

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 – 82%; 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 3½ – 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 3½ – 6 (97%)

Family and Child Allowances

Benefit & Eligibility	Universal tax-free cash benefits for employed families with child under age 18. ¹
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 – 3:30

Last updated July 2002

¹ Age 21 if disabled or 25 if a full-time student