

# Advocacy Factsheet Belgium



Marists  
of Champagnat  
SECRETARIAT OF  
SOLIDARITY-CMI



Marist International  
Solidarity  
Foundation ETS  
**FMSI**  
For the benefit of children

## ABOUT US

The **Marist International Solidarity Foundation** (FMSI) is a non-governmental organization committed to promoting the rights and welfare of children, especially those living in vulnerable situations. FMSI works closely with the Marist Brothers and partners worldwide to implement programs focused on education, child protection, healthcare, and emergency relief. By leveraging its presence in various countries, FMSI advocates for **child rights** and supports local communities in their pursuit of social justice, dignity, and sustainable development. Through its engagement in international mechanisms like the United Nations, FMSI seeks to raise awareness and influence policies that ensure a better future for children across the globe.

## EMPOWERING YOUNG VOICES

The UPR report was prepared with the **active and meaningful participation of children and young people from Belgium**, ensuring that their voices and recommendations are placed at the center of these human rights discussions. This statement reflects the concerns and priorities they themselves identified in the UPR process.

## ISSUE IDENTIFIED

While children recognize Belgium's strong legal framework, they highlighted a clear gap between policies and their lived experience, particularly in education and mental well-being.

Children described school as increasingly stressful and insufficiently adapted to their needs. They reported excessive pressure, limited flexibility, and unequal access to education, especially when costs for books, materials, and school activities depend on family income. Children stress that education should support learning and well-being, not undermine mental health.

Mental well-being emerged as a growing concern. Children spoke about anxiety, stress, and the lack of accessible psychological support in schools and communities. They emphasized the importance of prevention, early support, and safe spaces where young people can seek help without stigma.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We therefore encourage Member States to recommend that Belgium:

1. Guarantee truly free access to education, covering essential materials and school activities for all children;
2. Strengthen school-based mental health services, ensuring timely access to psychological support;
3. Improve access to youth psychological services, unifying federal and regional mental healthcare funding to reduce specialized support waiting times for adolescents to under 30 days.
4. Invest in prevention and well-being programs that address stress and promote healthy development.

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UPR submission

