports, cultural and artistic practices, the representations of time of young people who live in Brussels, the importance of activities subject to easier organisation thanks to new technologies, and the fleeting character of various forms of engagement.

83. While there have been attempts to understand and interpret the high-risk behaviour of young people in Brussels, it is scarcely quantified. Data for the population of Brussels exist, but they do not distinguish age categories.

84. In terms of mobility, it would be interesting to understand the mobility strategies of young women with respect to those of young men. Recent current events have highlighted the verbal violence towards women in the public space as well as avoidance strategies [Gilow, 2015].

85. Finally, while the studies underline the polarisation between two types of youth in Brussels, it is interesting to note that most of the studies focus more on Brussels youth in difficulty or disadvantaged youth, and that there is little focus on the more privileged youth. For example, in the area of education, only Devleeshouwer has focused on young people from so-called 'average' schools. In this area, there is also the exploratory work of Caillez and Bailly [2008]. While the research is focused on the disadvantaged populations in order to understand the social and societal evolution, the fact remains that the more privileged part of Brussels youth must be considered in order to understand the perpetuation of social inequalities, which is just as necessary as producing the means to overcome them and to have a global view of Brussels society.

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Financial support

Brussels Studies gets published with the support of:



Innoviris, the Brussels Institute for Research and Innovation



University Foundation



Fonds international Wernaers pour la recherche et la diffusion des connaissances



Fonds de la Recherche scientifique

This study is an initiative of the Bernheim Foundation in collaboration with the King Baudouin Foundation.

Fondat°Bernheim

To cite this text

SACCO, Muriel, SMITS, Wendy, KAVADIAS, Dimo, SPRUYT, Bram, D'ANDRIMONT Caroline, 2016. BSI synopsis. Brussels youth: between diversity and lack of security. In: *Brussels Studies*, Number 98, April 25th, www.brusselsstudies.be.

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