

Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care

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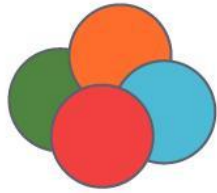
A peer learning project

Country Report – Belgium



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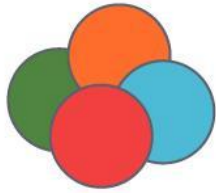
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1. Introduction

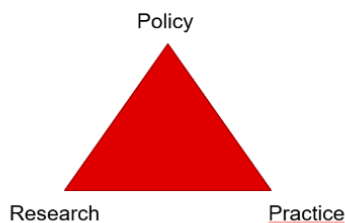
This country report of Belgium documents relevant policy, research, and practice of the organisation of ECEC, with specific attention to family day care

1.2. Flemish QualFDC Partners Overview



VBJK - Centre for Innovation in the Early Years
Started in 1986 as Research Centre in ECEC
linked to University of Ghent

We connect:



- Policy research / advocacy
- Innovative projects
- Making training materials
- Documentation Centre
- Networking (*Inter-*)national

<https://vbjk.be/en>

Vlaams Welzijnsverbond

The Flemish Welfare Association today groups facilities from three sectors in welfare work: youth and family support, support of persons with disabilities and childcare.

The Flemish Welfare Association represents 750 organizations, a capacity of about 27,000 places and an employment of 31,000 employees. We also recognise as an employers organization.

Within the sector childcare, we see 3 major subsectors:

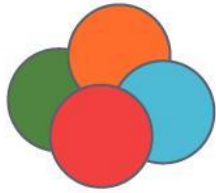
- Group daycare
- Family daycare
- Pre- and after school care (ages 2,5 to 12)



The sector childcare employs 3 staff members, 3 mentors and 6 pedagogical coaches. We support all our members in different areas: advocacy, policy-making capacity, reinforce quality on the job and preparation for qualification through workplace learning and experiential competencies.



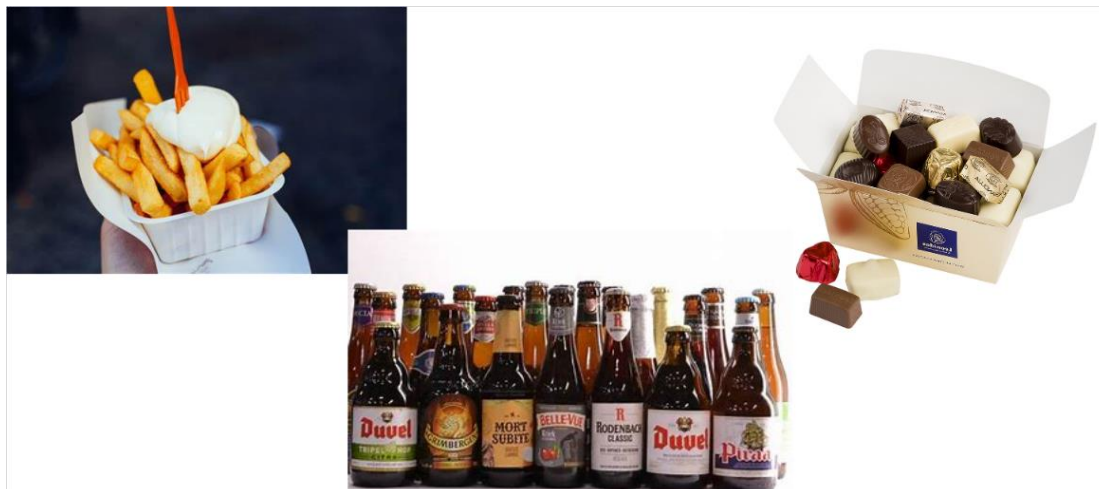
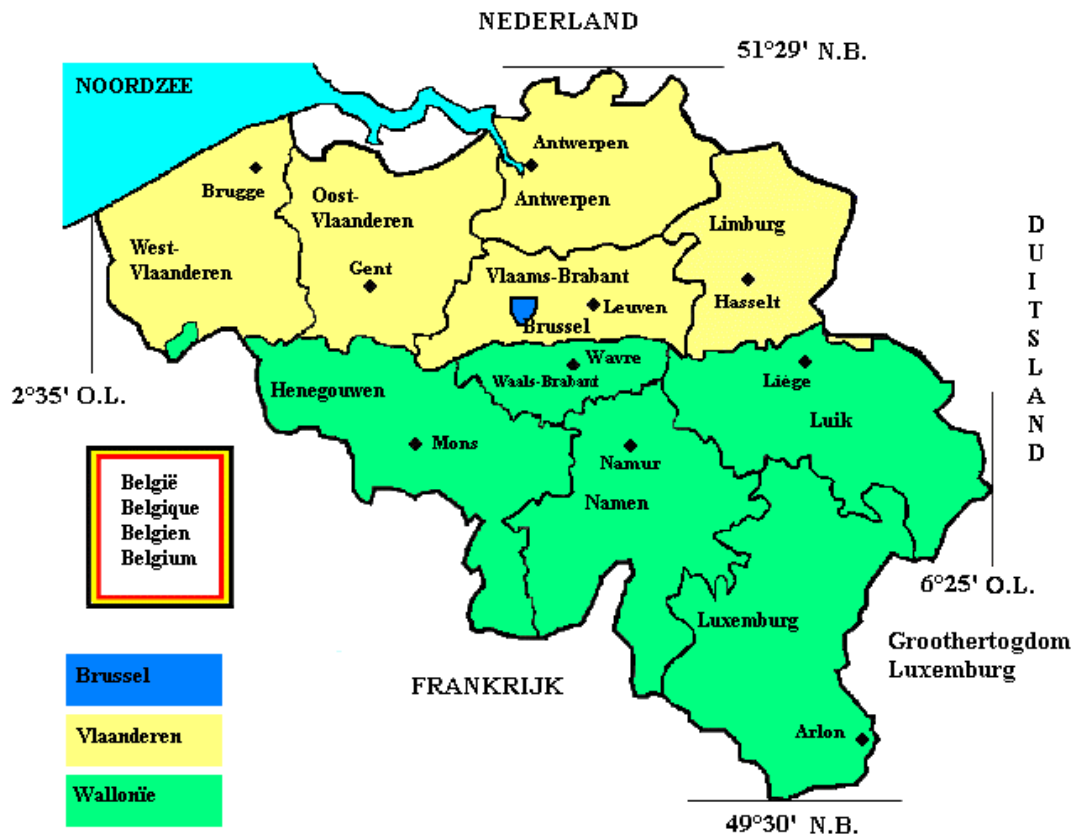
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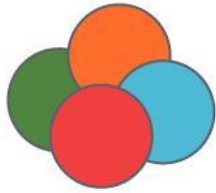


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1.3. General Information on Belgium

Belgium is a federal state with 3 communities (Flemish, French, German Community) and 3 regions (Flanders, Walloon, Brussels-Capital) next to the federal level. Policy areas such as family services, childcare services, education, youth work and welfare are regulated at the community level.





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2. General information on ECEC

Childcare (0-3)

Department of Public Health,
Welfare & Families

Responsible for childcare (0-3),
out of school care & preventive
family support



Hilde Crevits

Pre-primary education (2,5-6)

Department of Education



Ben Weyts

Childcare (0-3)

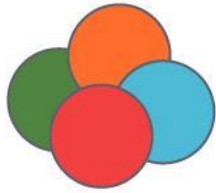


- ACR: 1 childcare worker – 8 children (9)
- Often parttime use

Pre-primary education (2,5-6)



- 1 teacher - +/- 24 children
- Mostly 3-4 classes, in age groups (often entry classes for 2,5-3years)
- Integrated in elementary education (2,5 - 6 -12 year)
- Often full-time use



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Childcare (0-3)

+/- 50%

Places are scarce & unequal accessibility

24% families with migration backgrounds
22% families living in poverty

Childcare (0-3)

Tax deductible;
Income related;
max 5€ that can be reduced
(1,65€)

Childcare (0-3)

Low qualifications (secondary school, 7th year kinderverzorgster, or adult education)

Since 2014: aim qualified staff in 2024/2026

Bachelor "Pedagogy for the young child" since 10 years

Pre-primary education (2,5-6)

3 years: 97%
4 years: 98%
5 years: 99%

Focus on 'toddler participation'

Pre-primary education (2,5-6)

Free of charge (maximum invoice)

Pre-primary education (2,5-6)

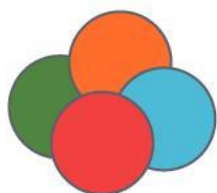
Bachelor degree in preschool education

+ 'invisible assistants' – childcare workers

REMARK:

- Mainly middle class women
- Main imagine: teacher in the classroom

Problem: shortage of staff!

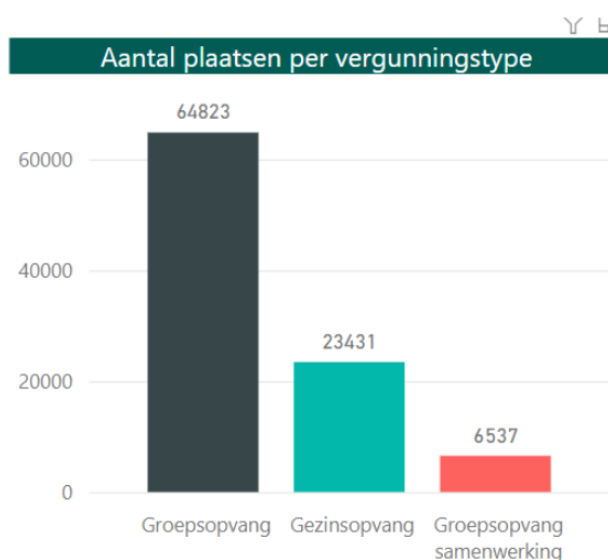


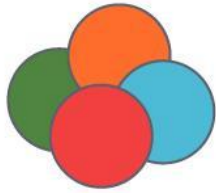
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Competence	Ministry of welfare	Ministry of education
Viewed as	A basic provision, despite a persistent shortage of places and a tendency to prioritize working parents	Basic provision for 2,5 - 6 year olds, universally accessible
Professionalism	Low standards, approx. 80% without formal qualification requirements	All teachers have a bachelor degree
Inspection	Central quality monitoring, albeit mainly technical standards	Pedagogical standards
Finances	Parents pay according to their income level in approx 2/3 of provisions	Officially free of charge for all
Availability	Scarcity of places, not enough for all children	Every child is guaranteed a place in school
Goal	Threefold: an economic function (labour participation), an educational function and a social function (equity)	Clearly formulated pedagogical goals

ECEC in Flanders -Types of childcare 0-3

Childcare centres
Family daycare





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Types of childcare 0-3

Childcare centres
Family daycare
After school care

5.4 Kinderen onder de 3 jaar in formele vergunde opvang per soort opvang

Inkomenstarief	Vergunningstype	Gebruik ⁽¹⁾	Aandeel kinderen per vergunningstype t.o.v. alle kinderen die opvang gebruiken
IKT	Gezinsopvang	16,7	31,1
	Groepsopvang	24,1	44,9
	Totaal IKT	40,8	76,1
Niet-IKT	Gezinsopvang	1,5	2,8
	Groepsopvang	11,3	21,1
	Totaal niet-IKT	12,8	23,9
Totaal		53,7	100,0

5.4 Kinderen van 2 maanden tot 3 jaar in formele opvang vergund door Opgroeien naar soort opvang - Vlaams Gewest (percentage)
Bron: Opgroeien, registratie aanwezige kinderen in september 2020
(1) Percentage berekend op het aantal kinderen van 2 maanden tot en met 35 maanden dat volgens de Mirage-databank in september 2020 in het Vlaamse Gewest woont

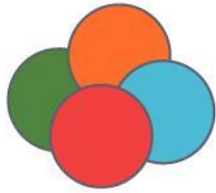
ECEC in Flanders - current challenges



ECEC-sector is in crisis

- several bad news items in the press
- low wages,
- low qualified staff
- adult child ratio is too high
- no child free hours
- more than 6000 vacancies
- a lot of suspensions

ECEC in Flanders - but also a lot of beauty



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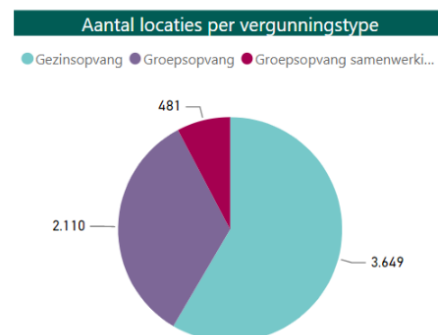
video: <https://vimeo.com/231046802>

Also an inspiring sector

3. Information on family day care

Numbers:

- Number of family day care organizers: 92 organizers (public and private)
- Number of locations FD who work alone: 3649 locations ■
- Number of locations FD who work together: 481 locations ■
- Total locations: 4130 locations





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Family daycare:

There are 3 possible kinds of family daycare:

1. Family care by 1 childminder up to a maximum of 8 children simultaneously.
2. Family care by 2 cooperating childminders up to a maximum of 8 children simultaneously.
3. Group care by minimum 2 cooperating childminders up to a maximum of 18 children simultaneously.

In family care, the goal is an average of 1 to 4 children.

In group care cooperating childminders, strive for an average of 1 in 7 children

Organization of childcare:

- Family care organizers:

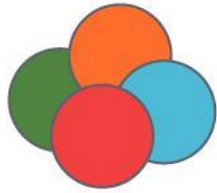
They select, supervise, monitor and educate the childminder. They have contacts with parents, take care of paying the childminders and collect invoices from parents. Parents pay a daily fee to the organizer based on their income.

- Available area in square meter per child:
 - 3m²: to play
 - 2m²: to sleep

Concerns:

There is a high workload both among family care organizers and the childminders. There is a high turnover among the childminders. In recent years we have seen a huge decrease in the number of childminders but the demand for childcare remains high. This means that the same or more children are being cared for with fewer childminders. This has a huge impact on childminders staffing and workload.

The challenge for the next few years is certainly and surely the retention of family daycare childminders and deployment of lateral entrants.



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Bylaws:

There are also 3 types of statutes for family daycare in Flanders:

- Independent statute
- Sui Generis statute (since 2003)
- Employee statute (since 2015, still a pilot project).

In Wallonia, the choice has been made to tilt all FDC into an employee status by 2025.

In Flanders, 600 childminders are currently working in an employee status. They are currently evaluating the sui generis statute and the employee statute to make new policy choices in the future.

The difference between the sui generis statute and the employee statute:

Family day care employee:	Family day care Sui Generis:
Is hired and receives an employment contract : all rules of labor law apply.	Concludes a cooperation agreement with the service : labor law does not apply.
The childminder receives a salary and fixed and variable expenses.	The "sui generis" childminder receives an expense allowance based on the childcare days provided.
The family care organisation must ensure that the childminder is assigned enough children to meet the contractual number.	



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The difference between the sui generis statute and the employee statute:

Family day care employee:	Family day care Sui Generis:
Is hired and receives an employment contract : all rules of labor law apply.	Concludes a cooperation agreement with the service : labor law does not apply.
The childminder receives a salary and fixed and variable expenses.	The "sui generis" reception parent receives an expense allowance based on the childcare days provided.
The family care organisation must ensure that the reception parent is assigned enough children to meet the contractual number	

Children do not attend outside the will of the childminder

Family day care employee:	Family day care: Sui Generis:
When children do not show up, wages and the fixed portion of the expense allowance continue to be paid.	When children do not show up, the childminder can claim a childcare allowance. The care allowance is regulated through the system of temporary unemployment and has strict regulations within the RVA.

Income security

Family daycare employee:	Family daycare: Sui Generis:
<p>The employee status provides income security :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A gross monthly salary of €2086.00 (at the current index). - A non-taxable expense allowance consisting of 2 parts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A flat rate of 20% on your monthly salary: 13.72 euros per day or 274.4 € per month of 20 working days o 3.74 euros per child present per day of care, with a maximum of 8 children per day - Gross double vacation pay (92% of your gross monthly salary). 	<p>The "sui generis" status offers no income security.</p> <p>The reception parent receives only when the children are actually present :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • €13.18/half day/child (half day < 5h care) • The "sui generis" status offers no income security. • €8.79 (- 3h, only for after-school care)

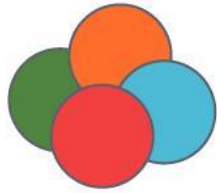


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Vacation and holiday	
Family day care employee:	Family day care: Sui Generis:
20 days of vacation: net pay and double vacation pay	20 unpaid days are assimilated for social security purposes
10 days of additional vacation as compensation for the 50-hour week where the reception parent receives net pay.	If the host parent takes more leave than the 20 days unpaid, it is not assimilated for social security purposes.
10 paid legal holidays (with compensation when they fall on a Saturday or Sunday)	A holiday is unpaid and is only assimilated for social security purposes if the host parent has a childcare plan for that day.

Illness	
Family day care employee:	Family day care: Sui Generis:
Guaranteed salary and flat-rate expense allowance of 20% on your monthly salary during the first month of illness	No guaranteed salary
After that first month you are entitled to a sickness benefit, which is based on your salary	You are entitled to a sickness benefit but this is based on your performance in the previous quarter

Small leave of absence	
Family day care employee:	Family day care: Sui Generis:
Minor leaves of absence: a funeral, communion, marriage,...	Well-defined situations within the RVA regulations. Can be compensated by a benefit if the conditions of the 4 week regulations are met.
Time credit and thematic leave	
Entitled to time credit in the form of leave, training credit, parental leave,...	Time credit en thematic leave are not possible.
	A child minder in time credit with a regular employer may cumulate the expense allowance and the care allowance with the interruption allowance.



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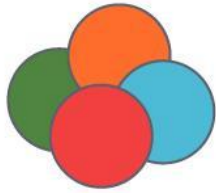
Educational leave	
Family day care employee:	Family day care: Sui Generis:
Entitled to paid educational leave.	No educational leave, but training vouchers.
Pension	
Pension is calculated at the minimum wage of the sector (€1,821.96 per month)	<p>The calculation of your pension is linked to your occupation. If you care for an average of 4 children per day all days until retirement, the calculation base is €1,593.81 (minimum wage NAR)</p> <p>Career years prior to 2003 do not count in the calculation</p>
Unemployment	
Family day care employee:	Family day care: Sui Generis:
Entitled to unemployment benefits in case of dismissal	<p>Does not <u>acru</u>e to unemployment rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you can work for 15 years while retaining your rights if you start from unemployment or quit your previous employer. If your cooperation agreement ends, you will not receive C4. If you stopped working at your previous employer, you re-enroll with your last employer. - If you have been a child carer sui generis for more than 15 years, you will have to work for 13 weeks before you can apply for unemployment again.

4. Information on professionalisation & support systems of family day care in the country



On the job pedagogical bachelors for the entire childcare system.

- 264 FTE
- Approximately 1 FTE per 80 to 100 childminders.
- Working within a pedagogical framework and at the requests of the family care organizer



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Pedagogical coaches:

1. Starting childminders
 - Organization of the day, setting up the play area, pedagogical actions, contact with parents
 - Suggested frequency (directional)
 - First month: weekly minimum 6h of active coaching
 - 2nd month: 2 x per month minimum 6h of active coaching
 - 3 - 6 month: 2 x per month minimum 4h of active coaching
 - 7 - 12 month: 1 x per month 4h of active coaching or customized coaching
 - On demand: basis course (with qualified and non qualified child care workers)
 - Zooms in on the 15 basic competences.

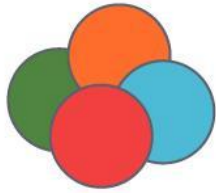


Pedagogical coaches:

2. Pedagogical counseling questions:

- The request can come about in different ways:
 - At the request of the childminder(through the childcare organisation).
 - At the request of the person in charge
 - After a insufficient score at MeMoQ
 - After a deficit after an inspection visit
- In a pedagogically difficult situation or when the family care organizer can't offer a more intensive form of counseling.





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Pedagogical coaches:

3. MeMoQ

- In some services there is a demand for implementation of MeMoQ, both through training or intervision, and in the workplace. For starting childminders, this is included by the pedagogical coach and mentor in the 15 basic competencies. For childminders who have been working for some time, this will be implemented rather through training, learning networks or intervision.



Qualification of FDC

'EVC'

- = Recognition of Acquired Skills. (**E**rkenning van **V**erworven **C**ompetenties)
- = To acknowledge existing experience in a specific context (your daycare).

The assessment:

- 2 (scheduled) days: These days follow each other as soon as possible, not always consecutively
 - Day 1: observation and oral examination in the daycare
 - Day 2: oral examination in a test center
- Both days the same 2 assessors are present together
- Takes place in the daycare of your choice (own daycare is possible)
- Price: €130 (967 DKK)



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5. Information on the Flemish QualFDC partners

5.1. Vlaams Welzijnsverbond



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Within childcare, we see 3 major sub sectors:

- Group care – childcare centres
- Family care – childminders
- Extracurricular care

Childcare employs 3 staff members, 3 family care mentors and 6 pedagogical coaches. We support all our childcare members in the areas of advocacy, supporting policy-making capacity, qualitative strengthening on the shop floor and preparation for qualification through workplace learning and experiential competencies.

5.2. VBJK



VBJK (Centre for Innovation in the Early Years) is an NGO and recognized as a research centre by the Federal Belgian Government. VBJK is an official partner of Agency Upbringing and works in close collaboration with the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy of Ghent University.

VBJK focuses on the basic provisions for young children (0-12) and their families, such as ECEC (childcare and preschool), out of school care and preventive family support. VBJK always combines theory, policy, and practice in its work. This means, in coaching, product development (such as books, a 2-monthly magazine, and movies) or research, VBJK always connects all involved parties: children, parents, practitioners, researchers, policymakers and all possible relevant organisations.



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VBJK is specialised in national and international projects.

Examples of national projects, relevant for QualFDC, are Strengthening childminders in family day care, or projects on professionalisation. VBJK is also specialised in European policy research. The centre was involved in the CoRE research (Competence Requirements in ECEC) commissioned by DG Education and Culture (2009-2011), the research on 'The role of ECEC in preventing early school leaving, also commissioned by DG Education and Culture (2013-2014) and the Eurofound systematic review on continuous professional development in ECEC (2013-2015).

VBJK is also part of the NESET II Network (Network of experts on the Social Dimension of Education and Training), which provides reports for the European Commission on specific requested themes, such as professional learning communities, integrated working, multilingualism.

VBJK has worked for years on CPD (continuous professional development) of ECEC staff, with specific attention to the link between theory and practice, through group reflection. A specific method (WANDA) has been developed by VBJK and Artevelde University College to support and realise group reflection in groups and teams and encourage a high quality, inclusive childcare for the diversity of children and families. Whilst the notion of reflexivity in professional practice is not new, finding ways to realise this reflexivity and concretely link it to transformation of practice is innovative.

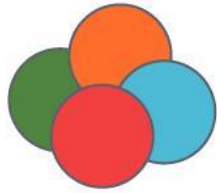
How does VBJK work?

Innovation, in relation.

- VBJK works in a participative way, looking into the perspective of everyone involved, including children and families who participate directly or indirectly. We carefully search for ways to reach partners and target groups.
- We **cooperate** with partners in an open and respectful way and attentive to transparent dialogue. We always look for a common ground and equivalence.
- VBJK informs **policymakers**, on request as well as proactively, based on careful monitoring of evolutions in practices and research – including internationally – as well as our own projects and research.
- **Nationally and internationally**, we keep track of relevant trends in practice, research, and policy. In every project we aim for **co-ownership** of stakeholders. By building solid support, we always try to go for change on a **structural level**.



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Innovation by reflection.

- **Critical reflection** is the key to innovation and change. Professionals ask themselves: why do we do what we do in our work with children? VBJK often takes the position as a critical friend. As a supportive friend, we want to fully understand the work of practitioners, we want to value it and at the same time question it. Alongside the partners we analyse the practice, research, and policy (deconstruction) and then build new practices, policy, and research: reconstruction in co-construction.
- The work of VBJK is **methodically and scientifically** substantiated: we build our work on theories of change, work with models in which we approach actors of change, use validated techniques of group reflection (i.e., intervention and supervision). The same scientific basis is used in our own research, be it focus groups, literature reviews, action research, case studies or quantitative analysis.

Innovation in a structural way

- VBJK works towards building and strengthening **competent systems**, in which not only the individual, but also the team, the organisation, the policy level and (international) networks have their role to play. Only through solid cooperation and quality requirements for all these actors, every level can continually develop and grow. The different roles and responsibilities of all actors are at the focus of all our guidance projects, policy work and research.
- At VBJK, we want to take the time needed to facilitate **innovation** and to give our partners tailored support, advice, or research. VBJK always aims at broad and **structural change** in the long term.