

## Belgium

**Distinctive Features:** Explicit family policy; regional governmental responsibility for family policies; support for the traditional family; policy divisions between cultures (French and Flemish) and regions; generous child allowance.

### Maternity / Parental Leave

Benefit	Maternity: cash benefit and job-protected leave, including adoption
Eligibility Criteria	Working mothers, working parents
Duration of Leave	Maternity: 15 weeks; Paternity: 3 days; Parental: 6 months, + 3 months supplemental
Compensation Rate	Maternity: 75 – 80%; Paternity: 100%; Parental: 6 months (flat rate), + 3 months (unpaid)

### Early Childhood Education and Care

Age Group Served	Child Care: ages 0 – 3; Preschool: ages 2½ – 6
Eligibility Criteria	Child Care: working parents, poverty, special needs; Preschool: universal
Fees	Child Care: income-related fees; Preschool: free
Locus of Care	Child Care: centers, family day care homes; Preschool: preschools
Funding Strategies	Child Care: govt., employer, parent-fees; Preschool: govt.
Access/Coverage (%)	Child Care: ages 0 – 3 (30%); Preschool: ages 2½ – 6 (97%)

### Family and Child Allowances

Benefit & Eligibility	Universal tax-free cash benefits for employed families with child under age 18. <sup>1</sup>
Benefit Levels	Among highest in Europe; rates vary by employment status of the parent, the parent's employment sector, child's age and ordinal position.

### Child Support

Benefit	Advanced maintenance payments guaranteed for up to three months if non-custodial parent fails to pay
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### Child and Family Tax Benefits

Tax Deductions/Relief	Family is the filing unit; tax benefits for lone parents and for child care expenses.
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### Other Child-Conditioned Income Transfers

Benefits	Means-tested social assistance benefit; benefits for lone parents
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### Child and Adolescent Health

Access to Coverage	Universal coverage through a national health insurance system
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### Housing Benefits

Benefit	Tax subsidies and benefits for home purchase and mortgage payments.
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### School-Age Children Policies

Compulsory School	6 – 18
School Hours	8:30 – 12:00 and 1:30 – 3:00

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<sup>1</sup> Age 21 if disabled or 25 if a full-time student