



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

BrusselsChildbirthTrust
Supporting Families and Parents-to-be in Belgium



CONTENTS

THE BCT'S MISSION STATEMENT SAYS

*The aim of the **BCT** is to provide help and support to English-speaking families in the greater Brussels area, during the early years of parenthood.*

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INTRO

It's been a busy and exciting year for the BCT, celebrating our 45th anniversary in the summer and, after 4 years, the return of the Nearly New Sale in the Autumn. After the difficult years of the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw so many events cancelled and plans put on hold, 2023 saw us returning at last to hosting a full calendar of face-to-face events.

Highlight of the year was our 45th anniversary in July. We held a birthday party with over 180 of our members and their families joining with us in celebration, with a bouncy castle, dancing, crafts, games and face painting – as well as a spectacular birthday cake for all to share!

In November 2023 we were able to organise and hold our beloved Nearly New Sale (NNS). It had been almost four years since we had last done so – and its popular return proved the value of a physical market place for members to sell their children's clothes, toys and accessories. A big thank you for all the effort and hard work by the NNS committee and all the volunteers who came together to make it happen. Both members and non-members were able to enjoy the sales – with 98 sellers and over 290 buyers on the day.

The BCT Clubhouse has continued to thrive in 2023 and is enjoyed by so many of our members for playgroups, baby massage, talks, our interest groups and many other members courses – we even held painting classes and Christmas wreath making! We also saw that members are willing to host playdates and coffee mornings at their own homes, which is lovely to hear about. We've been renting out the Clubhouse to members for parties at the weekends and we are delighted that members have taken advantage of the offer, while also providing

the BCT with some much needed additional income.

We managed to set up several baby swimming groups so that our members could take their babies and toddlers swimming guided by a private swimming instructor. We have enjoyed summer picnics in the parks, story time in the Clubhouse, Easter egg hunts and Halloween parties and, as always, our playgroups and events were made possible thanks to the continued generosity, creativity and adaptability of our volunteers.

On top of all of this, the BCT continues to provide its core services, support and information for parents and future parents, underlining its value as a vital and trusted resource.

All this is made possible thanks to our volunteers. The BCT is run entirely by volunteers who generously give their time and energy, to help us achieve our mission to provide a wide range of support services to young families in Belgium.

Thank you to everyone who volunteers for our organisation, you make our BCT community great!



Louise

Louise Nugent
BCT President

MEMBERSHIP

2023 was another fantastic year for BCT. We are delighted that, as of the end of 2023, 785 families held BCT membership and were able to participate in all that BCT has to offer.

Throughout the course of 2023, 378 new members joined us, and 312 existing members renewed their membership.

We still have an incredibly international membership, with 65 nationalities amongst our membership (of those who self identified).

It has been wonderful to see the Clubhouse in constant use, with a wide variety of playgroups, talks, story time and craft sessions, events, BCT parties and, of course, when rented by BCT members for private parties and special events.

The beginning of the year, and the start of the new school year in September and October, were busy months for the membership team as many new members joined us and we welcomed many returning members who renewed their membership. We are delighted to see that 2024 has started on a very strong footing as we welcome many more members to the BCT family!

Twizzit is now well established as our management system, and has proven to be an extremely useful tool in not only streamlining our renewal process, but also in housing all things BCT, from the calendar of events and playgroups to the details of interest groups, support and local groups.

We continue to seek ways in which we can maximize all that Twizzit has to offer, and to make it as straightforward as possible for our members to manage their BCT membership. For new families joining the BCT, everything is well detailed on our website and well automated to connect new members to set up their Twizzit account.

PLANS FOR 2024

We look forward to all that 2024 has to offer to our members, and to continuing to enhance the membership processes to ensure we provide the most efficient ways to welcome new members and streamline renewals.

BCT MEMBERSHIP card on Twizzit



MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

MEMBERSHIP TYPE
Standard Membership

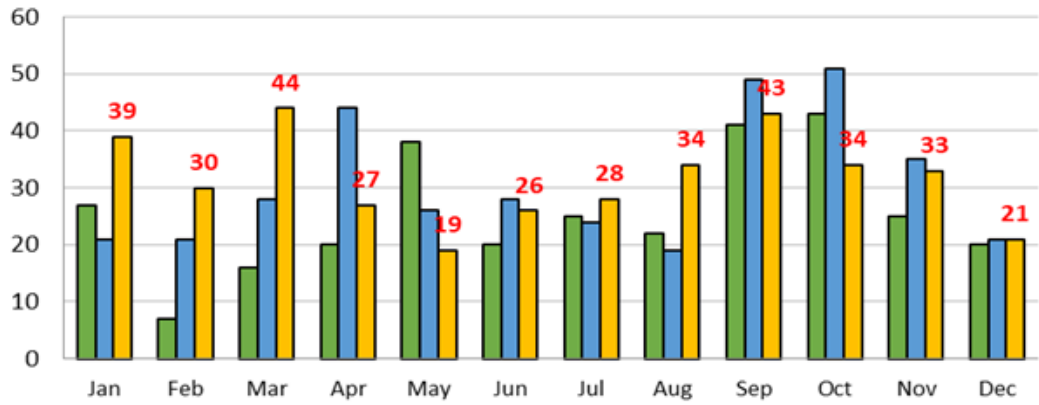
ORGANIZATION
Brussels Childbirth Trust

DURATION
04/08/2022 -> 04/08/2023

COMMENT

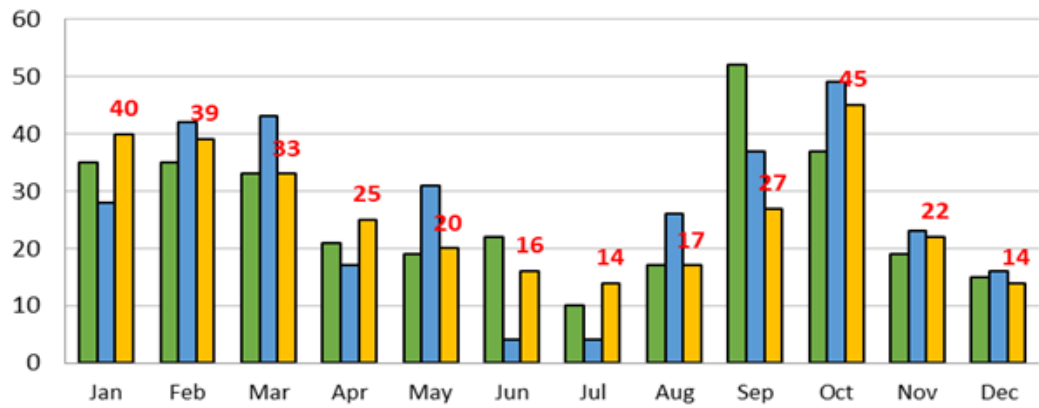
THE TOP RANKING COMMUNES

1	Brussels	124 families
2	Ixelles	117 families
3	Woluwes (WSP & WSL)	103 families



NEW MEMBERS PER YEAR

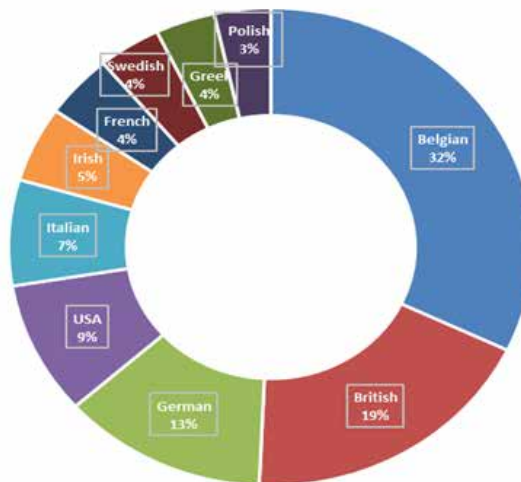
■ 2021=304 ■ 2022 = 367 ■ 2023 - 378



RENEWALS PER YEAR

■ 2021=315 ■ 2022=320 ■ 2023 = 312

TOP 10 MEMBER NATIONALITIES



VOLUNTEERING

2023 thankfully brought a revived enthusiasm for members to volunteer within the BCT organisation! Offers of 'short-term' commitments to host a playgroup were plentiful and it was wonderful to see young mums and dads making the most of their maternity, paternity and parental leave.

In general members hosted groups at the Clubhouse for an average of 4 weeks before going back to work but were kindly active in helping to recruit new hosts within the group so the weekly meetings could continue.

Those who had longer parental leave also offered to host further groups as their babies 'graduated' from one group to the next age range. This allowed long-term friendships to develop as the 'original' crowd of parents and babies stayed together.

Another big change noticed in 2023 was, for the first-time since Covid, members were offering to host in their own homes once again. This allowed local groups to be more active. Those members who could not travel to the Clubhouse easily to volunteer, could host the playgroups on a rotational basis, so once again they did not need to commit every week. As well as hosting in their own homes, other volunteers offered to take it in turns to arrange get-togethers in local cafes or public parks.

Twizzit remained a very valuable tool for our volunteers in helping them manage BCT activities. If their bus was running late, the 'live feed' function allowed volunteers to chat with those registered to come to the activity and let them know the situation

in 'real time'. Often another group member could step in at short notice or the group patiently waited a little longer, knowing that their host was on their way. This highlights the importance of signing up for an 'activity' so you receive these 'Live feed' messages and are always kept up to date.

After the despair of the volunteer team in 2022 it was like a ray of sunshine when we managed to arrange two highly volunteer intensive events during 2023! In June we were able to celebrate the BCT's 45th Birthday in style with a Jungle themed party at a hall that was run by Ixelles Commune. It was so uplifting to see new members, several heavily pregnant, along with longstanding members, some of whom had been volunteering for over 20 years, all step forward together to offer their help with crafts, facepainting and refreshments.



Volunteering at the Nearly New Sale

Likewise, after a hiatus of four years, thanks to an influx of offers of help and enthusiasm, November 2023 allowed the BCT to open the doors to a Nearly New Sale once again. With a committee of 25 and an additional 53 on-the-day helpers it truly was our most volunteer intensive event of the year. This is a welcome transition back to reliable volunteering



Volunteering at Christmas Funday

when members realise that they are being counted upon to make a BCT event running. We cannot thank those volunteers enough!

These two events in 2023 also highlighted the unique spirit that can be found within the BCT Community. You don't have to offer a weekly volunteer commitment, volunteering for just a morning or afternoon can make such a difference!

If each member family volunteered even for just one afternoon once a year, it would make such a big difference to BCT activities.

Despite this more positive outlook, the number of volunteers regularly working to keep the BCT up and running continues to decrease from previous years. Where once we had over 200 volunteers helping, now we are around 70. This naturally highlights the fact that more volunteers are taking on more than one role or task. Their adaptability to juggle more and more roles and their dedication to the work of the BCT is highly commendable, however it is a worrying trend as the responsibility of keeping the BCT running on a day-to-day basis, lies on the shoulders of fewer and fewer members.

We are delighted to report that 2023 did bring forward a handful of new 'long term' all-around BCT volunteers who expressed a strong desire to give something back to the BCT after it has 'saved their life' when they first arrived in Belgium. These members usually began as playgroup hosts, then

stepped forward to take on more demanding roles and some are even now joining the BCT Board!



Volunteering at Sing & Play playgroup



Volunteering at 45 Anniversary Party

The Clubhouse

THE CLUBHOUSE

The BCT Clubhouse continues to provide families with a multifunctional and convivial space to meet up. With its sizeable and attractive garden, it was enjoyed throughout 2023, especially for Easter egg hunts, summer barbecues and general playgroups.

In early summer we changed the format of our online prenatal courses to hybrid with half of the course hours now being taught by a new teacher at the Clubhouse.

Time and a little money were invested in the garden during 2023 for necessary general maintenance and occasional purchases, like plants and garden tools. A new Clubhouse Supply Co-ordinator was recruited who helped reorganise many of the supplies and coordinate required tasks.

Although Pregnancy in Belgium evenings, First Aid for Parents classes and a few of our member courses remained online, the Clubhouse hosted many face-to-face meetings, much to the delight of members. These included events such as Halloween and Christmas parties, the Christmas Crafts fun day, family photo shoots, a volunteer party, regular playgroups, interest, support and local group meetings, talks, workshops and member courses.

The rental of the Clubhouse to members for private parties continues to prove to be very successful with 60 bookings and a lot of positive feedback about our child-friendly premises. This was a very welcome and needed additional source of revenue. In addition, several members renewed their membership to be able to book a party at the Clubhouse. Even a few non-members joined the BCT for this purpose.



Party rental

LIBRARY

The Clubhouse is home to the BCT lending library and on-site children's library. As more playgroups resumed in 2023, more members were able to discover the books available. The librarian managed the library on site, as well as the book catalogue, which is listed on the BCT website. We hope to acquire some of the books which have been recommended to further enhance the library collection. We will also remind members that they may always donate any recently-published books to do with pregnancy, childbirth and raising children.

PLANS FOR 2024

A few improvements are planned for the storage space inside the Clubhouse and small general repairs will be carried out. We have recruited a new librarian and, as our new Supply Co-ordinator is leaving Brussels, we are looking to recruit a new Clubhouse Supply Co-ordinator.





Easter Egg Hunt

PRENATAL SUPPORT

In 2023 we taught 15 Birth & Parenting courses involving 105 families, and 5 refresher sessions. Of the 15 B&P courses, 6 were in-person taught by Alison Copner. Early in the year four wholly online courses were planned but not many people signed up for them, so only two were taught.

We were pleased to be able to offer hybrid courses from May with Özra Gokce providing courses on midweek evenings by Zoom and Katharina Pink on weekends at the Clubhouse; this mixture has been popular and will continue in 2024.

There were more course reunions at the Clubhouse, introducing new families to this wonderful family friendly space.

Our Pregnant & New Mums online drop-in sessions where discontinued due to lack of attendance. However, the related WhatsApp group has grown and still provides a valuable space especially for new mums for exchange and support. Real life meet-ups are now taking place weekly as Bumps & Baby playgroups at the Clubhouse.

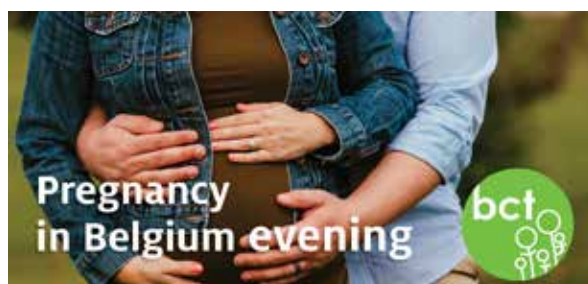
Hypnobirthing courses, a specialised form of prenatal preparation which started in 2021, have not been so popular as only 16 couples attended the seven courses. At the end of the year they were discontinued.

PREGNANCY IN BELGIUM (PIB) EVENINGS

Özra Gokce and Alison Copner continue to present the Pregnancy in Belgium Evening classes on Zoom, which works well. They receive excellent feedback from attendees. The information booklet that is given to attendees will be regularly reviewed in future.

We ran a total of 12 sessions in 2023, with 77 couples (84

in 2022) attending. There continue to be advantages of holding classes online. Couples can join from distant or from separate locations if one person is working away from home.



FIRST AID FOR PARENTS

These classes, facilitated by certified First aid instructor Kate Ellwood, were again very successful. These popular virtual sessions concentrate on how to apply simple first aid principles with confidence. The classes are well attended, with 193 participants in 2023 (229 in 2022): 121 members, and 72 non-members (who pay a higher fee).

Enormous thanks to the volunteer booking team for all these classes, and especially to the services treasurer who continues to give a weekly update on all bookings.





POSTNATAL SUPPORT



On behalf of all BCT members, we thank our volunteers who continue to offer their time fulfilling the following postnatal service roles. We receive positive feedback from those using the services. We are able to find new volunteers when needed and our newest service is doing well. The volunteers remain enthusiastic and motivated to provide help to fellow BCT members and new parents.

We continue to observe members seeking information primarily via social media. We continue to welcome the community service that social media has brought but are also seeing that the person-to-person contact remains essential to some new parents

TENS AND VALLEY CUSHION RENTALS

TENS rentals remained steady over the last year. A new volunteer has taken over this service and there have been several periods when all machines were rented out at once. Women continue to look to alternatives for pain management during labour. Most couples renting the machines hear about the machines from the BCT prenatal classes. The Valley Cushions continue to be rented out occasionally.

EARLY DAYS SUPPORT

Early Days Support volunteers continue to reach out to new parents and provide a listening ear. In 2023, the team grew from three to four volunteers and supported slightly fewer new parents than in 2023.

The participants of prenatal classes were offered support, as well as other new parents who contacted the team directly or through the Information Team. Support continues to vary from a single contact before birth to regular contact before and after birth.

BREASTFEEDING & BOTTLEFEEDING SUPPORT

There are two active breastfeeding and bottle-feeding support volunteers. The demand for this service remains low but stable. The volunteers receive questions mostly via email, which they then often follow up by telephone. They are present on our social media channels and try to support members this way when possible. There is very little demand for the bottle-feeding service as concerns are often addressed via social media groups within the BCT.

EXPERIENCES REGISTER

The Experiences Register has been a valuable service for those who have specific needs and who seek peer support from another member having had a similar



Babywearing workshop

experience in a particular subject matter. There was very little demand for this service in 2023. One of the reasons being that many difficulties faced in the past (for example, colic, breastfeeding difficulties) are becoming more frequent and more help is readily available to new parents in the hospital or from medical professionals. Another reason for this decrease, as with many of the other services, is the move to looking for advice via social media.

CLOTH NAPPY SERVICE

Contacts are made by email and our volunteer continues to be active and to give out very helpful information, including online demonstrations to members. Cloth nappy use is expanding in Belgium making this an easier option for parents.

BABYWEARING SERVICE & SLING LIBRARY

Our newest service is the Babywearing Service which offers guidance and help in choosing the appropriate sling for parents and baby. Workshops on babywearing have become incredibly successful and remain in high demand. In 2023 we held several babywearing workshops during which many slings were borrowed from the library. BCT members are also reaching out to borrow slings outside of the workshops.



GROUPS

We are lucky to have many wonderful volunteers who run and organise our many groups and get-togethers. Without their enthusiasm, support and commitment, it would not be possible to run all our activities and to offer so many opportunities for members to meet other families.

Thanks to the growing interest shown by our members, most BCT groups are fully operational.

The Clubhouse's weekly schedule is full of playgroups, different events and meet-ups of our support and interest groups. Year after year, local groups leaders keep on playing a key role in supporting members through meetings (playdates, coffee mornings, walks and get togethers) in various Brussels neighbourhoods, at the Clubhouse and through dedicated social channels like Facebook, WhatsApp chats, Messenger chats and, increasingly, our new event agenda and communication tool Twizzit.

CLUBHOUSE PLAYGROUPS

At the moment, the BCT Clubhouse hosts 6 regular weekday playgroups plus countless weekend playgroups, meetups and interest and support group gatherings.

LOCAL GROUPS

BCT has 10 active local groups in Belgium, the most active ones are in and around Brussels. The group organisers, some single-handedly while others work in teams, put a lot of effort into creating new connections and interactions amongst members. They organise a variety of opportunities to meet that suit working parents as well as those who stay at home. They also edit regular newsletters and provide relevant family-related information from their local neighbourhood.



(Future) Single Mums by Choice Group

All local group meet-ups are open to all BCT members, regardless of where they live.

The **Ixelles/St. Gilles/Forest group** continues to be a great local group providing support, information and socialising opportunities for families. Members mainly communicate through a WhatsApp group. Also, a regular newsletter via Twizzit is sent out.

The **Central group** is connected through Facebook Messenger chats, divided by children's age and location. Many new mums have never even met in person but they are virtually very well connected in their local neighbourhood.

The **Woluwe group** is run by a new team of volunteers, well-organized and full of ideas. The group counts about 120 active members. They edit a monthly newsletter and use their local Facebook group and Twizzit to update members about upcoming events such as playdates in the park, coffee mornings, parent-and-baby groups and parents' nights-out.

The **Tervuren group** receives a weekly newsletter that is packed with local information and the group meets once a week for a coffee morning as well as for the occasional park meet-up or night out.



Greek Language Interest Group

Recently more activities are being proposed in our **Leuven group** and in the **Schaerbeek/Evere group**, whose members meet for a weekly coffee date and playdates. We are also hoping to reactivate the **Waterloo group**.

Some groups and especially the **Kraainem/Wezembeek group** got actively involved in the organisation of the Autumn Nearly New Sale thanks to their enthusiastic group organiser.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups play a really big role in helping members who have to deal with similar life situations. Some groups get together at the Clubhouse or elsewhere while others offer support via WhatsApp or Facebook groups. Currently active BCT support groups are: Parents of NICU (neonatal) Babies, Pregnant & New Mums group, Single Parents, Twin and Multiples, (Future) Single Mums by Choice – plus our active IVF network which also welcomes non-members.



Woluwe Group



Parents of NICU Babies Group



INTEREST GROUPS

Among the Interest groups, the BCT language groups continue to be very popular. It's an incredible resource for expat parents to be able to meet other parents from the same country to expose their children to the common traditions, cultural tales, games and festivities. We have Croatian, Spanish, German, Greek, Scandinavian and Irish language groups. They meet monthly at the Clubhouse during weekends and organize a fabulous range of activities, family outings, brunches, playgroups and gatherings inspired by cultural and seasonal traditions.

The Working Mums Group meets regularly for lunch once a month in the Schuman area. The group organiser not only coordinates these meetings but also edits a weekly newsletter for the group with BCT events, news and child-friendly activities around Brussels.

The Feminist Parenting group is very active on WhatsApp (47 members) and the group meets once a month either at the Clubhouse or in a Brussels café.

SPLASH & PLAY SWIM GROUPS

The BCT once again organised Splash & Play swim groups for member families at the VUB University pool in Ixelles. Four courses, varying in length between 4-7 sessions with an average of 12 participants, were held in 2023. Lessons were led by professional baby swimming instructors in accordance with VUB pool rules. We offered families the choice of a weekday lunchtime slot or a weekend session. This year the weekend sessions were the most popular with 14 babies enrolled on both weekend courses and a waiting list to act as reserves if one participant could not attend.

In addition to having a reserve/waiting list, it was decided to raise the starting age for babies from 4 to 6 months. We also plan to offer courses in the spring and summer months rather than the colder months of the year as, during the autumn of 2023, many participating families were sick and missed one or several sessions.



Bumps & Babies Playgroup



Schaerbeek Group

PLANS FOR 2024

We are always looking for more members to help with the organisation and running of our many groups. Having more volunteers will allow us to offer more activities and fulfill the needs of our community. It also enables members to share the responsibility and meetings to run, even if a group organiser is not available. Organising a group is interesting and fun and can be very rewarding. Doing this as a team is even more enjoyable. Having better communication among the different local groups can enable an exchange of ideas which bring more members together.

The aim is to increase the number of events organised locally and to build opportunities for members to get-together.

EVENTS

2023 brought welcome relief to the BCT events department when, after several years of Covid restrictions, we could finally host events without any concern of distancing and limiting number of participants. It felt so good to be able to open the doors to all members once again!



It has however been difficult to find volunteers to help this year and we had to work hard to re-establish a team of regular helpers after several years of limited activities.

STORY TIME

Story time remained a popular monthly event at the Clubhouse. Following the tried and tested format of selecting a seasonal book to read to the children and then expanding on the story line with a related craft. This year we introduced a slightly later start time which proved much more popular with our members.

EASTER EVENTS

The first seasonal event of the year was a spring Easter party. Due to concerns received from some members that the Clubhouse was too far away for them to attend, we tried to encourage local groups in turn to host BCT events for the whole membership. Our local Woluwe group kicked off this concept by welcoming BCT families for two super fun Easter Egg hunts at different communal parks that was enjoyed by a large group of members.

BCT 45TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Then in June we held the most important event for many years, the BCT 45th Birthday celebrations! As an asbl in Ixelles we could hire the Maison de quartier Malibrant in Ixelles. This two-story venue was perfect for our Jungle themed Birthday party which just happened to coincide with one of the hottest days in Belgium. The warm humid conditions certainly added to the atmosphere for our little ones who enjoyed a massive monkey shaped bouncy castle, specially choreographed jungle disco dancing led by professional dance teacher Jean Emmett as well as face painting, glitter tattoos, crafts and many other games. After all the activities a wonderful Birthday tea was served as new and old members joined together to sing a chorus of 'Happy Birthday to the BCT' as an elaborately decorated jungle birthday cake was cut and shared with all the guests.

SUMMER PICNIC

Next came the summer picnic, kindly hosted by the Central Brussels local group. Once again, the 'around the world picnic' theme proved popular with our members who shared dishes from their home countries.

HALLOWEEN PARTY

Then before we knew, it was time again to arrange another BCT classic, our annual Halloween Party. This time we hosted a 'Charlie Brown and the Great Pumpkin' themed party. Families were welcomed at the Clubhouse for games, crafts, face-painting, dancing and Charlie Brown on the big screen.



BCT Anniversary Party

CHRISTMAS FUNDAY

The run up to Christmas would not be the same for many BCT families with our annual 'Crafts for Christmas – a Funday!'. Families could choose from attending two Clubhouse sessions or purchasing a 'click & collect' craft bag to prepare their seasonal decorations and gifts in the comfort at their own home guided by an online tutorial. The Clubhouse was also decorated so our groups could host their own Christmas parties and many of our Interest and Support groups enjoyed festivities with their members.

FAMILY PHOTOSHOOT EVENT

2023 saw the BCT organise two Family Photoshoots. They were led by a professional photographer who this year also looked after the booking schedule. The family friendly and welcoming atmosphere of the Clubhouse provided the perfect backdrop for family portraits and many members are now excited to make this BCT event their annual family photo shoot

NEARLY NEW SALE

Finally, after almost four years, 2023 brought back our most important fundraising event, the Nearly New Sale. With a dedicated and relatively new team of 25 committee members we were able to stage the fall sale at the Agora hall in Kraainem. New software was developed by one highly skilled volunteer. The software made the labelling of items easier for sellers and also made the final accounting after the Nearly New Sale quick and straightforward. In addition the information collected by the software provides valuable data of the sale which will help us in planning future sales. The sale was very well received by those buyers that came but it will take some time and effort to bring the Nearly New Sale concept back into people's minds and reach those that have never heard of it before.

One massive change to BCT events this year was the use of Twizzit to check entrance tickets. Members could simple show their pre-purchased electronic tickets on their phones and with 'one click' everything was in order. No paper tickets, no paper lists to check, a wonderful time-saving and environmental benefit for the BCT which we will definitely utilise for all future events!



Halloween at the BCT

INFORMATION

In 2023, the Information Team had two dedicated members who checked emails daily and endeavoured to answer the queries of members and non-members alike. One of those team members supports the new Talks Coordinator, whose role is to organise popular and varied talks and workshops for BCT members.

The Information Team continues to be the front desk of the BCT and the point of contact for newly arrived families as well as potential and even current members that have got specific queries.

EMAIL QUERIES

In 2023, the Information Team continued to answer a high number of email queries. Many queries came from non-members who were moving to Belgium or who were looking for advice regarding schools or healthcare for example. Many queries also came from non-members interested in attending playgroups or events at the Clubhouse or local group activities.

PHONE CALLS

The BCT phone line received 103 calls in 2023 compared to 126 calls in 2022. However, queries by email are still the most used approach to contact the BCT. As in previous years, most calls came from non-members looking for practical information. These calls ranged from enquiries about membership, prenatal courses, playgroups, local groups, Clubhouse party rentals, BCT events, the Belgian medical system to offers of collaboration. All callers new to the BCT were informed about the full range of BCT services and encouraged to visit our website for further information.

As usual, we also received a few calls from people in need of a listening ear. At the end of such a call, we always signposted the caller towards additional sources



TOP QUERIES

Local Groups, Playgroups,
Childminders/crèches,
Gynaecologists/new pregnancy/
Prenatal Courses, Schools,
Health care in general, Breastfeeding,
First Aid Classes &
Clubhouse party rentals



of support, such as BCT local and Facebook groups, the Belgian Schools Network, embassies or the Community Help Service.

TALKS

Members continued to participate in a variety of interesting talks and workshops held at the Clubhouse or online. In 2023 we recruited a new Talks Coordinator and two Talks Hosts for the Clubhouse.

We offered face-to-face talks at the Clubhouse in 2023, on baby's first foods, picky eating, baby-wearing, toddler yoga, family yoga, mindfulness, healthy weight management and self-care for mothers. We offered talks to members via online webinars on multilingualism, pensions transfers, and foods for hormonal balance in perimenopause. Talks were free for members and non-members were able to attend for a fee. Some of those non-members even joined the BCT.

WORKSHOPS

In 2023, we offered online and in-person workshops, that are longer or even consist of several sessions and for which participants may pay a fee. Subjects were: Parenting with Positive Discipline, Sleep Consultations and Job Skills (personal branding), Floristry and Family Language Consultations. Most of these will be reoffered in 2024.

MEMBER COURSES

Since 2016 we have been offering BCT Members' Courses in partnership with some of our members who are qualified in areas that are of interest to our wider membership.



Postnatal Pilates member course

As with BCT talks and workshops, in 2023 members were happy to either continue following courses from home or in-person. Members regularly attended online or in-person classes for Yoga (bedtime, toddler, family) Pilates and postnatal exercise. Members attended various courses at the BCT Clubhouse including art classes, baby massage classes and a new course from 2023, Postnatal Pilates.



Pilates member course

PLANS FOR 2024

A number of free online talks, workshops and in-person meetings are scheduled for 2024, including on babywearing, UK pensions, job skills, attachment parenting, tummy time, baby's milestones and play skills, drinking & feeding skills, living in Belgium – tips for newcomers, parental burnout, family and toddler yoga.



Baby's First Foods talk

We continue to offer those talks, workshops and courses which have shown a consistent demand from members, notably Babywearing, Pilates, Baby Massage, Postnatal Exercise and Yoga. Return to work-related workshops, parenting skills and painting courses are also scheduled. Feedback from members has been very positive. Participants have enjoyed learning and meeting like-minded people, both online and at the Clubhouse which provides excellent features like daylight, a large screen, flexible room settings, kitchenette and a welcoming atmosphere for these events.



Christmas Wreath-making workshop

COMMUNICATIONS

SMALL TALK: THE MEMBERSHIP MAGAZINE

The four issues in 2023 were carefully put together with a good eye for the needs and interests of our members. As in previous years, a wide range of topics relating to childbirth, parenting and family life were featured, providing relevant and valuable information and, at the same time, a voice was given to those members who were prepared to share their expertise and experiences with our membership. The continuous increase in group activities required more group related pages. We kept publishing specific Twizzit related articles whenever we observed members having problems with a feature of the app.

The team consists of the editor plus two editorial assistants and two proof readers. The liaison between volunteers and professional production companies and printers continues to work very well.

Display advertising has continued to be an important income stream for the BCT. Small Talk managed to keep the majority of its long-term advertisers and attracted some new ones. The number of adverts and income from display advertising was stable with 33 adverts being processed (36 in 2022) and an income of 6,159 euros raised (6,260 in 2022).

PUBLICITY AND PUBLICATIONS

Our **Facebook page** continues to be an important publicity tool for the BCT. The number of followers has again increased to 4,900 at the end of the year. 354 posts and BCT events and countless stories were placed on our Facebook page in 2023. In order to increase traffic on the page and to reach out to the wider expat online community the team regularly shares posts with Facebook expat groups in Belgium as well as our own multiple Facebook groups.

The BCT's profiles on **Instagram and X (former Twitter)** have also grown significantly. In 2023 we increased our activity on Instagram with 94 posts, 19 reels, 16 profile highlights and countless stories. Little



money was invested in Social Media advertising to promote specific courses and events.

We have noticed a significant decrease of reach on Facebook and Instagram compared to previous years which is caused by a worldwide change of algorithm on all META platforms. The aim of the platform provider is to increase advertising income which means that the BCT will have to increase its advertising investment for selected events and activities in order to have a wider reach.

Throughout 2023, we continued to improve the **website** by restructuring pages and continuously updating content. We also regularly published relevant Small Talk articles on the website blog and promoted them via our Social Media channels to distribute the new content and increase website traffic and visibility.

2023 saw two team members retire after many years of dedicated volunteering. It will be very difficult to find replacements.

Twizzit, our app/platform, has become a stable communication tool with our members. It was used to edit and distribute 46 weekly newsletters in 2023. After a newsletter was sent out we saw immediate action from members who signed up for groups, event, courses or classes. This shows that these newsletters are being well received by members. On the administrative side we are using Twizzit for the AGM invitation, president's letters and special event newsletters as well as registration and payment for courses and classes. A good number of group organisers now send out regular newsletters and event announcements to their groups

via Twizzit. The vast majority of BCT activities are now being listed in the agenda which, again, shows that after one and a half years, our membership has accepted the new app/platform and recognises its advantages.

We continue to support members and volunteers to use the app to its full potential with regular articles in Small Talk and video tutorials.

Additional projects the team worked on in 2023:

- BCT services were promoted throughout the year on important community and expatriate websites/ message boards in Belgium.
- We continued to work on reciprocal online references with organisations and businesses in our field especially The Village.be who posted a couple of Small Talk articles on their page
- Our business profile on Google maps is being updated regularly and proves to be an additional tool to ensure our local online visibility.
- A large stack of publicity packs, consisting of Small Talk issues, Clubhouse and Pregnancy services flyers and business cards, were given to the Welcome & Dparture Desk of the EU for hand out and display at their office and events for employees at the European Institutions.
- About 100 publicity packs were prepared and distributed via the Pregnancy in Belgium sessions and by individual mailings.
- BCT was featured in a testimonial for Twizzit that included some footage, photos and interviews at the Clubhouse during playgroup and babywearing workshop.
- Cross-team support was provided, e.g. production of the Annual Report 2022, President's presentation at the AGM 2023, design and reprint of pre- and postnatal services flyer, update and reprint of the Pregnancy in Belgium booklet, design of posters and onsite and online publicity support for all events and activities



PUBLICITY - PLANS FOR 2024

We are planning to develop a concept for online advertisement opportunities on the website. We also plan to run a Small Talk related survey in order to better understand the importance of Small Talk for our members. In addition, we are planning to develop a promotion campaign for the Nearly New Sale, starting early to improve visibility and raise awareness of the event in the Brussels family community. Cutting costs in all areas will continue to determine all publicity activities. The publicity team needs additional, active members in order to develop and implement some of the abovementioned plans and projects to promote the BCT.

ONLINE MEDIA

Website & Social Media

2023 showed us without a doubt that our decision to opt for a separate membership management system has absolutely paid off! With our new website AND Twizzit, we were able to connect even better with our members and to provide them with the information they need.

WEBSITE FOR INFORMATION

Our website www.bctbelgium.org is still our main point of contact for non-members who come across the BCT for the first time. It provides them with information about the BCT, our services and activities, our courses and classes. In 2023, we organized our first Nearly New Sale since 2019 and published all relevant information for sellers and buyers on the website for easy access.

TWIZZIT FOR COMMUNITY

Twizzit, our membership management system, has proven invaluable in keeping our members up to date with events and group sessions. Instant access to the BCT agenda, signup forms and membership information, makes keeping in touch with the BCT so much easier. In 2023, we added a few more signup forms for courses and events, which Members and non-members alike can use to register and pay online using Bancontact (or via bank transfer, if they prefer). The platform is available both via the Twizzit website and the BCT Twizzit app. Using this new platform has saved our volunteers a lot of time and has made our administrative work much easier and more straightforward.

FACEBOOK FOR INTERACTION

The **BCT Facebook page** (www.facebook.com/bctbelgium) not only provides members and non-members with information we want to share about our organization and events but also about parenting in general with

articles from around the web. In 2023, we saw another steady increase in numbers with **4,900 followers**.

The **BCT Facebook group** (www.facebook.com/groups/BrusselsChildbirthTrust) is a community of BCT members and non-members that support each other on their journey through parenthood, with knowledge, lifehacks and encouragement. Parents asked lots of questions, for instance about how to obtain Belgian nationality for themselves and/or their children, on the best buggy to buy for Brussels, on doctors, creches and preschools as well as more serious subjects like support for newly diagnosed diseases.

At the end of 2023, the main BCT Facebook group had more than **5,900 members**. Other BCT groups on Facebook bring together the members of our local, support and interest groups, where members can share information that is more targeted on certain areas or interests. These groups complement our main group very nicely.

INSTAGRAM FOR VISIBILITY

With all the playgroups and events happening at the Clubhouse and around Brussels, we could finally take up publishing photos about the BCT on our Instagram account **bctbelgium** again! And it shows: at the end of 2023 we had almost doubled the number of followers.

X (FORMER TWITTER)

For those parents who are still on X (former Twitter) we keep publishing our "Around the web" articles, which feature the many facets of parenting of different age groups.

One of the main goals of the BCT has always been to connect people, providing them with a network. We are more than happy that we can do that both in real life and online, with the help of our website, Twizzit, the Facebook page and group, Zoom, Instagram and X (former Twitter).

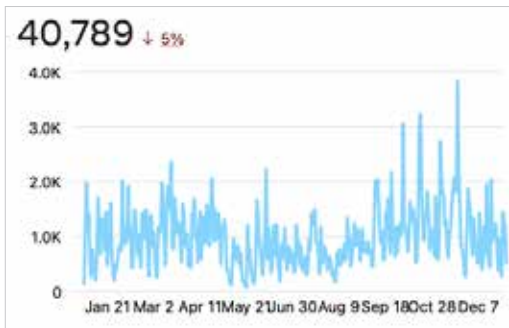
WEBSITE MOBILE USE IN 2023



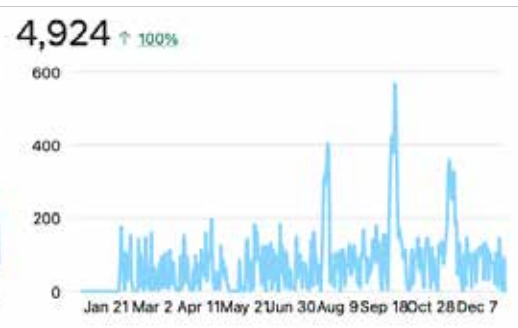
WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS IN 2023

Page title and content class	Views	Users	Views per user	Average engagement time	Event count All events
	48,976 100% of total	9,234 100% of total	4.76 Avg. 0%	0m 20s Avg. 0%	106,228 100% of total
1. Post (set)	12,521	338	33.76	4m 10s	12,895
2. The Brussels Childbirth Trust (BCT) - Brussels Childbirth Trust	5,474	3,488	1.57	58s	18,900
3. Birth & Parenting Courses - Brussels Childbirth Trust	3,458	1,968	2.21	1m 57s	6,768
4. Become a BCT member - Brussels Childbirth Trust	2,515	1,288	1.68	45s	4,847
5. Playgroups - Brussels Childbirth Trust	2,090	1,212	1.28	1m 10s	5,546
6. Nearly New Sale - Brussels Childbirth Trust	1,424	979	1.45	43s	4,401
7. Join us - Brussels Childbirth Trust	1,283	1,014	1.26	37s	4,315
8. Pregnancy in Belgium - Brussels Childbirth Trust	1,317	782	1.75	52s	3,565
9. First Aid for Parents - Brussels Childbirth Trust	1,130	481	1.73	48s	3,245
10. Member Courses - Brussels Childbirth Trust	1,118	426	1.78	1m 18s	3,148
11. Find us @ The Clubhouse - Brussels Childbirth Trust	928	452	1.42	31s	2,413
12. Local Groups - Brussels Childbirth Trust	897	448	1.99	46s	2,597
13. Clubhouse Party Rentals - Brussels Childbirth Trust	410	346	1.48	49s	2,884
14. Support Groups - Brussels Childbirth Trust	721	337	1.34	54s	2,144
15. Hypnobirthing Courses - Brussels Childbirth Trust	626	318	1.18	1m 02s	1,739
16. Contact us - Brussels Childbirth Trust	566	407	1.39	55s	1,289

FACEBOOK REACH IN 2023



INSTAGRAM REACH IN 2023



INSTAGRAM MOST FAVOURITE POST



MOST POPULAR POST



MOST LIKED POST



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



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PAST PRESIDENT
Sandra Drechsel
past-president@bctbelgium.org



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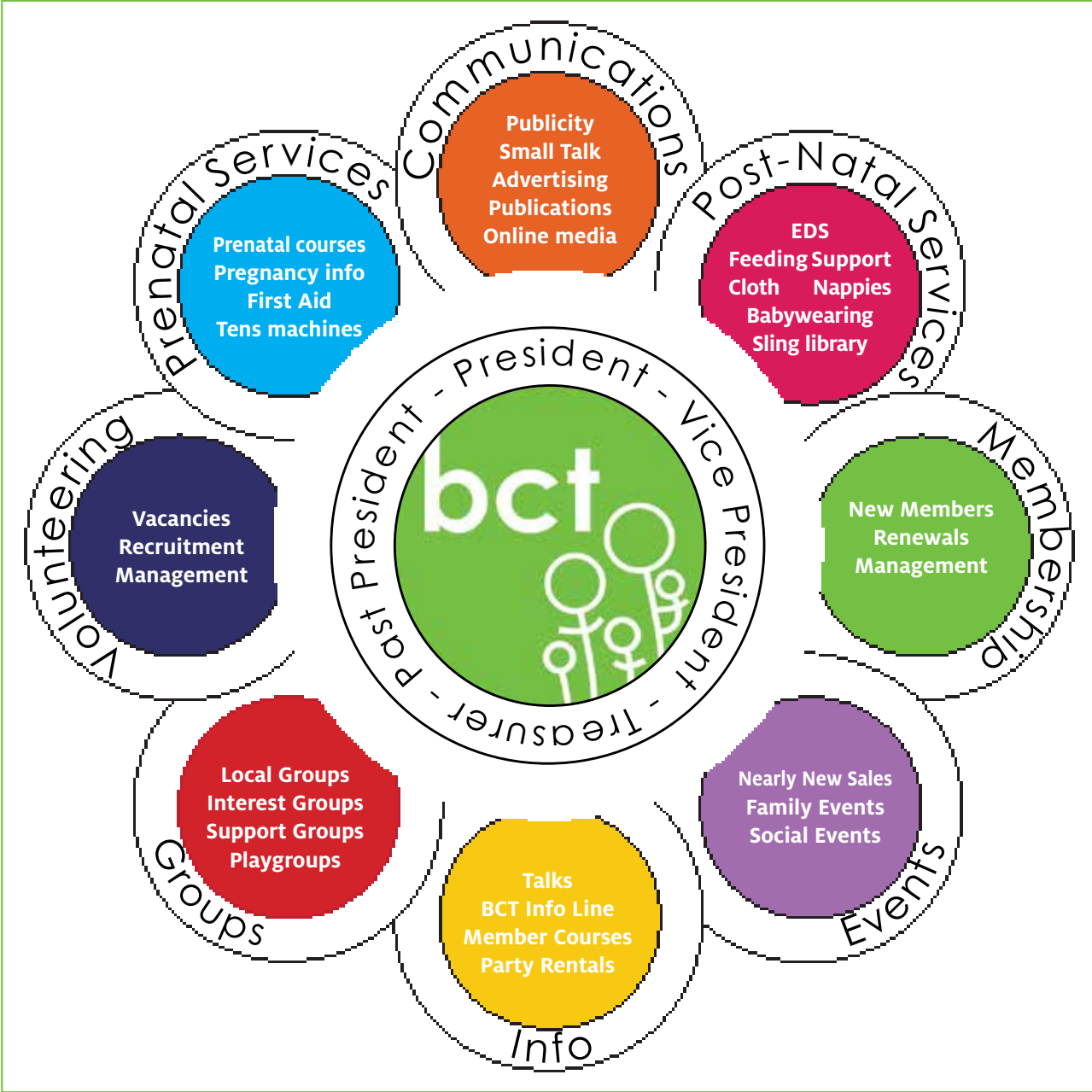
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POSTNATAL SERVICES COORDINATOR
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FINANCES

The final accounts at the end of the year showed a loss of €11.200 versus an expected loss of €21.420.

The main reasons, for the significantly (by €10.220) lower loss: Renting the BCT Clubhouse out to members for Birthday Parties, we saw an increase in membership numbers. And also reduction in electricity cost and less repair works.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM? WHAT IS IT SPENT ON?

The BCT's main sources of **income** in 2023 are the membership fees, prenatal and postnatal services, display advertisements in Small Talk magazine, members courses, groups, events, the NNS and the rental income for the Clubhouse.

The BCT generated revenue from membership fees of €36.446. This is more than the budget of €34.000 and more than last year: (2022) of €34.658.

The income from prenatal services (prenatal courses, First Aid classes and 'Pregnancy in Belgium' classes) was €32.805. With significant expenses in this area of €30.219, the profit was €2.586, unfortunately is less than last year: (2022) €4.495.

The display ad team generated income of €3.225 which covers 22% of the costs related to the production, printing and distribution of the magazine. This income was less than the budget of €6.000, and less than last year: (2022) €6.260. Outstanding for 2023 is €1.972.

After three years without a Nearly New Sale we organized an Autumn 'Nearly New Sale' in 2023. The income was €13,646 and the expenses in this area €11,616. The profit was €2,030, this is more than the budget €1.500.

The events team generated an income of €1.295 with the expenses €1.901. The loss is in the line with the budget.

The income from Member courses and Workshops showed €2,968 with the expenses €1.072.

The postnatal services generated a stable income of €640 (for the rental slings and tens machine), respectively.

The swimming groups brought €7,022 to the BCT revenue. Related expenses for swimming pool and instructors in 2023 were €6.062.

On the **expenditure** side our premises and its maintenance are the biggest blocks amounting to €41.114. Last year (2022) it was €41.329. The Budget for 2023 was €45.920.

The BCT started to rent out the Clubhouse in 2021. In 2023 the generated income was €11.340, which covered 38% of the net rent paid in 2023 (€29.490). In 2022 the income was €8.100, and covered 29% of the net rent (€27.720). Since 01.08.2023 - increase net rent.

The cost related to our prenatal services, mainly for teacher fees, were €30.219.

The IT cost of €6.681 consist of the website maintenance, Zoom subscriptions and the cost for the membership management system Twizzit. The budget 2023 (€7.300).

Philippe Vandebek from Rudi Swings bvba, Boekhouding - Fiscaliteit has checked and approved the end of year statement closing 2023.

FORWARD LOOK TO THE BUDGET 2024

The BCT does not intend to make a profit, but has accumulated profits over some years in the past. This year another overspend of €11.750 is projected.

Most of our efforts will again be in the area of increasing our membership base further. We are aiming to cut costs where possible and to increase our income in order to cover expenses.

A big "thank you" needs to go out to the various volunteers who took on additional projects throughout the year and for each person who supported the BCT so generously with a donation.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Actuals 2022, budget and end year accounts 2023 and budget 2024

AREAS	2023 ACTUALS			2023 BUDGET			2022 ACTUALS			2024 BUDGET		
	INCOME ACTUALS	EXPENSES ACTUALS	RESULT	INCOME BUDGET	EXPENSES BUDGET	RESULT	INCOME ACTUALS	EXPENSES ACTUALS	RESULT	INCOME BUDGET	EXPENSES BUDGET	RESULT
1. Membership	36.446,00	-833,00	35.613,00	34.000,00	-1.900,00	32.100,00	34.658,00	-1.841,00	32.817,00	36.000,00	-1.000,00	35.000,00
2. Magazine	3.225,00	-14.855,00	-11.630,00	5.000,00	-13.500,00	-8.500,00	6.260,00	-13.500,00	-7.240,00	6.000,00	-14.800,00	-8.800,00
3. It	0,00	-6.681,00	-6.681,00	0,00	-7.300,00	-7.300,00	0,00	-7.745,00	-7.745,00	0,00	-6.800,00	-6.800,00
4. Publicity	0,00	-769,00	-769,00	0,00	-1.000,00	-1.000,00	0,00	-513,00	-513,00	0,00	-1.000,00	-1.000,00
5. Premises	11.340,00	-41.114,00	-29.774,00	8.000,00	-45.920,00	-37.920,00	8.100,00	-41.329,00	-33.229,00	11.000,00	-43.000,00	-32.000,00
6. Member courses & Groups	10.640,00	-7.214,00	3.426,00	10.900,00	-7.300,00	3.600,00	10.930,00	-6.964,00	3.966,00	10.000,00	-7.000,00	3.000,00
7. Board	0,00	-3.970,00	-3.970,00	0,00	-2.900,00	-2.900,00	0,00	-1.641,00	-1.641,00	0,00	-2.500,00	-2.500,00
8. Prenatal Support	32.805,00	-30.219,00	2.586,00	30.900,00	-28.550,00	2.350,00	32.570,00	-28.075,00	4.495,00	30.900,00	-28.500,00	2.400,00
9. Postnatal Support	640,00	-9,00	631,00	600,00	-500,00	100,00	520,00	-545,00	-25,00	600,00	-200,00	400,00
10. Volunteers	0,00	-328,00	-328,00	0,00	-1.000,00	-1.000,00	0,00	-483,00	-483,00	0,00	-1.000,00	-1.000,00
11. Funday/Events	1.295,00	-1.901,00	-606,00	3.850,00	-4.500,00	-650,00	3.349,00	-3.354,00	-5,00	1.300,00	-2.000,00	-700,00
12. Nearly New Sales	13.646,00	-11.616,00	2.030,00	2.000,00	-500,00	1.500,00			0,00	13.000,00	-11.000,00	2.000,00
13. Bank charges/Interest		-730,00	-730,00		-800,00	-800,00		-780,00	-780,00		-750,00	-750,00
14. Paypal / POM		-998,00	-998,00		-1.000,00	-1.000,00		-958,00	-958,00		-1.000,00	-1.000,00
15. Other/Donations		0,00	0,00			0,00	130,00		130,00			0,00
Total	110.037,00	-121.237,00	-11.200,00	95.250,00	-116.670,00	-21.420,00	96.517,00	-107.728,00	-11.211,00	108.800,00	-120.550,00	-11.750,00

ACCOUNTS		1.01.2023	31.12.2023
PayPal	Membership	0,00	546,01
ING banks accounts		57.595,79	51.941,89
BE09 0019 0450 3757	Main	3.361,67	63,33
BE24 0019 0494 8038	Prenatal	4.185,00	6.115,00
BE27 0019 0495 1573	Membership	0,00	780,00
BE70 0019 0495 6425	NNS	0,00	3.662,79
BE41 0343 1742 7310	Savings	50.049,12	41.320,77
BE75 3636 1476 7751	Rental contract	4.440,00	4.440,00
Total		62.035,79	56.972,90

BCT *at a* GLANCE

785 MEMBERS

Here at the BCT we are all about family!

We are a volunteer-run not-for-profit social and support network for families and parents-to-be offering prenatal courses, postnatal services and a wide variety of activities and parenting resources in English. With currently almost **800 member families** from up to **70 nationalities** we are one of the largest international family communities in Belgium.

60 VOLUNTEERS (and counting!)

10 LOCAL, 14 INTEREST, 6 SUPPORT GROUPS

1 Nearly New Sale

44000

views on www.bctbelgium.org

220

parents-to-be
in prenatal
courses

4900 FOLLOWERS ON
www.facebook.com/bctbelgium

60 Clubhouse
Party rentals

5900 MEMBERS IN
OUR FACEBOOK GROUP

12 Pregnancy in
Belgium Evenings

18 TENS rentals

90 families at our Photo Shoot Events

**52 Families at
Baby Swimming**

**193 people attended our
First Aid for Parents classes**

And countless parent and baby meetups, playgroups, playdates, night outs etc.



BrusselsChildbirthTrust (BCT)
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