

BELGIUM – FLANDERS

Short cultural policy profile

Prepared by Simon Leenknecht

DATE: February 2023

1. Fact and figures

Political system of Belgium: Federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy

Official languages: Dutch, French, and German

	2020	2015
Population on January 1st	11 522 440	11 237 274
GDP in million EUR (Q1 of year)	116 031*	100 109
GDP per capita in PPS Index (EU27_2020 = 100)	119	121
General government expenditure (in % of GDP)	59.2%	53.7%
Public cultural expenditure in EUR	3 237 100 000	2 854 200 000
Public cultural expenditure as % of GDP	0.7%	0.7%
Public cultural expenditure per Capita	281	254

Share of cultural employment of total employment	4.5%	4.0%
---	------	------

Note: the figures above refer to the totals of all levels of government in Belgium; * asterisk means data are provisional

Source: Eurostat

2. Cultural policy system

2.1 Objectives

Belgium is a federal country. Cultural affairs are mainly the subject of policies on the level of the Flemish, French, and German-speaking **Communities**. This refers to areas such as arts, heritage, language, media, youth policy, and sports. Tourism and immovable heritage are competences of the **Regions** (Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels-Capital Region).

Principles of **political and cultural democracy** and references to **human rights** pervade the history of cultural policies in Belgium and its Communities. Many actions conducted in the framework of these policies are in line with the principles of the Council of Europe on the promotion of cultural diversity and cultural participation, respect of freedom of expression and association, and support of creativity.

Another important principle underpinning a large deal of cultural policies in Belgium and its Communities is **subsidiarity**. This means that the government does not directly intervene in cultural matters, other than by means of general regulations and support measures.

2.2 Main features

This profile primarily provides you information on the cultural policies of the **Flemish Community** of Belgium. These apply to people and organisations living and working in Flanders and Brussels. The focus lays on the policies subsumed under the Flemish policy field of Culture. Strictly speaking, this spans arts,

heritage, socio-cultural work, circus, amateur arts, sign language, and policies that permeate these different fields.

Matters such as media, sports, and youth form separate policy fields. If relevant, you will find information on culture-related affairs that are subsumed under other policy fields of the Flemish government or under other government levels.

In general, cultural policy in the Flemish Community is based on the following **values**:

- Equal rights for all its inhabitants
- Quality and diversity of the cultural offer (and taking measures to correct market distortions)
- Cultural democracy and cultural participation
- Cultural competences
- Creativity
- Protection and promotion of cultural heritage

Responsibilities of the Flemish authorities regarding the competence of Culture are:

- Developing a strategic conceptual framework for cultural policies
- Providing a set of policy instruments
- Taking measures to increase the quality of the cultural offer and provision of cultural services
- Monitoring (the effects of) these policy frameworks and instruments

2.3 Governance system: Organisational Organigram

Image 1: Higher and lower levels of government in Belgium

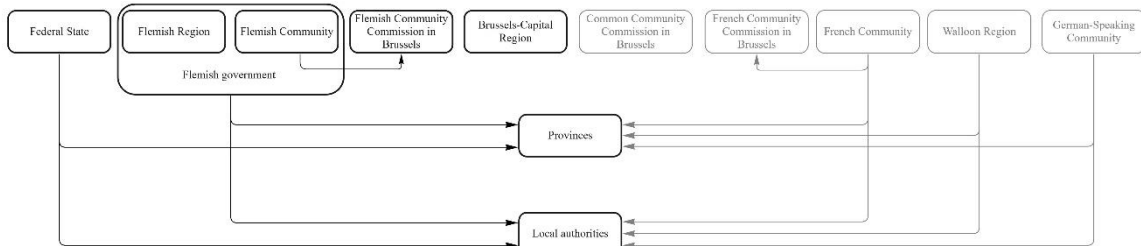
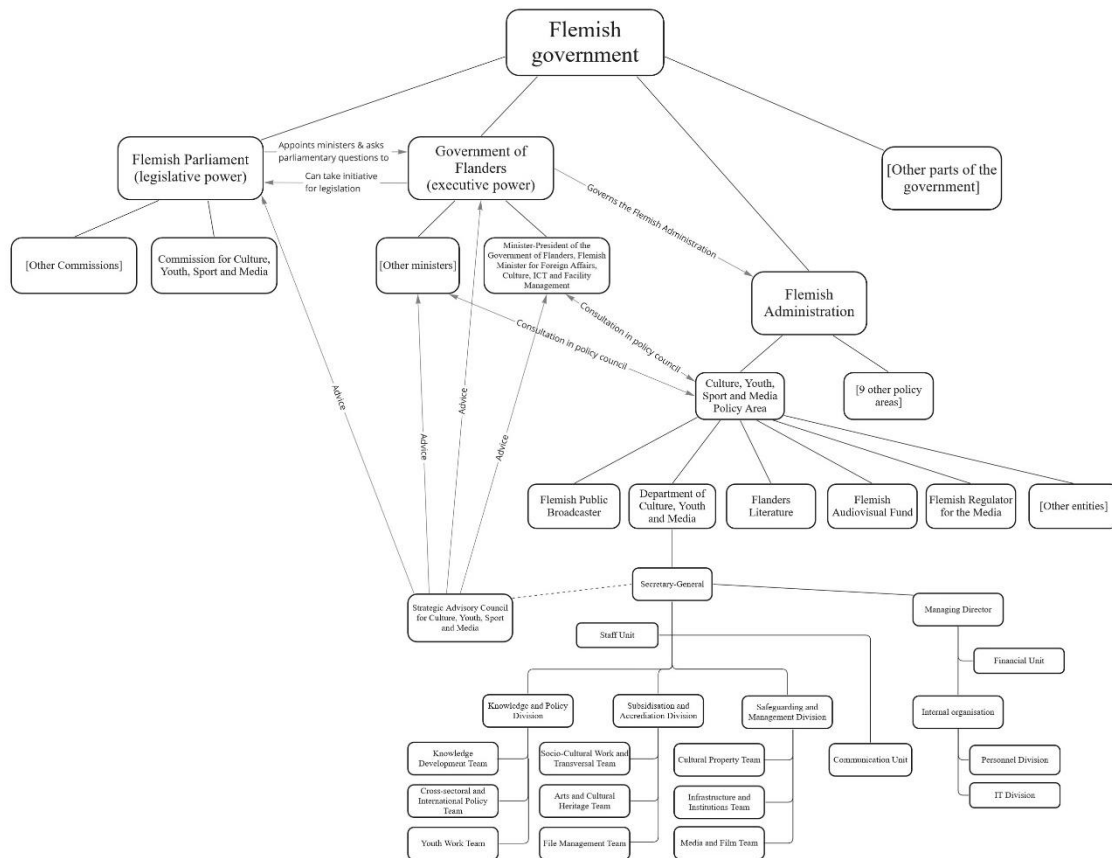


Image 2: Organigram of the Flemish government



Update: December 2022

2.4 Background

1944-1970

After the Second World War, cultural policies in Belgium expanded and were shaped by a drive to democratize culture — inspired by principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In line with international developments, cultural policies developed as an alternative to both the state culture of Communist countries and the market-governed system of the United States. These developments converged with the way Belgian society was historically shaped by philosophical and political divisions (the so-called 'zuilen', literally 'pillars'), leading to the subsidiary government intervention in cultural affairs.

1970-1980

The autonomy of the linguistic communities vis-à-vis the Federal State was further institutionalised. Through subsequent State Reforms, cultural policy was divided over the newly created government levels. In the wake of these reforms, the Culture Pact was passed. Throughout this decade, the ministers of Dutch Culture (as it was called) were Christian-Democrats, whose policies were geared towards democratizing culture (a network of culture centres and libraries was built throughout Flanders). In 1980, the Flemish and Walloon Regions were created (the Brussels-Capital Region followed in 1989).

1981-1992

In the wake of economic turmoil, overall government expenditure on Culture decreased. A new, rather management-oriented style of cultural policies — which included encouraging cultural organisations to generate a private income — was introduced by Liberal ministers of Culture in the Flemish government.

1992-1999

Christian-Democrat ministers of Culture continued the line of their liberal predecessors and focussed on the traditional arts and on socio-cultural work. Legislation on performing arts, music, and museums in Flanders and Brussels was passed that provided funding for delineated periods of time and which allowed funded players to devise longer-term planning.

1999-2009

Flemish government budgets for Culture increased considerably. Legal frameworks were streamlined and 'integrated' policies were created for the professional arts (the Arts Decree, which replaced discipline-specific regulations), cultural heritage (the Cultural Heritage Decree), and socio-cultural work (the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults). The Funds for literature and for audiovisual production were also established in this period, as well as the Participation Decree.

2009-2020

Budgets for Culture came under pressure. The number and scope of new policy initiatives on the Flemish level were rather limited compared to the preceding decade. Notable exceptions were the reform of the Circus Decree (whose new support schemes were rolled out in later years) and the new Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities in 2019. The latter came in the wake of a reform of government levels and their remits in Flanders, as provincial authorities were largely divested of their cultural competences and local cultural policy was thoroughly decentralized.

2020-2023

The third decade of the 21st century begins with budget cuts in (cultural) expenditure of the Flemish government. This is followed by the COVID-19 crisis, which – by contrast – is tackled with a broad array of (temporary) support measures. Nonetheless, the repercussions of this crisis still resonate through the cultural field and its ways of working, its networks and its place in society

– combined with the impact of the rising cost of living and energy, and Brexit. During these years, a series of reforms of cultural decrees takes place (see 6.1). From 2023 on, the Flemish government also increases the budgets for funding the arts. On the federal level, the status of the artist is reformed.

3. Current cultural affairs

3.1 Key developments

Several challenges have been the subject of debates in and on the cultural field in Flanders and Brussels in the past years. The COVID-19 crisis — and the subsequent effects of inflation — have been a major driver in reinvigorating some of these debates, such as the **socio-economic position** of artists and cultural workers, **inequalities** (with regard to gender, cultural background, (dis)ability, etc.) in the access to culture and to the cultural labour force, questions of **funding** for arts and culture, the impact of **digitization** on the workings of the sector, and **ecological sustainability**. **Internationalisation** was added to the agenda, as a significant part of the arts field in Flanders and Brussels relies on international activities, networks and revenues and the impact of restrictions on mobility that came with the crisis is still being felt — in addition to the consequences of Brexit.

The mentioned topics receive different rates and ways of attention in the different parts of the cultural and creative sectors. Sometimes they are even seen as conflicting with one another, as is the case with ecological concerns and the craving for a revived international mobility. The **broader questions** sparked by COVID-19, the rising cost of living and other events resonating throughout Belgian society (the severe flooding in the summer of 2021, awareness about restitution and the history of colonial repression and its repercussions, lawsuits on cases of sexual harassment and gender-based violence — to name a few) is whether cultural workers and organisations should go back to business as usual and — if the answer is no — how to achieve that transition in a just and fair way.

These challenges have also met varying interest of **policy makers**. The current Flemish government began its term with budget cuts — among them in the

domain of Culture (see also table 2). These sparked protests in Flanders and Brussels around the end of 2019. In the wake of the turmoil of **COVID-19**, however, politicians on the Flemish, Federal, and local level expressed their concern about the position of artists and cultural workers and the financial situation of cultural organisations. This resulted in a series of temporary support measures on all these levels aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis.

At the same time, measures taken against the spread of the virus seriously restricted the workings of the culture and the arts. Between March 2020 and May 2022, more than 50 instances were recorded on which the cultural field had to adapt to new regulations (either on the Federal, regional or local level). Some of these measures were met with protest, such as the complete prohibition of cultural events in December 2021 — a measure that was abolished by the Council of State shortly after.

Combined with the earlier protest against budget cuts, these experiences partly explain the ambivalent views still held among cultural workers and organisations towards policy makers — despite the support measures during COVID-19 and, more recently, the rise in the Flemish government budget for funding the arts (see also 3.2).

Most of the COVID-related support measures were no longer in effect by the end of 2022. A notable exception are the projects of the recovery plan of the Flemish government (*Vlaamse Veerkracht*). With regard to culture, these include investments in digitization (in line with the priorities of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility), and infrastructure. Some of the funded cultural infrastructure projects are related to the plans of local governments to compete for becoming European Capital of Culture in 2030.

In 2022, the Flemish government decided upon a support package of ca. 200 mio. euros to counter the effects of **inflation** and the rising cost of living and energy. About 16 mio. euros are dedicated to (partially) covering energy costs of government funded cultural institutions. Next to this, the multi-year funding for arts and culture organisations were indexed in order to mitigate their rising labour cost.

Notwithstanding these measures — and the already mentioned increase in government expenditure on the arts — cultural organisations keep signalling difficulties in coping with the repercussions of inflation and other crises mentioned above. Arts organisations, for example, had to change their policy plans for years to come and re-evaluate staff budgets.

3.2 Key themes

The arts field has taken up several of the challenges mentioned in 3.1 in actions that frequently fare under the theme of **'fair practices'**. These include charters, labour agreements, and awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives that aim to foster sustainable relationships between artists and organisations. They do this by drawing attention to and creating conditions for fair pay, safe and decent working conditions, transparency, shared responsibilities, and solidarity. Recent examples include the fair practice charter and toolbox [Juist is Juist](#).

Cultural policy documents show their support for the striving for fair practices. Policy makers, however, rather provide outlines and multifaceted support actions than specific rules on how to implement these. A case in point is the Arts Decree, which mentions attention to “correct remuneration for artists” and “attention for the principles of fair practices” as criteria for assessing funding applications. But it does not stipulate a clear definition of either. Instead, the codes and charters used in the sector are referred to as guiding the implementation.

Another example is the Action Plan against harassment and abuse in the cultural field and media of 2018-2021. It comprised an array of initiatives, such as installing an ombudsperson for mediating conflicts, setting up training courses for official confidants, and support for [Engagement](#), an artist movement against sexism and power abuse. At the time of writing, the Action Plan for the field of culture was being evaluated. A separate follow-up Action Plan for the field of media was installed in 2022.

There are signals that awareness in the arts field is indeed rising on aspects of fair practices. Moreover, implementing them has become an integral part of (binding) labour agreements between unions and employer associations in the arts in Flanders and Brussels. Assessing the specific effects of multifaceted agreements,

charters and action plans can be difficult, especially when their implementation depends a great deal on the individual responsibility and engagement of organisations and cultural workers. This also means the shift towards fair practices takes time.

The results of a recent survey on the **socio-economic position** of artists and other creative professionals in Flanders and Brussels could therefore not (yet) evaluate the outcome of this shift. It did however remind us that issues persist about e.g., remuneration, working conditions and gender-based inequalities (underrepresentation of women among artists over 40 years and a pay gap) – or at least until the COVID-19 years. Whether and how this crisis and the subsequent effects of inflation have affected the work of artists and cultural workers – for the better or the worse – remains to a large extent subject of future research.

The latter remark also pertains to **audience participation to arts and culture** in Flanders and Brussels. Research on the situation prior to COVID-19 shows that the degree of participation had remained stable or, especially in the case of pop and rock concerts, had increased over the course of the last 20 years. The study links this to the general increase in the level of educational attainment among people living in Flanders. Analyses reveal that, with regard to the frequency of attending concerts, museums and libraries, the gap between people with a bachelor's degree or higher and those without has widened.

The **Arts Decree** was modified in 2021, as part of series of re-evaluations of culture decrees (see 6.1) under current minister Jan Jambon (2019-2024). In its different versions, the Arts Decree offers a relatively open framework for supporting the professional arts, through both short-term project funding and grants and multi-year subsidies. Applications go through a process in which their (artistic) quality is assessed by peers. Although the Decree stipulates criteria which are to be taken into consideration while evaluating applications (see above, for example), these criteria remain flexible in their specific interpretation and contain few quantitative or output-related requirements. This offers opportunities for a diverse range of artistic initiatives and allows (in theory) room for innovation.

Though there was concern in the sector about the reform, the open and flexible framework of the Arts Decree remains largely intact. Moreover, the decisions on

the new application round for multi-year subsidies resulted in an **increase in the budget** from 2023 on, a break with a decade of stagnation and budget cuts (see 5). Despite earlier fears that funding would be largely funnelled into larger institutions, the budget is divided among organisations of small to (relatively) large scale. Furthermore, a larger number of arts organisations gets funding than in the previous period.

The budget increase also entails an increase in expenditure on project funding and grants. Hitherto, expenditure on short-term support fluctuated strongly per year. By contrast, the new Arts Decree stipulates that a stable share of the available budget must be dedicated to this kind of funding. Other changes include a prohibition on combining project funding with multi-year funding, the introduction of a new type of longer-term multi-year subsidies, and the reintroduction of subsidies for international presentation projects.

The latter examples mark a **subtle change**. Receivers of the new type of long-term funding signed management agreements with the Flemish government, which include specific assignments. Applications for international presentation projects will be reviewed with regard to their contribution to the priorities in the international policies of the Flemish government (see 3.3). Though the framework for funding the arts is still largely tailored to the artistic needs and visions of the field, these new procedures point towards a more direct relationship between funded art organisations and the government.

3.3 International Cultural Cooperation

Both the Federal State and the Communities and Regions have **competences in foreign relations**. The latter can devise policies on foreign affairs, but only regarding their own competences. This means the Flemish government can sign agreements with (foreign) regions and other countries than Belgium.

Flemish policy instruments for international cultural cooperation come in two types. A significant part of these instruments is governed by the principle of **'follow the actor'**. Here, players from the cultural field take the initiative for establishing and maintaining transnational connections, supported at arm's length through funding by the Department of Culture, Youth, and Media, by

Flanders Investment & Trade, by other agencies of the Flemish government, or by autonomous public funding bodies. These support measures are either specifically geared towards international mobility and cooperation or are generically aimed at supporting cultural projects and organisations in their workings (which can involve international activities).

This exchange is in part facilitated by **international network organisations** in arts and culture — some of which have their main seat in Belgium. Complementary to these networks, Flemish **centres of expertise** such as Flanders Arts Institute, VI.BE, FARO, Socius, and Circuscentrum play an active role in establishing relations between cultural professionals beyond borders.

A **second type** consists of funding schemes in which the goals and geographical reach of projects are more strictly defined and fit into specific government strategies. The Flanders Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) provides support for cultural projects that share the interests of the government or that help fostering relations with other regions and countries.

FDFA also acts as bridge between the cultural field and the network of **General Representatives of the Government of Flanders**. This network consists of fourteen diplomatic representatives in other countries or in international bodies. Part of their job is to enhance the international visibility and reputation of Flanders through the arts and heritage sector. The General Representatives can support cultural partnerships and events involving cultural players from Flanders and abroad. Bi-lateral collaboration agreements between Flanders and other regions or countries can also result in specific support measures for cultural collaboration, which are managed by the Department of Culture, Youth, and Media.

Internationalisation in culture is a priority for Jan Jambon (2019-2024), who is minister of both Culture and Foreign Affairs in the Government of Flanders. A Strategic Framework for 2021-2025 lists focus regions (such as Catalonia, Basque Country, Scotland, Wales) and countries (including neighbouring countries, South-Africa, and Morocco).

Cultural diplomacy initiatives are also undertaken on the **Federal level**, especially by the cultural institution BOZAR. And as Belgium is a member of the EU, cultural organisations and professionals from Flanders and Brussels frequently participate in support schemes such as Creative Europe, Erasmus+, or Interreg.

4. Cultural Institutions

4.1 Overview

Flanders has been described as a cultural '**nebular city**', a sprawl of predominantly small to mid-large cultural infrastructure and organisations of **private and public origin**. The distinction between both is not always clear, as some public organisations are former private initiatives and private organisations may have received some form of public support at some point in their history. The Flemish Arts Decree, for example, provides a relatively flexible framework that allows organisations with a predominantly private income to apply for public funding.

Next to this public-private **interplay**, the interplay between the Flemish, provincial, and local government levels has been a historical driver in constituting the multifaceted cultural field in Flanders.

These interplays are reflected in table 1, which represents the cultural institutions receiving funding from the **Flemish Community** (through the Arts Decree, the Cultural Heritage Decree, the decree on Socio-Cultural Work for Adults and legislation on Media, or through the Funds for Literature and for Audiovisual Production) and from the **local governments** (these include public libraries and local cultural centres).

Immovable heritage sites are also mentioned, but these are regulated by legislation pertaining to the **Regions**. The **Federal government** is the main funding body for a number of cultural institutions (among them the national orchestra and opera house and some large museums and archives, most of them located in Brussels). These are also listed in table 1. **Provincial governments** in Flanders are now largely divested of their cultural competences.

4.2 Data on selected public and private cultural institutions

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural institutions	Number (year)
Cultural heritage sites	Immovable heritage sites (protected) in Flemish Region (excluding protected archaeological sites)	13 725 (2020)
	Archaeological sites (protected) in Flemish Region	46 (2020)
Museums	Museums institutions structurally funded through Cultural Heritage Decree	45 (2020)
Archives	Archive institutions structurally funded through Cultural Heritage Decree	9 (2020)
Visual arts	(Audio)visual arts organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	26 (2023)
Performing arts	Performing arts organisations (theatre, dance, musical theatre) structurally funded through Arts Decree	68 (2023)
	Music organisations (classical music, jazz, folk, pop and rock) structurally funded through Arts Decree	69 (2023)
Libraries	Public libraries	314 (2015)
Audiovisual	Cinemas in Flemish and Brussels-Capital Regions	43 (2018)
	Flemish public broadcasting organisation (VRT)	1 (2023)
	Regional television broadcasting organisations	10 (2020)

	Flemish private television broadcasting organisations	16 (2020)
	Flemish private radio broadcasting organisations	3 (2020)
	Network radio broadcasting organisations	61 (2020)
	Local radio broadcasting organisations	236 (2020)
Interdisciplinary	Transdisciplinary & cross-sectoral organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	21 (2023)
	Multidisciplinary organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	29 (2023)
Other	Architecture and design organisations structurally funded through Arts Decree	12 (2023)
	Art Institutions ('Kunstinstellingen') funded through Arts Decree	7 (2023)
	Organisations structurally funded through Cultural Heritage Decree, other than museums and archive institutions	41 (2020)
	Organisations structurally funded through the Decree Socio-Cultural Work for Adults	131 (2022)
	Local culture centres	69 (2015)
	Literary organisations and literary magazines receiving multi-year funding through Flanders Literature	14 (2022)
	Federal Scientific Institutions	10 (2023)
	Federal Cultural Institutions	3 (2023)

	Federally funded Bi-Community cultural organisations and activities	8 (2023)
--	---	----------

Sources: Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish government, Flanders Heritage, Flanders Literature, Flemish Regulator for the Media, Flanders Arts Institute, Belspo, and Statbel

5. Cultural Funding

5.1 Overview

A great deal of cultural policy of the Flemish Community consists of **general regulations** and **at arm’s length support measures** (see 2.1). This results in a diverse range of public funding instruments, regulated by decrees (see 6.1) or special funding bodies (such as the Funds for Literature and for Audiovisual Production). A diverse range of organisations and individuals (such as artists or craftspeople) can apply. A significant part of these are non-governmental organisations of either public or private origin and with a mixed public-private income structure (see 4.1 and 4.2). Depending on the type of policy instrument, subsidies are available for either non-profit or profit cultural activities.

The **share of cultural expenditure** in the total of all government expenditure in Belgium drops from 1.3% in 2015 to 1.2% in 2020 (table 2). (This refers to the sum of COFOG groups 8.2 (cultural services) and 8.3 (broadcasting and publishing services).) This is mainly due to the drop of 76.7 million euros in public cultural expenditure on the level of the Flemish government (comparing 2015 to 2020). (Data on 2020 are provisional, but no significant changes are to be expected in the definitive amounts.) Specific reasons for fluctuations are difficult to determine, as competences can be bequeathed from one government level to another (because of (Internal) State Reforms, see 2.4 and 6.1). But the substantial drop is very likely linked to the budget cuts mentioned earlier (see 3.1).

It is unclear what the share is of cultural support measures during COVID-19 (see 3.1) in these figures. (A large share of these temporary support measures are almost certainly labelled as COFOG 8.6, as expenditure in this group significantly increases in 2020. Group 8.6 is not included in table 2.) More recent figures on government expenditure are not yet available, thus the effect of the recent budget

increase in the Arts Decree (see 3.2) cannot be assessed. The question remains whether the trend of austerity has turned after a decade of budget cuts (see 2.4).

Table 3 zooms in on the partition of the cultural expenditure of the **Flemish government** in 2021. It follows Flemish government budgets, which apply a different categorization than the international standards used in table 2. In table 3, 'culture' therefore excludes expenses on matters such as media and immovable heritage, which fall under different areas of competence.

The **Federal government** provides funding to a limited range of (large scale) cultural institutions and culture-related activities. It also decides on policy on the status of the artist (see 6.1).

As described in section 4.1, **lower governments levels** were and are an important provider of public funding for culture. Since 2016, local governments in Flanders have been granted a great deal of freedom in how they devise their cultural expenditure. Since 2018, the provincial governments no longer hold cultural competences, except for a small number of related matters, such as immovable heritage (see 2.4 and 6.1). In table 2, the cultural expenditure of both local and provincial governments are subsumed under the moniker of lower government levels – which also comprise those in the Brussels-Capital and Walloon Regions.

Despite enduring political interest in **private funding for culture**, reports (in [2015](#) and [2017](#)) have stated that there is no widespread 'culture' of private financing of the sector in Flanders. Surveys on charity in the whole of Belgium (in [2017](#) and [2020](#)) show that cultural goals represent about 10 to 12% of individual donations. A [study](#) on data from 2018 finds that around 19% of corporate givings by small- to large-scale companies in Belgium is aimed at culture. These figures do not comprise sponsorship of culture, on which few data are available. Next to these companies, there are many philanthropic foundations active in Belgium. Prominent foundations and corporate giving programs for culture include the King Baudouin Foundation, SPES, CERA, the National Lottery, and Sabam for Culture.

In both the current (2019-2024) and previous term (2014-2019), the Flemish government has taken measures aimed at stimulating private financing of culture. One recent example are the reduced tax rates in the Flemish Region on donations and on bequeathing inheritances to charities. **Tax incentives** related to culture

also exist on federal level, most notably the tax shelters for companies investing in audiovisual and performing arts productions.

5.2 Public cultural expenditure by level of government

Table 2: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, in national currency and in EUR, 2020, 2015

Level of government	Total expenditure in EUR* in 2020**	% share of total in 2020**	Total expenditure in EUR* in 2015	% share of total in 2015
Flemish government	1 072 200 000	1.9%	1 148 900 000	2.5%
Federal government	174 200 000	0.1%	102 900 000	0.1%
French Community	670 400 000	3.2%	585 800 000	3.2%
Walloon Region	43 200 000	0.3%	38 800 000	0.3%
German Speaking Community	13 700 000	3.0%	11 900 000	2.6%
Brussels-Capital Region	26 100 000	0.4%	17 600 000	0.4%
Flemish Community Commission in Brussels	46 100 000	20.0%	36 700 000	25.6%
French Community Commission in Brussels	15 400 000	2.6%	12 900 000	2.8%
Not allocated among government levels	31 500 000	3.7%	24 000 000	4.0%
All lower government levels	1 259 100 000	3.7%	1 118 500 000	3.8%
Total of all government levels in Belgium	3 199 600 000	1.2%	2 854 200 000	1.3%

Note: * At the date of expenditure; ** provisional data

Source: [National Bank of Belgium](#) (2022)

5.3. Public cultural expenditure per sector

Table 3: Expenditure by the Flemish government on culture: by field, 2021, in EUR

Field/Domain/Sub-domain	TOTAL (EUR)
Cultural Heritage	65 580
Arts	186 905 000
Socio-Cultural Work for Adults	72 947 000
Administration	25 260 000

<i>Dedicated to Culture</i>	385 843 000
<i>Spanning Culture, Youth, and Media</i>	120 440 000

Source: Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish government (2022)

6. Legislation on Culture

6.1 Overview national cultural legislation

The Belgian Constitution determines cultural affairs as competences of the (Flemish, French, and German-speaking) Communities, as well as cultural cooperation between the Communities and international cooperation on cultural affairs. This is the result of successive State Reforms since the 1970s (see 2.4). The latest State Reform (2012-2014) has enabled the government of the Brussels-Capital Region to develop policies on particular cultural affairs on its territory (even though it is not a Community government).

Legislation of the Flemish Community is codified into **decrees**. Flemish decrees on cultural matters either apply to specific sectors or have a scope that spans the entire cultural field (or even other policy fields). Examples of the former are the Arts Decree (which arranges support for the professional arts), the Cultural Heritage Decree (which applies to movable and immaterial cultural heritage), the Circus Decree, the Decree on Amateur Arts, and the Decree Socio-cultural Work for Adults. Examples of the latter type are the Decree on Supralocal Cultural Activities and the Participation Decree (which applies to the policy fields of Culture, Youth, and Sport).

Under current minister of culture Jan Jambon (2019-2024) the decrees on professional arts (see 3.2), cultural heritage, socio-cultural work for adults, amateur arts, and participation were or will be evaluated and modified. These and older modifications to these cultural decrees are in part also aimed at streamlining procedures and terminology.

An '**Internal State Reform**' of the Flemish government changed the modalities of funding local authorities with regard to culture and divested the provincial authorities in Flanders of a great deal of their culture-related competences (2016-2018). These provincial competences were bequeathed to either the local level or the Flemish government.

Certain legislation on the federal level has an important impact on cultural affairs in the Communities. This includes the **Culture Pact**, which regulates the allocation of public funding for culture.

Federal legislation on social security contains exceptions for artists that receive unemployment benefits. This framework is referred to as the '**status of the artist**'. New procedures are being rolled out between 2022 and 2024. Now also para-artistic profiles can apply and the conditions for being admitted to the status of the artist are more flexible. At the same time, rules on proving you still comply to the requirements have become more extensive.

6.2 Overview international cultural legislation

Belgium is a member state of the EU, Council of Europe, UN, UNESCO, and the OECD. The Flemish government is also involved in these **intergovernmental bodies**, either through independent relations (see 3.3), or through the Belgian membership (which requires coordination with the other government levels involved). This involvement includes implementing and monitoring treaties and policies, financial support for the workings of these bodies, and participation in working groups or conferences.

The following selection comprises **culture-related treaties** that were adopted by the Belgian State and that particularly apply to Flemish policies (provided by F DFA). The years between brackets refer to their date of adoption (by the Flemish government):

- UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1960)
- UNESCO Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1960)
- UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1983)

- Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1993)
- UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1994)
- Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production (2003)
- UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2006)
- UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (2009)
- UNESCO Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (2010)
- UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2010)
- Council of Europe European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) (2011)
- UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2011)
- UN Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2011)
- Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2014)
- Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-production (revised) (2018)

This list is not exhaustive: EU-directives that affect relevant (federal) legislation are not included. Regarding the latter, we could mention the 2019 directive on Copyright, which was implemented through federal law in 2021.