

Belgium

Recent policy developments

- Belgian federal “sustainable city contracts” seek to strengthen the social cohesion of deprived neighbourhoods, reduce their ecological footprint and promote city attractiveness.
- Wallonia’s latest version of its regional development plan is the Marshall Plan 2.Green, covering the period 2009-14 and focusing on: i) human capital; ii) competitiveness clusters and company networks; iii) scientific research; iv) a framework conducive to the creation of activities and quality jobs; v) Employment-Environment Alliance; and vi) combining employment and social well-being.
- The latest version of the Flanders in Action/Pact 2020 is the overarching development strategy that serves as the basis for the Coalition Agreement of the Flemish Government 2009-2014. The three pillars of Flanders in Action are to: i) live better; ii) work smarter; and iii) be more sustainable. The Pact 2020, signed with social and private partners, promotes projects that address 13 societal challenges.
- A reform enacted in 2011 has increased the fiscal autonomy of the three Belgian regions.

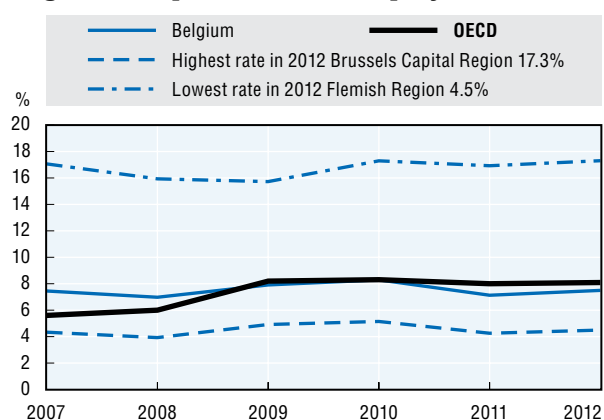
Government structure	Municipal-level governments	Intermediate-level governments	Regional or state-level governments
Federation	589	10	6

Regional development policy	
Lead ministry(ies) or committees	No federal lead ministry, as responsibility is delegated to the regions: Brussels-Capital Region, Flanders and Wallonia
Regional development framework	No federal framework exists. Each region has its own overarching development strategy, such as Flanders in Action or Wallonia’s Marshall Plan.

Urban development policy	
Lead ministry(ies) or committees	Federal Public Service (Urban Policy Service)
Urban policy framework or strategy	Big City Policy (<i>Politique des Grandes Villes/Grootstedenbeleid</i>) programme was launched in 1999/2000. The focus of programmes is generally on social cohesion, sustainable development and urban regeneration.

Rural development policy	
Lead ministry(ies) or committees	No federal lead ministry, as responsibility is delegated to the regions: General Directorate of Agriculture (Flanders) and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Wallonia)
Rural policy framework or strategy	Regions have individual rural development programmes.

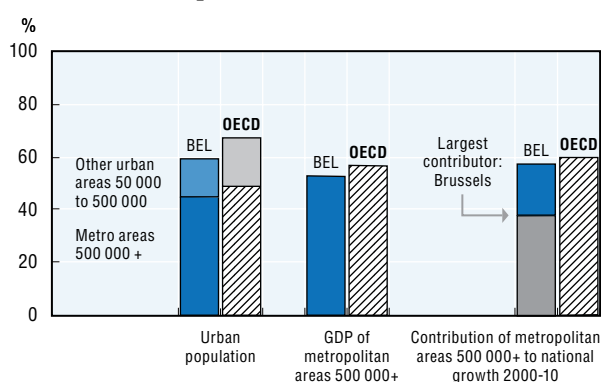
Regional disparities in unemployment trends



In 2012, unemployment rates varied between 4.5% in Flanders and 17% in the Brussels-Capital Region, where the youth unemployment rate reached 36%, or 14 points higher than the OECD average.

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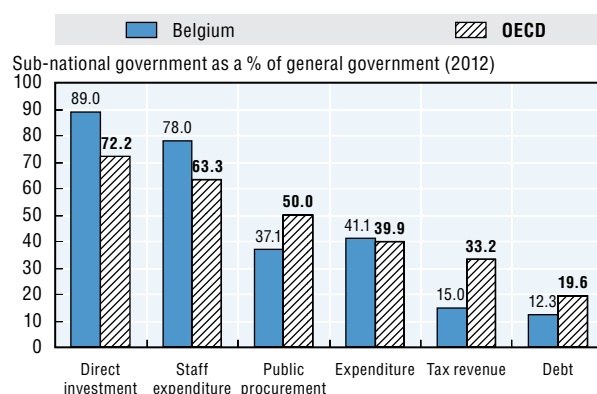
The importance of urban areas



In Belgium, 59% of the population lives in cities of different sizes. The share of population in metropolitan areas (urban areas of more than 500 000 inhabitants) is 44%, compared to 49% in the OECD area.

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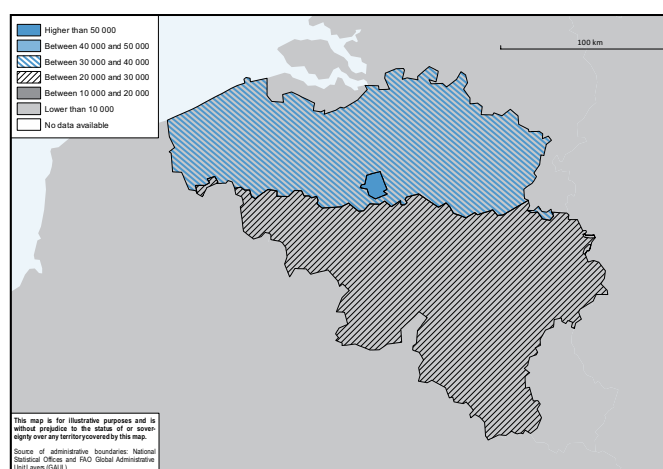
The role of sub-national governments in public finance



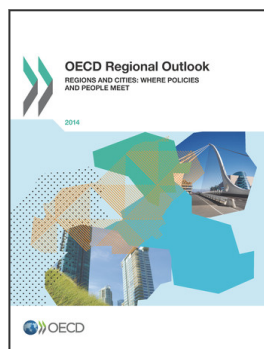
Education and social protection are the two largest spending items for SNGs in Belgium: together they represent 51% of sub-national expenditure, compared to 39% in the OECD area.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933107408>

Regional differences in GDP per capita levels



Belgium had the 5th largest regional disparities in GDP per capita in OECD countries in 2010. GDP growth rates were nevertheless very similar among Belgian regions during the period 2000-10: between +1.5% annually for Wallonia and +1.4% in Flanders.



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