

Acknowledgements

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Belgium

[KONINKRIJK BELGIË]
[ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE]
[KÖNIGREICH BELGIEN]

RESEARCH PARTNER CENTRE

VLAAMS STEUNPUNT VRIJWILLIGERSWERK VZW VSVW

Els Vanleene

Eva Hambach

in collaboration with

Université de Liège

ULg - Centre d'Économie Sociale

Michel Marès

COUNTRY FACT SHEET											
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Population 2003: 10,396,421 inhabitants 2005: 10,511,382 inhabitants ■ Area 30,528 sq. km ■ Population density 2003: 340.6 inhabitants per sq. km 2005: 342.2 inhabitants per sq. km ■ Present form of government Federal constitutional monarchy ■ System of government Belgium is a federal state, composed of communities and regions. Not only do the Federal government and Parliament have the power to govern, there are also three communities: the Flemish, the French and the German community, in accordance with the precincts of the language and culture. Each of them has its own community parliament. Economic interests have encouraged a subsequent distribution of power. There are three regions: the Flemish, the Walloon and the Brussels-Capital Region. Each region also has its own competences and decision-making structures. Belgium has 10 provinces and 589 towns. ■ European elections 24 European parliamentarians. ■ Social security and welfare system Social security in Belgium is administered by the Federal government and carried out by public authorities and private institutions. It is a universal model, paid for by the government, individuals and companies (social security contributions, deducted from wages). The system is based on the principle of solidarity between active and non-active (or no longer active) citizens. The aim is to provide an allowance for the most needy. The standing expenses for social security were 23.2% of GDP for the year 2004. Due to the ageing population and mounting medical costs (further specialisation, more expensive diagnostic instrumentation, etc.) the system is under pres- 	<p>sure. Although the Federal government manages public welfare, local authorities manage the distribution of the welfare allowances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public health system The Belgian health system is open to all citizens and managed by the government (standards and control), but carried out by private organisations (National Health Services). It is a system based on the principle of solidarity. Costs are remunerated by the government and through obligatory contributions. According to the (social security) status of a person, health care will either be totally free, totally refunded or partly refunded. It is possible to take out extra private insurance policy. The health insurance system has also been under greater pressure for a few decades as privatisation of health care has increased greatly. ■ Level of education <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>20-24 years old who have completed secondary schooling</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2003: 81.2% 2005: 81.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-64 years old who have completed secondary schooling</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2003: 62.0% 2005: 66.1%</td> </tr> </table> ■ Immigration rate 2003: 850,077 immigrants (0,081%) 2005: 870,867 immigrants (0,083%) ■ Growth rate 2005: 1.14% Births: 118,002 Deaths: 103,278 ■ Employment rate <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>15-64 years old (total – male – female)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2003: 59.6% - 67.3% - 51.8% 2005: 61.1% - 68.3% - 53.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55-64 years old (total – male – female)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2003: 28.1% - 37.8% - 18.7% 2005: 31.8% - 41.7% - 22.1%</td> </tr> </table> ■ Unemployment rate <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>15-64 years old (total – male – female)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2003: 8.2% - 7.7% - 8.9% 2005: 8.5% - 7.7% - 9.6%</td> </tr> </table> 	20-24 years old who have completed secondary schooling	2003: 81.2% 2005: 81.8%	25-64 years old who have completed secondary schooling	2003: 62.0% 2005: 66.1%	15-64 years old (total – male – female)	2003: 59.6% - 67.3% - 51.8% 2005: 61.1% - 68.3% - 53.8%	55-64 years old (total – male – female)	2003: 28.1% - 37.8% - 18.7% 2005: 31.8% - 41.7% - 22.1%	15-64 years old (total – male – female)	2003: 8.2% - 7.7% - 8.9% 2005: 8.5% - 7.7% - 9.6%
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Sources: <http://statbel.fgov.be> and <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

Communication and co-operation with other organisations and partners is important to the *Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk*: it keeps the centre up-to-date, creates networks and extra experience and knowledge.

VSVw

Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw

[CONTACT]
VLAAMS STEUNPUNT VRIJWILLIGERSWERK vzw (VSVw)
 Amerikalei 164
 2000 Antwerp – Belgium
 0032.03.2185901
 e-mail: info@vsvw.be
www.vrijwilligerswerk.be

The *Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw* (formerly known as the *Platform voor Voluntariaat*) is the Flemish Centre for Voluntary Work. It was established in 1977. This not for profit association is open to all volunteer organisations, whatever their field of activity (welfare, education, health, the environment or sport) and whatever form of structure they have. Initially, its work was to match volunteers to voluntary organisations, however this is no longer a major activity of the centre. At present, *VSVw* supports volunteers regarding organisations, it informs them on the impact and meaning of the legal framework and it performs the role of mediator between organisations and policy-makers (e.g. advocacy).

Although the task may not be considered a major part of the *VSVw*'s work, it has set up a commonly-managed website www.vrijwilligerswerk.be which is used to match organisations and volunteers. The website is owned by all the volunteer centres (Flemish, Regional and Brussels). A major part of the website is a database which indicates volunteer vacancies in the various centres. There is also a section dedicated to information which will be developed further in the coming years.

The *VSVw* has several objectives and functions:
 It endeavours to obtain favourable regulations for volunteers from the Belgian government and to make voluntary work possible for everyone. The organisation plays an important role in lobbying for a volunteer-friendly environment.

As organisations need legal assistance, the *VSVw* provides information and an explanation of existing regulations, as well as information on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteer organisations.

The *VSVw* wants to support organisations in developing a proper volunteer policy. In co-operation with the Brussels and regional centres, practical tools, publications and advice are offered. To follow up new developments, *VSVw* has participated and headed several projects, such as 'Accreditation of Prior Learning' (APL), 'Insurance and Volunteering', and 'Support of Volunteers'.

The *VSVw* primarily advises organisations, but it also helps volunteers and other interested parties with their queries.
 Although the *VSVw* does not simply want to be considered an education service, it gives lectures and conducts educational programmes limited to laws and regulations on volunteering.

Another aim is to increase public awareness, and to ensure that volunteering is respected and appreciated. To this end, a magazine called 'tACTIEF' containing articles on volunteering has been created, and a yearly event known as 'Week on Volunteering' is organised to bring volunteering to the attention of the mass media, policymakers and the general public.

PARTNER CENTRE FACT SHEET

VSVw

■ Population served	Flanders: 6,078,600 Brussels-Capital: 1,018,804
■ Geographic area	Flanders: 13,522 sq.km Brussels-Capital: 162 sq. km
■ Organisations members	Between 400 and 600 (low estimation), difficult to estimate due to fact that we also serve federations, municipalities, etc.
■ People employed:	Full-time: 2 Part-time: 1
■ Number of volunteers	On the board: 1 In projects: 2 Occasional volunteers: 2

■ Annual budget year 2006	Euro 218,782.70
■ Agencies and local branches	none
■ Services offered	Advice Information Advocacy Development of publications and practical tools
■ Networking	At a European level: Active membership of <i>European Volunteer Centre - CEV</i> . Bilateral contacts with <i>CEV</i> members on specific projects. Co-operation in European projects through <i>CEV</i> . At a national level: Through the High Council of Volunteers and direct contacts with policymakers and/or administrative bodies. At a Flemish level: Co-operation with regional centres and <i>Het Punt vzw</i> , Brussels. Co-operation with volunteers involving sectors and institutions, foundations (Board of Directors, projects...). Direct contacts with Flemish policymakers and administrative bodies.

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1 DEFINITIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1.1 VOLUNTEERS

A volunteer is any person (made of flesh and blood) that performs a voluntary activity, which means an activity of any kind (intellectual, practical, ...) that adds social value either to society, certain target groups or to a not for profit organisation. A company, a city, a school or any other organisation cannot be regarded as a volunteer.

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, the word "bénévole" was used frequently until the arrival of the new law on volunteering. In the past, the word "volontaire" was assigned to firemen, ambulance-men, etc. These days, the two terms are used indifferently in current practice. In the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, only the word "vrijwilliger" is used.

1.2 VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is any activity which is carried out by a volunteer within, or under the 'authority' of an organisation. Volunteering is not simply an activity but a commitment towards others, such as helping the elderly, assisting children, organising events, etc. Volunteers can be differentiated from (ordinary) members of (not for profit) organisations. A member simply 'spends' time, participates... while a volunteer works productively in an organisation's activities.

[Unpaid] Volunteers perform volunteer activities without receiving any payment for it; it is an unpaid commitment. A person who undergoes medical experiments to test new medicines is not considered a volunteer. Someone who takes up a paid (political) mandate is not a volunteer. Although volunteering is unpaid, volunteers can be given a limited amount of money, to reimburse their expenses or as a forfeit, for costs to be made.

[Without coercion] A volunteer commits him/herself without any obligation; he or she cannot be forced to perform an activity. A trainee in a hospital or retirement centre cannot be considered a volunteer. Although persons cannot be forced to volunteer, the moment they engage in some type of voluntary activity, a kind of (juridical) relationship (with mutual rights and duties) is established.

[For others or for society] Volunteering means being of use to others who are not family or acquaintances, in an organisation or for society in general. For example, it could be helping the elderly cross the road, coaching young football players, reading books to the blind, etc. However, helping at a private barbecue of a neighbour or helping your own child with his/her homework, does not fit the definition.

1.3 VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

Volunteering always comes within the framework of a not for profit organisation (the so-called NGO). The organisation can be more or less structured. Moreover, public and private organisations (not for profit) are entitled to engage volunteers, as well as certain organisations (a group of some individuals who come together and co-operate to reach a certain aim) can work with volunteers.

The common characteristic of volunteer organisations is the absence of profit among their aims. In these entities, people are united by a common goal to accomplishing something together.

As different types of organisations can engage volunteers, we can identify different types of volunteer organisations. In theory, we can make a distinction between 'autonomous' organisations and 'support' organisations. 'Autonomous' organisations mostly (or sometimes only) work with volunteers. If there are professionals, they are situated at a 'higher' (often 'national' or 'regional') level (e.g. youth movements, cultural action, etc.). Activities and initiatives are conducted by volunteers. In the case of 'support' organisations, paid workers do most of the work. Volunteers perform additional, supporting tasks (e.g. in a library or a hospital) in these kinds of organisations. Of course, a more complex typology of volunteer organisations can be developed.

[Distinction between professional activities] A volunteer cannot perform the same activity as both an employee and as a volunteer for the same employer. The keyword is "activity". A person can volunteer within his own organisation provided that a clear distinction is made between the activity he performs as paid staff, and the activity he performs as a volunteer.

2 VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING FOR ORGANISATIONS

Studies indicate that there are various ways of volunteering; and it is through these ways that the real value of volunteering can be understood.

2.1 THE ROLES OF VOLUNTEERING

The characteristic roles of volunteering confirm that volunteering is a major force in society.

The following is a short overview of the various roles of volunteering as described in scientific literature.

- **An identifying role**

Volunteering has the mission of identifying weak points in society, that is, it discovers new needs.

One example regards the entire sector of basic education and alphabetisation courses. Owing to a lack of government attention (not necessarily intentional) on the issue, volunteers started to organise courses. In Belgium, these courses are now organised by the State, and include paid staff workers.

Volunteers initially set up free information and service structures on issues and legislation regarding rent. Another example are the efforts made by some organisations to find solutions for illegal immigrants and political asylum seekers bogged down in red tape.

The volunteer sector becomes involved in issues which have not been addressed (or sometimes ignored) by policymakers and governments.

- **An 'additional' role**

This role stresses the added value of volunteering, in the sense of introducing more humanitarian values and elements into an organisation. Volunteering is not solely based on business-linked or functional relationships.

Voluntary work is not guided solely by functional or quantitative parameters; it provides new opportunities to establish different and alternative ways of dealing with problems.

An example are volunteers active in services or institutions for the elderly: while nurses and caring staff are bound to results, volun-

teers can make time to talk to people, to make time for them and approach them on a more personal level.

The volunteer sector makes sure that there will always be a 'human approach' to problems and solutions.

- **A personal development role**

Volunteering offers learning processes for people involved; it gives them the possibility to discover, develop, experiment, verify or ameliorate their skills, know-how and attitudes. Competences can be built up through volunteering.

For example, youngsters entering the labour market sometimes have problems in gaining experience. Experience in volunteering has a positive impact on a C.V.

People who make a living with a boring job can compensate and use their creative skills in a volunteering environment.

People with weak self-esteem can develop skills and competences through volunteering.

The Volunteer sector can contribute to educational (both informal and formal) processes.

- **A social role**

Due to its nature, volunteering can be carried out by anyone, regardless of background, level of education, etc. Volunteering offers a broad spectrum of activities, from washing dishes in the canteen of a football club to being member of a board or advisory committee at a community level.

Volunteering can be a pool for special target groups to develop experiences, to reintegrate themselves into society, to be a forum in which isolated people can establish social contacts.

In Vlaams-Brabant (the Flanders) a pilot project for co-operation between mental health institutions and volunteering organisations has been set up. The aim is to reintegrate persons with a background of psychological instability.

The Volunteer Sector is open to everyone, and does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

- **An economical role**

This role is based on two elements. On the one hand, it refers to the fact that volunteering (as well as the third sector) takes place beyond the sphere of economical logic. Volunteers are active in sectors that are not considered money-making; sectors which do not develop "normal economical activities". By nature, volunteering exists beyond market logic.

On the other hand, the economical role refers to the fact that volunteering makes services payable. By involving volunteer organisations and institutions (as long as they do not take advantage of volunteers) the price beneficiaries pay is considered acceptable (as it does not reflect real market costs).

For example, socio-cultural organisations offer a broad variety of social and cultural and educational activities for their members. They work mostly with volunteer teachers for subjects of general interest. If they were forced to hire private teachers, they would not be able to afford to run such courses.

A lot of organisations that provide services for the disabled or the elderly (shopping, company, transport to hospital, etc) only consider the real costs, as the beneficiaries would be not be in a position to pay for the volunteer's time.

The Volunteer sector contributes to the welfare of society and adds value to the GNP of a country.

- **A democratic role**

Last, but surely not least, is the democratic role of volunteering. It gives people access to society, helps them to be an active citizen, and offers a channel to ventilate problems, complaints and suggestions.

From the perspective of the citizen, the democratic role lies in the fact that people are part of organisations, of what is called the social capital of society which offers the means to communicate with policy-

makers and governments at different levels. It gives people the opportunity to be part of the policymaking process.

From the perspective of the government and policymakers, volunteering contributes to active citizenship, fortifies social cohesion in society and enables solidarity between people. Volunteers can make possible what other sectors cannot, it can open channels where other sectors sometimes fail.

Nowadays, many authorities at a national, regional and local level stress the importance of civil society, often by emphasising the responsibilities of individuals and groups to contribute to shaping society. Quite a few local communities have already discovered the force of active citizenship by inviting people to talk and take part in plans to re-organise society, to contribute to actions to integrate newcomers, etc.

At the European Union level, the tendency to accentuate the importance of social cohesion is slowly entering the decision-making process.

A very good example of democratisation can be found in the self-organised groups of poor people (generational poverty). By organising themselves, these kinds of groups have started to have an impact on decision making, by drawing attention to the specific needs and problems of their situation.

The Volunteer sector helps to ensure democratic processes in society.

2.2 VALUES OF VOLUNTEERING

In general, volunteering is seen as a major source of social capital for society: volunteers ensure social cohesion, networks and co-operation between people; organisations contribute as they are seen as facilitators of democracy.

The value of volunteering can be found at different levels and at different stakeholder view points:

- Social values of volunteering:
 - Networking between people, realisation of specific aims.
 - Way of integrating people into society.
 - Social network for isolated persons.
 - Constructive way to deal with problems of society, neighbourhood, etc.
- Democratic values of volunteering:
 - Volunteering leads to more tolerant attitudes.
 - Volunteering leads to greater trust in (public) institutions, authorities, etc.
 - Volunteering is a mediator between the general public and politics.
- Economical values of volunteering:
 - Volunteering adds economic value: the GNP increases.
 - Volunteering ensures that certain services remain affordable.
 - Volunteering guarantees that certain services and needs are met.
- Human values of volunteering:
 - Volunteering is essentially based on principles of solidarity, respect, co-operation, caring for others.
 - Volunteering offers persons a positive feeling, a feeling of recognition and of being worthwhile.

Although it is clear that volunteering has different and substantial benefits for society as a whole, we can identify values at the level of organisations and volunteers as persons.

Value of volunteering for organisations:

- Volunteers are seen as added value: they perform activities with a 'human face', aimed at more personal relations and contact.
- Volunteers enable organisations to extend their services.
- Volunteers keep 'in touch' with society: as such, they are a 'tool' to ensure that the organisations do not lose touch with reality.
- Volunteers can bring new forms of dynamicity into an organisation.

Value of volunteering for volunteers:

- Volunteering gives a feeling of being wanted, being someone, being useful to others, the organisation, society.
- Volunteering gives people the chance to discover themselves as people, it gives them an opportunity to experiment.
- Volunteering ensures informal learning, developing skills and competences.
- Volunteering enables people to establish new friendships.
- Volunteering is a way to contact other persons, to breach isolation, depression.

Value of volunteering for the beneficiaries:

- Contacts which are based on commitment, participation and common values and not merely on 'instrumental' relations.
- To choose between a broad range of activities offered by volunteers.
- Enables low budget participation.
- Opens the way to contact with other persons in an informal manner.

Value of volunteering for society:

- Volunteering is a binding factor in society, it brings people together and gives them greater trust in the governmental and political institutions.
- Volunteering guarantees that needs and/or responsibilities which are not met by the government will be taken into consideration by citizens.

Value of volunteering for the profit sector:

- Volunteering gives people the possibility to discover, extend and develop skills, attitudes and competences which are needed in the workplace.
- Possibility for companies and enterprises, by way of Corporate Social Responsibility, to demonstrate that the profit sector is "concerned" about society.
- Through the development of employee volunteering, there will be more direct return of the 'goods' of volunteering for the profit sector (more team-building, greater motivation, etc.).

3 DIFFERENT FORMS OF VOLUNTEERS INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Voluntary organisations in Belgium play a role in offering services of general interest, such as education, health, social action, culture, and so on. The services they render meet the needs of certain target groups, or of society as a whole. Besides these 'service rendering' organisations which are, to a certain extent, additional to governmental services, many voluntary organisations operate exclusively for themselves such as youth groups, sports clubs, human rights action groups.

Hence, some organisations provide additional services to existing ones, while others create new services. As mentioned before (see: roles of volunteering), voluntary organisations have innovative roles: they launch new initiatives, identify and try to meet new needs (often before the government does). In several cases, volunteer initiatives lead to new job opportunities or to the creation of new job profiles.

According to recent studies, approximately 10% of the workforce work in the associative sector. These organisations contribute to 8.2% of the GNP, which comes to approximately 20 billion Euro.

3.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS

Associative life in Belgium is organised in diverse forms. Although the structures can be different, all these voluntary organisations have a common characteristic: their aim is to fulfil specific (social) aims, profit making is not amongst their aims. In general, they fall under the so-called entities without profitable aims. They can be differentiated in the following categories.

3.2.1 NOT FOR PROFIT (NFP) ORGANISATIONS

This kind of organisations is created to produce goods and or

services, but its statute forbids to produce income for themselves, or provide profit or any other financial gain to the institution that creates, controls and finances them.

Not for profit organisations have the following five characteristics:

- They are organisations, which means they have an institutional status.
- They cannot divide income (profit) from activities among their members nor board members.
- They are private and structurally separated from the State.
- They are independent, which means they have their own rules and decision making structures.
- Membership to these organisations is on a free basis and the organisations are able to mobilise voluntary resources under the form of gifts (donations) or volunteer work.

3.2.2 NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS - VZW

A *vzw* is a group that has been granted with juridical personality (Law of 27th June 1927, changed by the Law of 2nd May 2002). These organisations do not conduct industrial nor commercial operations and they do not endeavour to gain profits for their members. These organisations are the dominant form in the associative sector of Belgium. In 2004 (31/12/2004) the number was estimated at 113,513 organisations. Although some of these organisations have ceased activity, 62% of the afore-mentioned figure is still active nowadays.

Among these organisations, 15,000 employ personnel paid with their own means (most of these organisations work with paid staff, but are run with government funding).

The *Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw* and *l'Association pour le Volontariat* come under this kind of organisation.

3.2.3 INTERNATIONAL NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS - IVZW

This type of organisation is open to Belgians as well as to foreign-

ers, provided that the social head-office of the organisation is situated in Belgium and that it has not for profit objectives with an international utility. As is the case of a *vzw*, an *ivzw* cannot perform industrial or commercial operations and does not pursue activities to make a profit for its members (Law 27th June 1927, modified by Law of 2nd May 2002).

An *ivzw* organisation has a particular place in the associative sector of Belgium. Considering Brussels' role in the European and international context, the importance of this kind of organisation is increasing.

The *European Volunteer Centre - CEV* is an international association which belongs to this category of not for profit organisations.

3.2.4 PUBLIC UTILITY FOUNDATION

The creation of a foundation is the result of a juridical act which comes about when one or more moral, juridical, non physical personalities are willing to assign a patrimony to accomplish a certain aim (Law of 27th June 1927, modified by the Law of 2nd May 2002). A foundation can be recognised as a public utility in that it intends to accomplish a certain objective that can be of a philanthropic, philosophical, religious, scientific, artistic, pedagogical or cultural character.

Foundations have their own structure. Their aim is to reach certain objectives by granting funds to not for profit organisations, welfare institutions, educational entities, individuals. Sometimes, they set up certain programmes on their own.

Although there are very few foundations in Belgium, they play an important role as they are capable of collecting huge amounts of funding for philanthropic, scientific or cultural purposes.

3.2.5 DE FACTO ORGANISATIONS

De facto organisations are organisations that have no juridical status (as they do not comply to the law on associations as men-

tioned earlier). They are not obliged to follow certain rules and/or procedures (e.g. to lay down statutes at a court, the publication of board members in the Belgian Monitor).

Although they are more or less 'free', de facto organisations have an institutional role. Many volunteers are active in these types of organisations, and generally speaking, they do not hire paid personnel. Large organisations of this kind such as the political parties in Belgium and trade unions, are exceptions to this general rule in that they utilise paid personnel.

3.2.6 NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs)

By designating these organisations as 'non governmental', the independence and autonomy of this kind of not for profit organisations is stressed. The criteria used to define not for profit organisations can be applied to NGOs. An NGO is created in order to pursue specific aims (such as environmental protection) or to provide services to certain target groups (such as the young). In Belgium, the description 'NGO' is often used to identify and to describe organisations that are active in development cooperation.

3.2.7 EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

The increasing use of paid personnel in the above-mentioned organisations does not lead to the creation of new forms of organisations as long as volunteers are present within them.

4 PRINCIPAL TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS IN THE THIRD SECTOR

In Belgium, the third sector or social economy is made up of three major components: companies (cooperatives and companies with social aims), mutual-help organisations and not for profit

organisations (including de facto organisations). We intend to analyse the last mentioned as they are the only ones connected to volunteering.

4.1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS LINKED TO THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

4.1.1 SOCIAL ECONOMY (THIRD SECTOR)

In Walloon, the social economy is defined in the following manner:

"The social economy is composed of economic activities which are performed by companies (cooperatives and companies with social aims, mutual-help organisations and not for profit organisations, including de facto organisations)"; which are governed by the following moral principles:

- Services are intended for its members or the community rather than profit.
- Autonomy of aims.
- Democratic decision-making processes.
- Priority on persons and work rather than capital in the repartition of income.

In the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, the *Vlaams Overleg Sociale Economie (VOSEC)* also defined the social economy in 1997.

Even though the basic concept is similar to the definition provided above, there is an additional dimension: there is a connection with sustainable development.

"The social economy consists of enterprises and initiatives which intend to achieve certain added social values, while considering and respecting the following basic principles: the priority of work (labour) over capital, democratic decision-making process, social implantation, transparency, quality and sustainability. Particular attention is given to the quality of internal and external relations. The social economy can commercialise goods and services while considering

the valid economical utility of its resources to ensure continuity and a certain profit margin.”

4.1.2 SOCIAL PROFIT SECTOR

The meaning in a broader sense: the social profit sector contains the whole group of enterprises that benefit from public funding, without pursuing money-making aims.

The meaning in a stricter sense: the social profit sector adds an additional element, connected to health, social action, education or culture.

4.1.3 THE MAATSCHAPPELIJK MIDDENVELD (THE IN-BETWEEN AREA)

A typical Flemish concept called *Maatschappelijk middenveld* is worth mentioning to provide a more comprehensive picture.

The concept is hard to translate into English; it is a sort of ‘intermediary domain’, situated between the citizen and the political sphere. More precisely, organisations and associations that come within this area are created as a result of public debate regarding particular social problems and needs, which they bring together as a result of suggestions from their members and then transmit to policymakers. Certain sociologists

call this ‘mediation’. The *maatschappelijk middenveld* brings together ideas from the general public and directs them to the attention of public authorities. In this case, we cannot talk of a direct link between citizens and politics, as the ‘in-between field’ works completely independently and autonomously from politics and the economy. This autonomy is seen by certain sociologists as the real characteristic of the *Maatschappelijk Middenveld* (translated as *in-between area*): without organisational autonomy the groups that make up the *Maatschappelijk Middenveld* are unable to fulfil or carry out their mediation role between citizens and public authorities.

4.2 DIAGRAM OF CONCEPTS LINKED TO THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

The theoretical nuances between the different concepts are sometimes very subtle, as the diagram shows.

It is clear that the associative sector represents only a part of the third sector, even if it is one of the most important in quantitative terms, regarding the number of organisations and volunteers.



In the same manner, the associative sector distinguishes itself from the social profit sector. It is simply part of this sector because organisations and institutions different from not for profit organisations also meet the criteria of the definition; this is the case for public services, public administrative bodies, certain public enterprises, etc.

Overview of the sector

1 JURIDICAL FRAMEWORK: LAWS AND REGULATIONS DEFINING THE ASSOCIATIVE SECTOR AND ITS COMPONENTS

1.1 LAW OF JUNE 27TH 1921 MODIFIED BY THE LAW OF 2ND MAY 2002 REGARDING NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS - VZW, NOT FOR PROFIT INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS - IVZW AND FOUNDATIONS

The law regarding not for profit organisations (Law of 2nd May 2002) reformed 1921 Law.

Very briefly, the reform applies to the following pillars:

- Centralised administration.
- New procedures concerning the publication of acts.
- Declaration of obligatory statutory elements.
- Reorganisation of powers within organisations.
- New obligations concerning the book-keeping status of organisations.

1.2 ARTICLES 220 TO 226 OF THE INCOME TAX CODE (1992) FOR ORGANISATIONS UNDER THE STRUCTURE OF NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

In principle, a not for profit organisation falls under the rules of taxation of organisations with juridical structure and not under the tax legislation that applies to enterprises. Taxes will not be calculated on the annual income of an organisation but based on five revenue categories:

- Cadastral revenue from real estate belonging to the organisation in Belgium.
- Revenue from other real estate.
- On certain value-added typologies such as VAT.
- Revenue from capital and financial products, funds, real estate and different forms of income.
- Undocumented income or income that does not come under certain rules in the fiscal legislation.

1.3 ARTICLE 104, 3^º, B, D, E, G, I, J, K,L, 4^º OR 4^ºBIS OF THE INCOME TAX CODE CONNECTED TO TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS MADE TO NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS (1992)

1.4 LAW OF 3RD JULY 2005 CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF VOLUNTEERS, KNOWN AS THE LAW ON VOLUNTEERING

This law was published in the Belgian Monitor on 29th August 2005. Although the law should have entered into force in February 2006, its implementation was postponed to August 2006. A small but important part of the Volunteer Law entered into force as of 1st January 2007.

2 JURIDICAL FRAMEWORK: LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON VOLUNTEERING IN BELGIUM

As Belgium is a federal state, there are different decision-making levels: the federal level decides on all matters of federal interest such as taxes, social security, labour, etc., while the second level decides on people-related issues.

The structure becomes more complicated as there are Dutch, French and German-speaking communities: each community has its own parliament. There are three regions: the Flemish region, the Walloonian region and the Brussels region (Brussels, the capital region where Dutch as well as French-speaking people live).

There are many arguments one can put forward to declare that volunteering is a person-related matter, a matter that has to be dealt with, in other words, by the communities themselves. In theory, each community has its own good practices but they must be applicable to the legal framework at a Federal level.

In fact, the legal framework for volunteering was set out by the Federal Parliament and implemented by the Federal Government, administrative bodies, etc. The Law on Volunteering is wide-ranging and applies to volunteering throughout Belgium.

The communities have the right and possibility to set their own rules on volunteering by establishing decrees and so on. All have to work within the framework set out by the Federal legislation, but they are allowed to adopt specific rules. The principle holds that a specific law has priority over the general law (although there should not be contrast between the measures).

2.1 THE LAW ON VOLUNTEERING

This recent initiative to set out certain rules for volunteering was proposed and developed by federal members of parliament who elaborated a bill on volunteering. The content was drafted by the members themselves but in close co-operation and collaboration with the volunteering sector itself.

Voluntary sector had been asking for a specific legal framework for more than two decades as common problems kept arising; organisations were uncertain on specific problems such as whether costs could be reimbursed to volunteers, which method was to be applied, etc.

The Law was adopted on 3rd July 2005 and was meant to become effective as of 1st January 2006. As expected, royal decrees were not elaborated in time, the sector started to worry and make complaints on certain parts of the law itself, which resulted in certain articles being modified by politicians.

In fact, the law came into effect as of 1st August 2006, but with an exemption that regulations on liability and volunteer insurances would only be implemented as of 1st January 2007.

2.2 AN OVERVIEW ON THE LAW ON VOLUNTEERING

The law starts with a clear definition of 'volunteering'. According to the Belgian law, "Volunteering is an activity carried out by a natural person (not juridical), on a free and unpaid basis, without gaining any benefit to himself, nor to his close friends or family but rather for the good of the organisation itself, to accomplish a specific aim, or for the good of society as a whole. This activity is carried out within an organisation (whether it be a de facto or legally recognised organisation)."

The Law regulates the following fields:

- Volunteering carried out by persons with a public allowance (pensions, subsidies, etc.).
- Reimbursement of expenses made by volunteers.
- Liability of volunteers.

- Insurance obligations.
- Obligation on behalf of the organisation to provide information.
- Other items.

Volunteering for people with a public allowance

The law slightly facilitates the red tape for these groups of people. The law distinguishes between persons entitled to unemployment benefits (before commencing volunteer work, they have to report it to the relevant office, but unlike before they can start volunteering immediately and will only be obliged to stop if the unemployment office establishes that the activity undertaken is not considered volunteering), people with a national health service allowance (an authorised doctor has to evaluate whether volunteering is compatible with the volunteer's general health condition), and people living on a public allowance, who need to seek authorisation from the appropriate authorities. Although some controlling mechanisms remain, the procedures have become less complex and more volunteer-friendly.

Reimbursement of expenses made by volunteers

Any volunteer can receive a reimbursement for costs made during his/her volunteer activities, provided that the organisation is willing to pay (the law does not specify the right of a volunteer to claim for it). The law confirms the existing principles on reimbursement. The volunteer may either receive a fixed reimbursement (regardless of real costs): in this case, the volunteer can receive a maximum of 27,92 Euro a day, for a maximum of 1.116,71 Euro a year, or else the organisation can opt for a system of factual reimbursements. In this case, the organisation only pays the expenses that are actually made by the volunteers (use of car, telephone, meals, etc.) as proof has to be provided in some form or other for each expense. A volunteer can benefit either from a fixed sum for daily expenses or from a reimbursement of actual expenses incurred, but she/he is not allowed to combine these two forms.

Liability of volunteers

The law has set up a protection system for the volunteer. A per-

sonal claim can no longer be made against a volunteer who causes damage to third parties (third parties not belonging to the organisation, beneficiaries, other volunteers within the same organisation). The third party has to make a claim against the organisation for which the volunteer operates.

The volunteer can only be held personally liable in three cases: in the case of repeated minor mistakes, in case of a serious mistake, or in case of fraud or deception.

However, the law is not faultless on the matter of liability as it makes the distinction between an organisation with a legal status and a de facto organisation. Volunteers who operate in a de facto organisation cannot – in most cases - count on immunity. S/he remains in the same weak position in that s/he can still be held personally responsible for his/her actions.

Insurance obligations

In connection with liability, the Law indicates that obligatory insurance is necessary for those organisations where volunteers are granted immunity. These organisations are obliged to take out insurance for civil liability. Other possible insurance policies, legal aid, accident insurance are not yet obligatory. Those organisations which do not come within the "immunity" ruling, are not obliged to do anything. In this case, the general liability rules apply: any volunteer can be personally persecuted. In the voluntary sector, it is a quite spread opinion that this is a significant weak point in the legal framework. Volunteers who operate in de facto organisations need to provide their own insurance (mostly private and civil liability insurance).

Obligation on behalf of the organisation to provide information

Every organisation that engages volunteers has to inform the aforesaid before starting of five aspects of the organisation: the aims of the organisation, the legal status of the organisation, the fact that volunteers are insured for civil liability, whether they will receive reimbursement for expenses, and finally that the volunteers have a duty to respect the organisation they work for (the obligation of secrecy). The organisation can choose how it wishes to implement the obliga-

tion, either verbally or in a written form (a volunteer contract), or on an individual or collective base.

Although this law can be criticised in certain points, voluntary organisations have generally welcomed it because at least it provides a precise juridical framework, and so modifications and improvements to this law can be subsequently made later on.

3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

3.1 A DEEPLY-ROOTED HISTORY

The associative sector in Belgium is quite varied and complex. Its origins go back to the beginning of the 19th century, with Article 291 of the Napoleonic Penal Code of 1810 - in force in Belgium since 1830, which hinders any form of individual initiative and prohibits freedom of association. The liberalism that gradually emerged in Belgium found this restraint intolerable and from 1830 onwards, Article 20 of the new Constitution stated that 'Belgians have the right to associate with one another, and this right cannot be submitted to any preventive measure'.

However, apart from the aforesaid article, no legislation on the matter was developed, no legal framework that guaranteed freedom of association was elaborated, and so Belgians had to wait until the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century before the law on the status of certain types of associations (without profit-making activity) was passed by Parliament. In that period, mutual-help associations (1894), professional associations (such as those of lawyers, architects, etc.) (1898), non-public universities (1911), international associations (1919) and trade unions (1921) were recognised.

Subsequently, when the status of not for profit organisations of Law of 27th June 1921 was defined, there was finally the possibility for each organisation to become a juridical personality, which meant that rights and duties were separated from the rights and duties of the physical persons that make up the organisation.

3.2 THE "BOOM" OF THE 1970S

The road for associative structures to develop was finally open. There was a significant increase in the number of not for profit organisations in 1971, and throughout the 1970s. This was certainly due to a renewal of democratic spirit linked to the contestation period of the late 1960s which turned the 1970s into the decade of participation in social activities.

As a consequence of difficulties by public authorities to respond to the needs of society, and a general crisis of the welfare state, a new wave of associations appeared on the scene. These organisations operated principally at a micro-level, attempting to resolve tangible problems at their level with limited financial resources and ambitions, rather than trying to transform politics or the economy. 'Small is beautiful', appeared to be the key phrase.

3.3 TRENDS OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS

The 1990s was also a good decade for associative life. Slowly, the general public has become aware of the importance of the associative sector, although the real impact is still difficult to measure as few studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of this sector in society.

In the late 1990s, Belgium was included in a pilot project aimed at establishing instruments related to the development of volunteering, the structure of volunteering, regulations regarding volunteering and its extent. A report published by the King Baudouin Foundation reveals information and gives an overview of the needs of the volunteering sector.

The years 2000 to 2005 were characterised by major changes. We can summarise them as follows:

- Two new Laws were adopted by the Parliament:
 - The previous 1921 Law on not for profit organisations was modified (see above).
 - The Law on Volunteering Rights was passed. This is a totally new law (see above).
- Creation of differentiated book-keeping for the associative sector,

which has led to obtaining more precise figures on the voluntary sector.

- Creation of an advisory body at the Federal level: the High Council of Volunteers. The advisory body is composed of representatives from different volunteer sectors, from the Dutch, French, and German-speaking regions of Belgium. The Council monitors the policies proposed, formulates suggestions for policymakers and looks out for the best interests of the volunteering sector.
- Reinforced support from political powers towards volunteering and associative life in Belgium. Government and policymakers have now acknowledged the added value of civil society.
- Development of migrant not for profit organisations.
- A significant increase in paid employment within the associative sector (+11.6% from 1998 to 2002, a growth rate which is twice as high as the general employment growth rate).

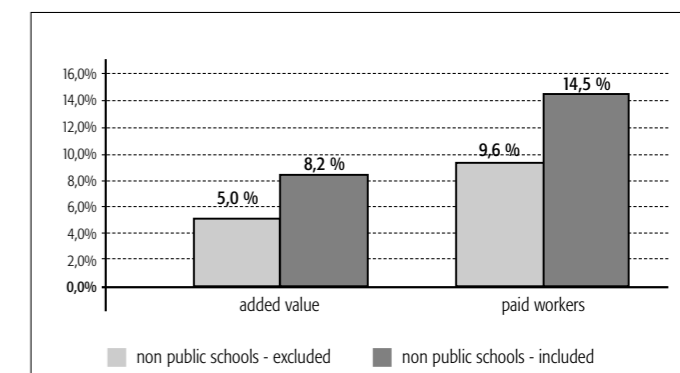
companies are cooperatives. The figures indicated come from various sources and refer to recent years.

4.2 THE ASSOCIATIVE SECTOR

Again, only the associative sector, that is, the entire ISBL (ASBL, foundations, de facto organisations, etc.) engage volunteers. For this reason, only data regarding this sector will be detailed.

The associative sector plays an important role in the economic development of the nation, partly due to its contribution to GNP, that in 2001 was 8.1% (estimated at about 20 billions Euro), and partly because of employees working in the sector: 504,294 in 2001, about 14.5% of the paid workforce of Belgium.

Table 2 Part of associative sector in Belgian economy, 2001 ⁽¹⁾



(1) Excluding NFP organisations not employing paid workers. Source: *Compte satellite et comptes nationaux (ICN)*.

4 RESEARCH DATA

4.1 GENERAL FIGURES ON THE THIRD SECTOR (THE SOCIAL ECONOMY)

The table below offers an overview of Belgium's social economy. It should be noted that the "approved" cooperatives and the "social-purpose" companies partially overlap because most social purpose

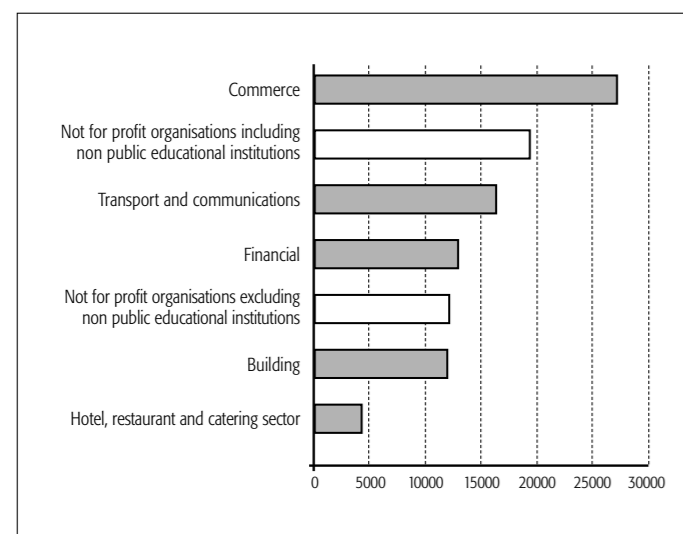
Table 1 Panorama of social economy in Belgium

	Associative sector	Not for profit organisations - Asbl	Foundations	Approved cooperatives	Mutual-help organisations	Social purpose companies
Organisations	50,000	113,513	439	165	5 unions	384
With paid employees	n.a.	15,170	85	Almost all	All	n.a.
Workers	n.a.	n.a.	6,742	6,750	12,700	n.a.
Workers (full time units)	n.a.	389 638	5,101	5,662	11,040	n.a.

Even if the voluntary sector is not an activity sector in itself because it brings together organisations that operate in a wide variety of fields (see below), it is interesting to compare it to some areas of the Belgian economy (see Table 3).

In terms of its contribution to GNP, it is comparable to that of the building industry or financial activity sectors. If one includes the added value generated by non public schools, it exceeds the large sectors of transport and communication and its economic weight is approximately two-thirds that of the trade industry.

Table 3 Added value of the associative sector compared to some other economical branches, Belgium, 2001 ⁽¹⁾



(1) Excluding NFP organisations not employing paid workers.
Source: *Compte satellite et comptes nationaux (ICN)*.

4.3 HISTORICAL FIGURES

Despite interest generated by the voluntary sector, it has not been completely outlined by Belgium's statistic body. In national documentation as well as in other sources of official information, data on not for profit organisations have been encompassed into various large

forms which makes it extremely difficult and almost impossible to reconstruct comprehensive statistical data on this sector.

This difficulty has created a statistical problem: it does not allow politicians to have access to useful information in developing and evaluating economic policies. And for the general public, it obscures the real importance of these organisations in the general framework of the Belgian economy. Fortunately, two recent major advances have addressed these shortcomings.

4.3.1 ASSOCIATIVE EMPLOYMENT DATA

A first significant statistical improvement in Belgium is the possibility to locate recent legal statutes of organisations in the computer databases of large institutions. In this manner, the National Social Security (ONSS) is now able to provide comprehensive data on employment in organisations and, more particularly, in not for profit institutions which constitute the main component of the sector. This innovation has made it possible to historically understand the employment situation in not for profit organisations since 1998.

4.3.2 CREATION OF THE SATELLITE ACCOUNT

This lack of data on the voluntary sector is the reason behind the development of a methodological basis which provides for the collection all over the world of information on the voluntary organisations following a common approach in the 1990s and under the auspices of the Commission of the United Nations Statistics. This task was co-ordinated by the John Hopkins University (USA) and resulted in the publication of a manual, the *Handbook on Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts*. The international distribution of this manual is intended to foster the development of what is called a "satellite account" of non-profit institutions (NPIs) in different countries.

Definition of the Satellite Account

The *Satellite Account* means a set of statistical tables, which may be associated with national accounts, but in which it is possible to adopt an approach specific to the field being studied and add elements not in the national accounts in order to describe the economic situation of the field in question more faithfully.

The Tables on the Satellite Account of not for profit institutions contain information on:

- the number of not for profit organisations;
- their main activities;
- employment and volunteering in NFP organisations;
- production and added value;
- their production costs;
- their market and non-market resources.

In February 2004, the Institute of National Accounts (ICN) published data from the satellite account of not for profit institutions for the first time which cover the years 2000 and 2001.

4.3.3 DEFINITIONS N-ISBL

The gathering of not for profit organisations into a satellite account must not obscure the great diversity that exists in this sector. This diversity is evident especially in terms of activities carried out. Numerous NFP organisations may carry out several types of activity. However, the national accounts in general and the satellite account, in particular, should make a ranking of organisations based on their core activity (by main activity, which means the one that generates the greatest added value).

Traditionally, the classification system used by activities in Belgium is the nomenclature NACE-BEL (based on the nomenclature of activities NACE used today in the European Union). To classify NFP organisations, the UN Manual recommends using a specific nomenclature for the voluntary sector. This international classification (called ICNPO) has been translated and adapted in Belgium. This has generated the nomenclature N-ISBL which includes six branches and 22 sub-branches.

4.4 EMPLOYMENT IN NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

With nearly 390,000 employees in 2002, not for profit organisations alone accounted for 13.5% of employment in Belgium. We have summarised the most significant figures into a single table to better position the sector's contribution to employment (Table 4).

Table 4 Key figures of paid employment in not for profit in 2002 (FTU - units of full time work)

	Bruxelles	Flandres	Wallonia	Belgium
Number of jobs (units of full time work)	55,877.3	225,142.7	108,618.3	389,638.3
Division of jobs by region	14.30%	57.80%	27.90%	100.00%
Growth of jobs from 1998 to 2002:				
in number of FTU (in social domain)	+6,826.9 (+3,109.0)	+21,532.3 (+14,896.9)	+11,984.8 (+3 716.9)	+40,344.0 (+21,722.8)
in percentage	+13.9%	+10.6%	+12.4%	+11.6%
Number of jobs of 1000 inhabitants	57.1	37.7	32.3	37.8
Jobs in not for profit organisations:				
considering a broad definition of not for profit sector (1)	24.6%	40.5%	30.6%	34.2%
considering a restricted definition of not for profit sector (1)	53.4%	59.6%	51.5%	56.2%
Jobs in NFP organisations according to activity sector:				
culture, sports and leisure	7.2%	3.0%	4.1%	3.9%
education	34.7%	39.9%	40.3%	39.3%
health	18.3%	19.8%	19.0%	19.3%
social action	19.3%	30.5%	24.6%	27.2%

(1) Please note that the broad definition of market does not exclude any branch of activity, while the restricted definition is limited to certain sectors, mainly health, social work, education and culture.
Source: *Centre for Social Economy*.

In particular, it draws attention to the extent of not for profit organisations which provide more than half (56.2%) of the sector's employees, as well as the growth rate of employment in organisations (11.6% from 1998 to 2002); that is, more than 40,000 jobs created in four years for the whole of Belgium, mostly in social activities. At the regional level, if one refers to the size of the population, the number of jobs in organisations is, on average, higher in Brussels (57.1 jobs per thousand inhabitants), reflecting its specificity as the Capital. As for the difference between Flanders (37.7 jobs per thousand inhabitants) and the Walloon (32.3 jobs per thousand inhabitants), this stems from the larger role traditionally vested in Walloon by local authorities to the fields of education services, health and welfare.

4.5. THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

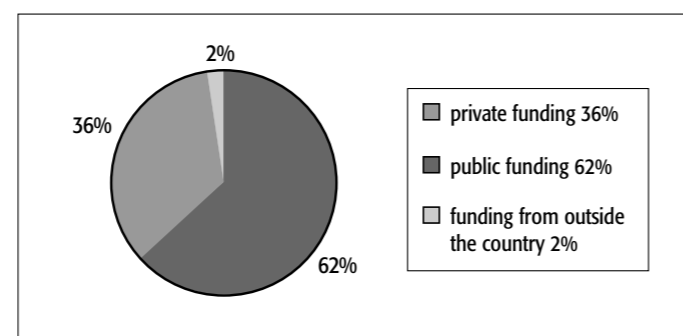
Not for profit organisations have the peculiarity of resorting to various means to finance their activities. This is firstly due to the many individuals and organisations that regard this activity as important (beneficiaries, government, business, other NGOs, donors, and so on) and, secondly, the often mixed character of the NFP organisations' activities. It is not rare that they combine a commercial activity (funded by the sale of some type of merchandise) and a non-commercial activity (funded by public aid, through donations or contributions).

Table 5 makes it possible to visualise the distribution of the key financial resources according to their origin. We can see that these resources are drawn primarily from public sources (61.8%). Enterprises, other organisations and individuals provide more than 36% of these resources. The "rest of the world" (European institutions, businesses and households in other countries) supplies a maximum of 2%.

The "satellite account" can also specify the origin of these resources by sectors (and sub-sector) activity. Once again, this aspect allows us to analyse the voluntary sector in greater detail, as it does not present a uniform profile in matters of funding.

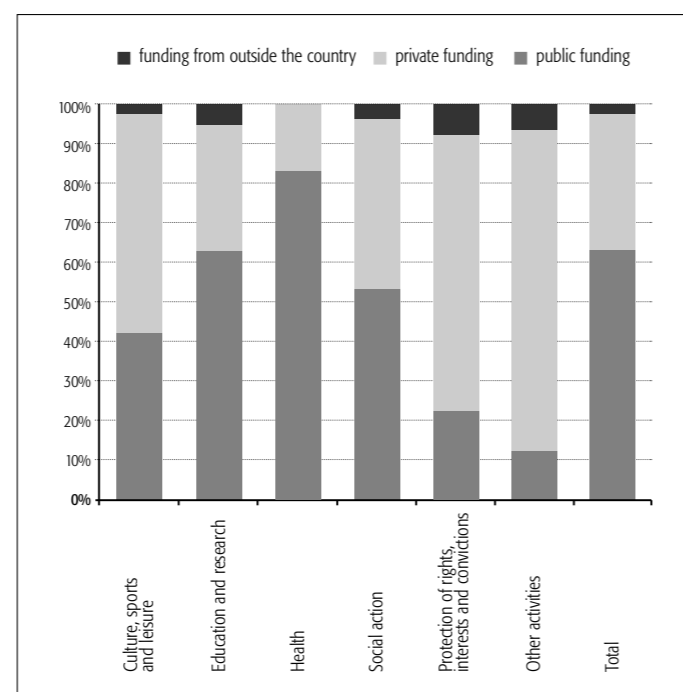
The sectors of health, education and research (excluding schools in the network of private education) and social activities are mainly

Table 5 Origin of the main resources of NFP organisations, Belgium, 2001 ⁽¹⁾



(1) Excluding organisations which do not use paid employees and the non public school system. Source: Satellite Account (ICN)

Table 6 Source of NFP organisations' main resources, by sector N-ISBL, Belgium, 2001 ⁽¹⁾



(1) Excluding organisations which do not use employees and non public schools. Source: Satellite Account (ICN)

dependent on public funding. In sectors that provide less institution-alised services, funding mainly comes from private sources. Cultural, sports and leisure organisations can ask their members for contributions (in the form of cost sharing or fees), while organisations which defend human rights, interests and beliefs (workers' unions, religious organisations, organisations for the defence of human rights, consumer organisations, environmental protection organisations, etc.) are inherently organisations based on membership. They are based on fees and donations from their supporters. Finally, the sector "other activities of organisations" brings together organisations involved in activities that are not typically associative (agriculture, construction, retailing, catering, financial activities, business services, etc.). These activities are mainly funded by the sale of goods or services produced. This explains the importance of private financing in this sector.

5 THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEERS

5.1 THREE APPROACHES IN ANALYSING THE SAME PHENOMENON

Firstly, according to a survey of the Association for Volunteerism, 17% of the Belgian population regularly carries out voluntary activity - that means 1,500,000 people involved - for an average of 7 hours per week, equivalent to 296,000 units of full time job.

Secondly, the satellite account method was less optimistic as it evaluated the number of volunteers as equivalent to 76,259 units of full time jobs. This figure only accounts for volunteer organisations that employ salaried staff, excluding teaching. However, this is the method upon which the majority of the figures of this sector are based.

A third approach utilised to analyse the sector is also worth noting. It was based on a survey carried out in 1999 on how Belgians utilise their time which was then compared to similar statistics in 2003. The field study utilised was less restrictive and more representative of the general population, as this approach was based on the

statements provided by the general public. The results of this study gave an average of the first two approaches, that is an estimated 150,000 units of full time jobs (200,000 units of full time jobs, if we include those grouped under the heading of "militancy", that is, those who participate in gatherings and demonstrations of political, cultural, social or youth organisations).

This last-mentioned study provides an overview of the distribution of volunteers grouped according to five major elements: the region of origin, their gender, age, their benefits and their professional qualifications. In the table below, we can see that men carry out more social commitment activities than women, the Walloons more than the Flemish, job seekers more than full-time workers; these last mentioned being more actively involved in volunteering than part-time workers.

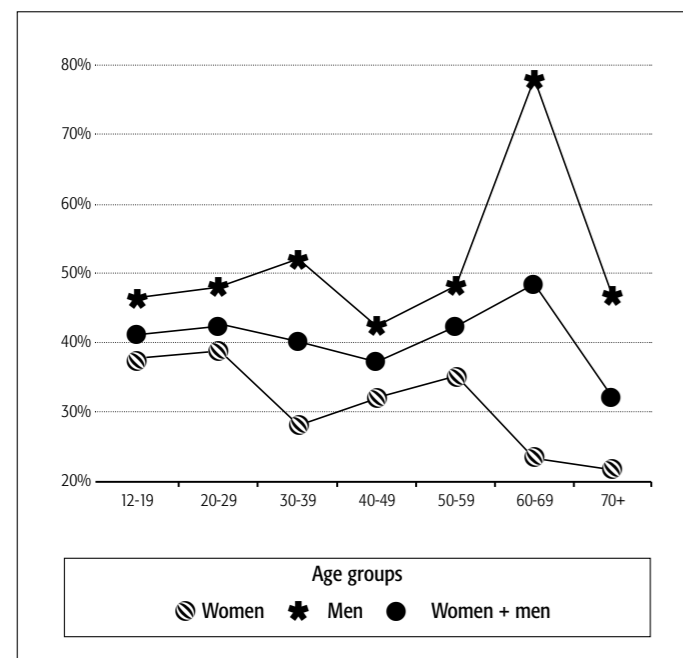
Table 7 Hours of social engagement ⁽¹⁾ average per person

All engagements	Total	Men	Female
Flemish	37	42	31
Walloons	50	69	33
Higher education	41	49	35
Full time workers	36	44	20
Part time workers	18	16	20
Unemployed	55	73	50
Total population	40	49	31

(1) This average may seem low but it is important to remember that it was calculated on the entire population and not on all those involved in some form of volunteer activity.

As for the age factor, the survey results corroborate a well known fact: people over 50 years of age are the most active volunteers, certainly as regards to men. The figure was markedly different for women over the age of 60, as this is due to the fact that women are far more monopolised by other activities such as caring for a family

Table 8 Hours of social engagement per year according to age - average



member than men. These tasks are of course essential, but strictly speaking are beyond the framework of volunteerism.

All these studies give a relatively comprehensive and articulate overview of the situation. However, it is important to keep in mind that the studies mentioned above covered different aspects of volunteering; it is therefore not surprising that the results produced are diverse.

5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEERS BY SECTOR OF ACTIVITY

According to the Association for Volunteerism, the 1,500,000 active volunteers in Belgium can be divided according to the table below. It should be stressed that this distribution does not take into account the amount of time invested in each sector.

Table 9 Division of the number of volunteers according to the sector of activity

Sports	17.2 %
Social action	17.10%
Professional guilds and trade unions	10.70%
Education and training	10.00%
Arts and humanities	9.10%
Protection of rights	8.20%
Others	27.70%
Total	100.00%

Source: Association for Volunteerism.

The following table, in turn, reflects the time invested by volunteers, which significantly alters the distribution.

Table 10 Division of voluntary organisations and engagement according to sector of activity

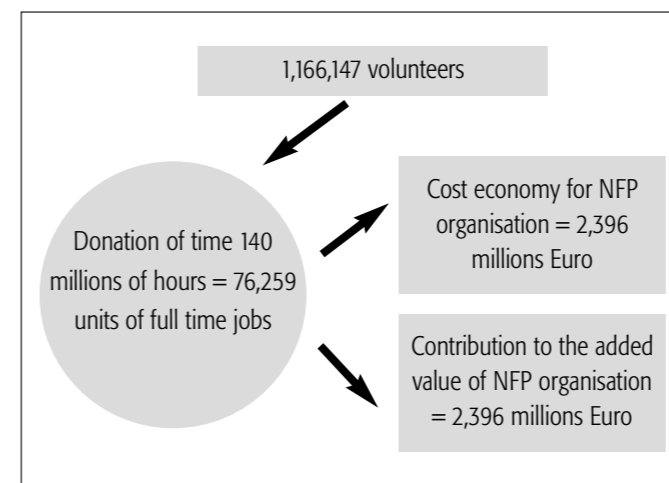
1. Culture, sports and leisure	23.00%	69.70%
2. Education and research	7.00%	0.50%
3. Health	6.10%	1.50%
4. Social action	26.20%	11.60%
6. Other activities	37.70%	16.70%
Total (in %)	100.00%	100.00%
Total (in absolute values)	16,091	76,259
	NFP organisations	units of full time jobs

NB: Volunteerism is assessed on the basis of the organisations covered by the satellite account, i.e. organisations that employ paid employees, excluding non public schools.
Sources: Satellite Account (ICN), Mertens, S. and Lefèbvre, M., (2004).

5.3 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE NATIONAL GDP

The data indicated above on the voluntary sector did not include the added value made by the volunteers. If we total the hours worked by all the volunteers within not for profit organisations, it provides nearly 2.3 billion Euro of additional added value. If we add this added value to the 12 billion Euro already attributable to the activities of the voluntary sector (excluding education), the value added to GNP increases to more than 14 billion, or 5.9% of GNP.

Contribution of volunteers from organisations, Satellite Account, Belgium, 2001 (1)



(1) Excluding non public school and organisations which do not use employees.
Source: Mertens, S. and Lefèbvre, M., (2004).

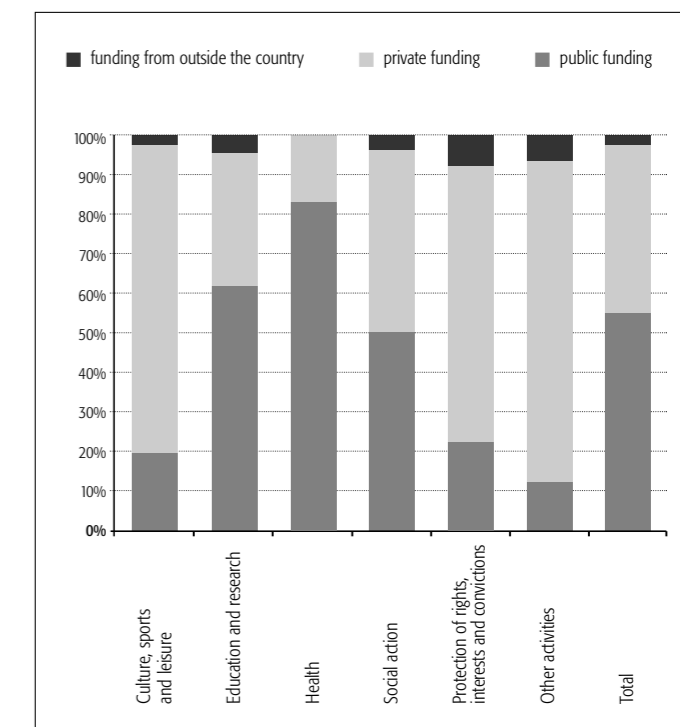
5.4 IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE RESOURCES OF THE ORGANISATIONS

In previous tables we may see that contributions from the private sector to the voluntary sector take the form of economic resources originating from sales, contributions and donations, but volunteering

is not taken into account. This resource from the private sector is very important for organisations. If we give a monetary value to the work of volunteers, as we have done in the previous paragraph, and if we consider the savings capitalised in this manner (in not having to pay for the work carried out) by organisations (2,396 million Euro) under the form of donations by people through the volunteers themselves, then the level of private funding rises globally from 36% to 43%.

The most spectacular change appears in the fields of culture, sports and recreation where contributions from the private sector have increased by 50% (from 54% to 80%). In other sectors of activity, the share of private funding has also increased, but is far less significant.

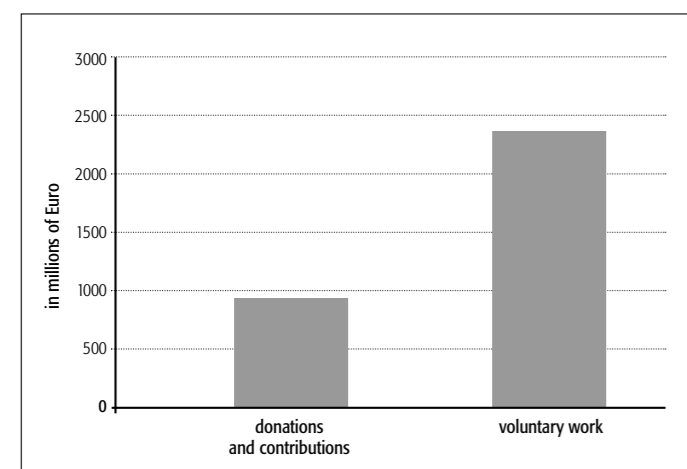
Table 11 Source of primary economic resources of not for profit organisations (with monetary valorisation of volunteering), by sector of activity N-ISBL, Belgium, 2001 (1)



(1) Excluding organisations which do not use employees and the free education school system.
Sources: Satellite Account and National Accounts (ICN), Mertens, S. and Lefèbvre, M., (2004).

When considering this particular resource (typical of the associative sector) that is, volunteering, we are able to evaluate all voluntary contributions made by families to organisations. Their contribution comes principally in the form of donating time and work which equals a monetary value of 2,396 million Euro which is two and a half times the value of donations given in money by families to associations, that is 930 million Euro (Table 12).

Table 12 Contributions by families ⁽¹⁾ to organisations, 2001 ⁽²⁾



(1) The contributions shown in this table are those that the National Account equates to donations, i.e. contributions to organisations regarded as non-commercial.

(2) Excluding organisations which do not use employees and non public schools.

Sources: *Satellite Account and National Accounts (ICN), Mertens, S. and Lefèbvre, M., (2004).*

5.5 RESOURCES GIVEN TO ORGANISATIONS: COMPARISON BETWEEN VOLUNTEERING AND OTHER RESOURCES

We can now complete a description of the methods used to finance the voluntary sector with an analysis of the priorities of governments and families expressed implicitly in the choice of areas they decide to support. In Table 13, we can see the division in terms of sector of activity of resources from the public sector and the resources given by families, including donations, contributions, and also volunteering.

Resources from the public sector are concentrated in the health sector (64.3%) and in the social action (21.1%). Table 13 allows distinguishing among the contributions of households (column 2), volunteering (column 3) and donations and subscriptions (column 4). Their contribution in the form of donated time is concentrated in the fields of culture, sports and recreation (69.6%), while donations and a portion of the contributions are mainly given to organisations working in social services (71.0%).

Table 13 Distribution of resources by sector - N-ISBL, Belgium, 2001 ⁽¹⁾

	Households	Volunteering	Donations and subscriptions	Total
Culture, sports and leisure	4.8%	52.3%	69.6%	7.8%
Education and research	5.5%	1.0%	0.6%	1.9%
Health	64.3%	2.6%	2.0%	4.1%
Social action	21.1%	28.5%	12.1%	71.0%
Protection of rights, interests, convictions	2.1%	2.6%	0.7%	7.4%
Other activities of NFP organisations	2.2%	13.0%	15.0%	7.9%
Total (in %)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Total (in millions of Euro)	11,993,578	3,326,325	2,396,310	930,014

(1) Excluding organisations which do not use employees and not public schools.

(2) The contributions shown in this table are those that the national accounts equate to donations, i.e. contributions to organisations regarded as non-commercial.

Sources: *Satellite Account and national accounts (ICN), Mertens, S. and Lefèbvre, M., (2004).*

Support bodies

1 INTRODUCTION - REPRESENTATION AND COORDINATION BODIES

The volunteer sector, as a part of the larger third sector, is characterised in different ways. As Belgium has a rich tradition of associative life, a large part of the volunteer sector is supported by related 'national federations' and/or 'national secretariats'. For example, tennis clubs operating at a local level may engage volunteers. These clubs are supported by the Tennis Federation, for all matters concerning their specific sport, while the Flemish Sports Federation provides general information on volunteering in the sports sector and takes on part of the work in defining general policies of the sector.

Similar structures can be found in Walloon.

1.1 FIRST APPROACH

Representation, support and co-ordination of volunteering overlap at different levels and sectors in Belgium.

A distinction should be made between an 'association', and the broader sector-linked groups on the one hand, and inter-sectoral (or cross-sector) groups on the other.

1.1.1 ASSOCIATIONS AND SECTOR-RELATED BODIES

Umbrella associations are those support bodies that represent and co-ordinate regional and local organisations that are related in some manner. They operate and collaborate together to accomplish common aims, and there is a connection between the 'top' and the 'bottom', as local and regional organisations are represented in the decision-making structures of the umbrella organisation.

Examples of such associations are the Scouts' Movement; women's organisations, development co-operation organisations, environmental groups, and the *Red Cross*.

These organisations try to focus the general public and policy-makers' attention on issues in their particular field, including volunteers. Of course, they can also be represented in other bodies and structures, in relation to common issues and mutual target groups.

The next group come under the heading of federations. Their members are organisations that have more or less the same aims to accomplish, though regional and local organisations do not have very close ties with the federation. Organisations can choose whether membership to these larger entities brings advantages to them or not, as they can operate without these ties. However, co-operation places them in a stronger position to negotiate, to receive financial support, etc. Groups of amateur artists such as dance groups, theatre groups, some environmental groups, (some) socio-cultural organisations, sport clubs, etc. can be regarded as autonomous and independent, but will often become members of federations to receive the services they render. It should be noted that the representing bodies pay great attention to private associative initiatives in volunteering, and that representatives of local authorities also play a role in supporting, co-ordinating and representing volunteer work in the public sector.

Beside these structures, there are some other bodies that draw together groups from specific sectors or from different sectors as they represent a consultancy body, or they may wish to create a network to fulfil an advocacy role. The importance of these kinds of structures was confirmed during the drafting of legislation on volunteering. Some examples of these bodies are the Flemish Youth Council, the Flemish Centre for Volunteering and *l'Association pour le Volontariat* as well as the *Platform Francophone pour le Volontariat*.

1.1.2 INTER-SECTORAL BODIES

In Belgium, volunteer infrastructures in both the Flemish and the Walloonian region can be defined as inter-sectoral bodies as their aim is to represent volunteering. In Flanders, the aim is accomplished through a mixed and balanced composition of the Board of Directors and the General Assembly. The inter-sectoral character of the organisation gives these bodies the possibility to represent 'volunteering' as a particular sector.

In Walloonian, the *Platform Francophone pour le Volontariat* carries out a similar role for the French-speaking part of Belgium.

Both aim to play a role in supporting volunteering in Belgium and within their own community, but also fulfil an advocacy role at a national level.

In Flanders, the regional and Brussels volunteer support centres act as bodies to which organisations can turn to for support, educational programmes, information, and so on. As regional centres are attached to regional authorities, they do not play a major role in lobbying or policymaking at levels other than their own.

1.2 SECOND APPROACH

Besides the above-mentioned 'horizontally-structured' bodies, there are also vertical structures which are related to various levels of policymaking in Belgium.

1.2.1 AT A FEDERAL LEVEL

The High Council of Volunteers

At the end of 2001, the Ministry for Social Affairs set up the High Council of Volunteers. This permanent advisory body was formed to advise and inform the Federal Government on issues related to volunteering and to ensure attention to specific problems concerning volunteers and volunteering in different areas such as:

social security, tax law, the relation between volunteering and the labour market, etc.

1.2.2 AT A COMMUNITY LEVEL

At a community level, the government has not created public structures which support volunteering. Financial support is given towards sectoral and inter-sectoral support bodies.

2 VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATIONS

There are different bodies that try to facilitate dialogue between the associative world and the political world.

2.1 ASSOCIATION POUR LE VOLONTARIAT

Founded in 1974, the *Association pour le Volontariat* is an umbrella association that co-ordinates and promotes volunteering. It is recognised as such by the French Community as a general association for ongoing education. The Association has approximately 1,000 member organisations from Brussels and Walloonian.

2.2 VLAAMS STEUNPUNT VRIJWILLIGERSWERK VZW (BEFORE: PLATFORM VOOR VOLUNTARIAAT)

Established as a private initiative; this platform was set up in 1977. The organisation operates at a Flemish level (see also: Partner Centre Fact Sheet), and works closely with regional centres and the Centre of Brussels, *Het Punt vzw*.

The *Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw* receives an annual financial backing from the Flemish Ministry of Welfare (it since 2007

this subvention increased through an extra contribution of the Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports).

2.3 THE YAQUA ASSOCIATION

YAQUA is a platform for the French-speaking organisations. This platform renders different services for citizens as well as for NFP organisations, such as:

- A databank of organisations and initiatives arranged by topic or geographical territory.
- A voluntary workers' guide in which people can find practical guidelines on different types of engagement (neighbourhood action, responsible consumerism, etc).
- An on-line newsletter.

2.4 DE VERENIGDE VERENIGINGEN (THE ASSOCIATION OF ASSOCIATIONS)

Similar to *YAQUA*, the organisation *de Verenigde Verenigingen* was established to gain greater attention from policymakers at a Flemish as well as at a federal level for civil society and associations. The organisation has a lot of member associations and federations and operates as a voice for active citizenship, commitment to volunteering and for the benefit of NFP organisations (indirectly including volunteers).

The *de Verenigde Verenigingen* represents the so-called *Maatschappelijk Middenveld* (see text above). Beside the role of advocacy, they launch initiatives to stimulate active citizenship, launch different projects and act as a forum for the exchange of know-how and information.

The organisation has established a Charter between itself and the Flemish Government.

With negotiations underway for an Associative Pact, a similar movement is going on in Walloonian as well.

3 PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEERING

In 2001, International Year of the Volunteers (IYV), many policy-makers announced the added value of volunteering. In Flanders, several ministries set up special and sector-oriented programmes to support volunteering. The Ministry for Welfare distributed a new subvention for regional volunteer centres and the Brussels Volunteer Centre.

A programme was established to attract, on the one hand, the young, and on the other, persons near retirement age, to volunteering. Although the campaign was only relatively successful, extra attention towards volunteering was gained.

The Ministry for the Environment has allocated extra funds for a project on volunteering in environmental organisations. Discussions on to what extent the NFP organisations need help, support and educational programmes were conducted.

At a federal level the IYV 2001 led to the establishment of the High Council of Volunteers, an advisory body, composed of representatives from the three regions in Belgium (French, Dutch and German-speaking areas). The High Council can call on four experts in volunteering. The High Council itself chooses these experts. Although the Council does not have sufficient means to work as effectively as needed, it is a big step forward taken towards creating a formal and officially-recognised body that looks into issues from the perspective of volunteering.

The IYV 2001 didn't lead to the installation – as happened in other countries – of a National Committee. However, for the closing sessions of the IYV a delegation attended the Conference in Geneva.

After 2001, the promotion of volunteering has not been an ongoing issue for policymakers, although some initiatives have been set up such as the one by the Ministry for Culture of the Flemish Community that has allotted an annual amount for outstanding volunteer initiatives in the sector of youth, culture, sports, while the Ministry for Welfare of the Flemish Community has launched several campaigns to attract persons aged over 55 years to volunteering.

The Flemish Ministry for Welfare ensures financial support for the Flemish Centre for Volunteering, the regional centres, as well as the Brussels Centre and provides funding for 'autonomous organisa-

tions within the sectors of health and welfare', from the time they are recognised as volunteer organisations.

In Walloon, the situation is different as a real system that provides support to volunteering and volunteer infrastructures has not been established to any great extent as yet. Cultural and political differences between the northern and southern part of the country provide for one part of the explanation.

4 OUTLOOK ON THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is doing quite well in Belgium. Although precise statistical data on volunteering (with a clear definition of volunteering, on volunteers, etc.) are hard to find, research with a quantitative and/or qualitative dimension does exist.

First of all, volunteering is a phenomenon that is not on the decline. It is very clear that volunteering remains popular, even for youngsters who have more (and often paid) opportunities to spend their time in a positive manner. A research investigating the effects of student vacation work on volunteering, indicated that though youngsters are involved in paid work it does not necessarily mean that their free commitment is put aside. People who are active in volunteering remain active. The young do not qualify their volunteering as 'volunteering' (but rather see it as something normal, without categorising it); for the volunteer sector the challenge lies in keeping the word and concept 'volunteering' dynamic and alive.

Moreover, statistics show that the activity rate of elderly people in volunteering is growing. The possibility of guaranteeing more time to do voluntary work by active or working citizens who are no longer young, early-retirement plans, the desire of citizens of having a greater choice in deciding how to spend their free time - all this leads to greater, longer and more active commitment to volunteering. Research shows that people in the 55-70 age bracket are very active in volunteering, and that percentage is steadily increasing.

As several initiatives and projects have paid more attention

recently to employee involvement, we can expect potential growth for the volunteer sector.

Besides sociological and demographical considerations, we may pin-point certain progress among policymakers at different levels of decision-making:

- Local governments, public authorities and administrative bodies have become more aware of the importance of volunteering that takes place in their territory. Open and concerted discussions with local organisations have led to a win-win situation in which all studies on trends indicate a greater awareness of the social benefits of volunteering for all parties involved, and local governments have also started to discover the benefits of involving volunteers in projects. Volunteers who are active at a local level, have the role of establishing useful and valid contacts with local administrative bodies and the general public. In this way these bodies are able to develop more services as well as more interesting awareness-raising events.
- Regional governments: these governments have all set up regional support centres for volunteering, thus guaranteeing that support to voluntary organisations is ongoing.
- Flemish government: although the Flemish government has already set up several initiatives and projects and supports organisations, there is more awareness of the need and added values of volunteering. The development of the Law on Volunteering (at a federal level) also stimulates political awareness.
- Walloonian government: as the structure and the cultural background is not totally comparable with the Flemish situation, the means of providing support seems to be rather indirect than direct to volunteering or volunteer infrastructures.
- Federal government: with the establishment of the High Council of Volunteers and the federal Law on Volunteering, we can expect more attention at this level too.

Another development is that the profit sector has become interested in collaborating with the volunteer sector. Some pilot projects have been set up and more initiatives are expected in the future.

"The realization of the Law on Volunteering is good for the volunteer sector. It ensures a certain recognition of the valuable work done by volunteers."

Voluntary organisations have also become aware of the following aspects:

- A greater need to develop more formal relations with volunteers which is based to a greater extent on a reciprocal cost-benefit analysis. The relationship between the volunteer and the organisation has to be one of reciprocal advantage.
- It is necessary to move away from the idea that voluntary work is permanent. Volunteers are no longer prepared for a lifelong commitment. This finding requires a shift in the thinking and organisation of volunteering within organisations, an evolution towards short-time, project-based commitments.
- Because of greater 'individualism' in society, volunteers look upon their commitment differently. This is not necessarily a negative trend as it offers opportunities to organisations.
- Traditional organisations are built upon a growth model. The volunteer commences by carrying out simple tasks and then gradually may become a member of the board. This volunteer-career philosophy is opposed to what many volunteers want. They would like to shape their own advancement without being pushed along a certain path.
- Risk of out-dated organisations. The average age of board members is increasing. This can lead to two different things: firstly, an organisation with an "old image" has difficulties in attracting the young, thus the organisation slowly but surely declines in terms of participation. Secondly, the organisation remains static in that there is no input of new ideas, the participants remain the same with the same president for a long period of time.
- Commitment to volunteering depends on the visibility of problems, on the extent of the attention that the mass media give to

certain "hot" issues. For example, the attention given to disasters caused by the tsunami have a positive effect on volunteering. When attention fades, it becomes more difficult to attract volunteers.

- In some sectors the word 'volunteer' is not used. In the youth sector, it is common that people are active without calling themselves 'volunteers'. They often link volunteering to 'traditional caring tasks'. The volunteer sector has to be aware of the old-fashioned image it has.
- People have little free time. Studies indicate that volunteers are not as available as in the past. Volunteers are quick to point out that their commitment is limited in time and in availability to do something.

Some subject matters and issues became so complicated that involvement of volunteers is more difficult. The ability to discuss and act at a political level requires a certain expertise on the matter in question. For this reason, there is increasing difficulty in involving new, and non-expert volunteers in certain organisations

"We have to make it 'easy' for volunteers so they are not afraid of committing themselves."

Generally speaking, there is no reason whatsoever to view volunteering or volunteering prospects in Belgium pessimistically. The willingness to transform this attention into greater financial resources for the sector itself seems to be growing. It will be important for the volunteering sector itself to keep developing as well, and to search for new ways to deal with certain challenges (different types of involvement, more 'competition' between organisations, etc.) and to keep up to date with what volunteers and society want and expect from it. Another challenge is the need to invest in networking to ensure that know-how is not wasted and that mutual support systems are set up.

Focus on support bodies

1 SUPPORT BODIES: AN INTRODUCTION (QUESTIONNAIRES)

There are different types of support bodies. To give a realistic overview of the Belgian situation for this research project, we have chosen to distribute the questionnaires to volunteer support bodies with structures that may be either intersectoral, sectoral or individual, and organised at various levels (territorial or sectoral).

Five questionnaires were compiled by intersectoral-oriented support bodies, of which three are structured as private - that is not for profit - organisations. The following organisations come with this description:

- *l'Association pour le Volontariat* (it covers French-speaking Brussels and Wallonia).
- *Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw* (it covers Dutch-speaking Brussels and Flanders).
- *Het Punt vzw* (it covers Dutch-speaking organisations based in Brussels).
- *Provinciaal Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk West-Vlaanderen* (the regional centre, West Flanders).
- *Lokaal Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk Leper* (a local centre, the city of Leper, West Flanders).

We have chosen these five support organisations as their sole purpose is to support volunteering, voluntary organisations and volunteers, without any other specification on the sector in which they operate. Their focus is only on volunteering, and in this way they can be seen as volunteer infrastructures. One of the above-mentioned organisations, *Het Punt vzw*, can be seen as a general and intersectoral support centre, but with activities limited to the Brussels territory (Dutch-speaking organisations).

Sectoral support bodies compiled four other questionnaires, namely:

- *Heemkunde Vlaanderen* (an umbrella association for all heritage

organisations in Flanders and Dutch-speaking organisations based in Brussels).

- *Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk* (an umbrella association for general welfare and Dutch-speaking organisations based in Brussels).
- *Steunpunt Jeugd* (an umbrella association that supports youth organisations in Flanders and Dutch-speaking organisations based in Brussels).
- *SoCiuS* (an umbrella association that supports socio-cultural work with adults in Flanders and Dutch-speaking organisations based in Brussels).

We have chosen these support bodies as they give an interesting (though incomplete) and diverse overview of possible support centres. In the Flemish community alone, it is not difficult to find another 10 to 15 relevant support bodies. We have chosen these as they represent a big part of volunteer activity. The exclusion of some sectors is compensated by interviews with leading people from support centres that operate in these sectors.

Sports is an important sector where many volunteers are involved; the environment and development cooperation sectors are also important as they have voluntary organisations that attract different types of volunteers.

Typical of the 'sectoral' (and also 'umbrella associations') support bodies is that volunteering is not their main, or better, not their only focus. They work specifically on certain issues (youth, environmental issues, adult education, etc.) but as the support is given to organisations and associations that have volunteers, these centres must necessarily also address issues regarding volunteering at a political level, by providing concrete and practical support, developing work tools, exchanging good practices, etc.

"Organising support bodies into different sectors may be logical, but it has its disadvantages. An organisation that does not belong to the same sector risks not being supported, even when the tools,

information, and good practices present in another sector can be of interest for the organisation in that it is cross sectoral."

As can be seen, Walloonian support bodies have not yet been mentioned. We interviewed the Walloonian-based *l'Association pour le Volontariat*, which can be considered the French-speaking counterpart of the *Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw*. As it was not easy to gain access to Walloonian organisations, we will provide an overview of the main support bodies in the southern part of Belgium further on. The same applies for the German-speaking organisations. The structure of the Belgian state is complex, as volunteering is a matter that belongs to the three different communities of the country, all with specific characteristics, different priorities, and different support bodies.

Nevertheless, the figures presented in this study refer to Belgium as a whole; in that they are representative of the entire nation.

2 HOW WORK IS ORGANISED

"Support bodies do make sense, but are they necessary? There are organisations that survive quite well without any form of support."

The majority of intersectoral volunteering support bodies are not for profit associations, except for regional centres. West Flanders is one of the five Flemish regions in which a volunteer support body is active. In Wallonia, certain regions provide volunteer support, but they are not (totally) instituted by the regional government itself. The regional or local authorities often set up regional and local support centres, though there are also examples of local support centres set up by the private – not for profit sector only.

Without exception, sectoral support bodies are non-governmental organisations. The difference between sectoral and intersectoral support bodies lies in the fact that their main objective is different: sectoral bodies give priority to work in the territory, identifying a target group for which they developed a mainly content based support structure. As these sectoral support bodies are faced with issues regarding volunteering, they have extended their services to

the field of volunteering support related to their own sector.

"Although our support body has only been created recently to support volunteers, we immediately started to develop volunteer guidelines, with practical checklists, experiences and good practices from of our environmental sector. The reaction and impressions given to us from the volunteers indicate that there is a need for this kind of support."

Generally speaking, in Belgium, support bodies have mostly been established out of the need or cooperation of not for profit organisation. This does not mean that the government does not understand the need to support these centres also with funding. Volunteering is seen as an activity that has to be developed without too much interference from public authorities. Many organisations believe that financial support from the government is acceptable as long as they can maintain their independence.

The fact that most intersectoral supporting bodies have a NGO status, gives them a certain autonomy in carrying out their activities, although it cannot be denied that the government has a say, in that it expects certain aims to be fulfilled, targets to be met and requires that NGOs clearly define their means (human resources as well as financial), targets, timing schedules when requesting financial support.

The range of activities of intersectoral supporting bodies is more or less the same. The main aim is to support volunteering, volunteers and volunteer organisations. According to the range and/or the territory and even the individual evolution of the organisation, a distinction can be made in the manner in which they provide support.

On the one hand, most supporting bodies are committed to supporting and assisting organisations that are active in the same or similar work field (sectoral), or to any organisation whatsoever that engages volunteers (intersectoral).

Although priorities may be different, the following support is given:

- Information on volunteering issues (law, regulations, sometimes linked to the specific sectoral situation, etc.).
- To inform, develop, or offer educational programmes on volunteer management.

- Training programmes (all support bodies provide training).
- Organisation of conferences.
- Development and publication of work instruments (laws, regulations), good practices, publications.
- Promotion of volunteering (campaigns through the mass media, events, meetings and conferences are mostly mentioned).
- Communication to organisations (website, newsletters, press releases, etc.).

“These traditional forms of support are needed, but support bodies also need to look closely at trends in society in order to develop new ways and forms of support, suited to changes underway.”

A few support bodies direct their attention not only towards the volunteer organisations, but also to volunteers themselves (e.g. *Het Punt Brussels* provides a help desk, volunteers can enter and ask for assistance in finding a suitable volunteer organisation, etc.). All the most established support bodies have a database, though not every database is a volunteer database (only the intersectoral based support bodies seem to provide such data).

Other support bodies assist volunteers as well. Although they might offer a database with volunteers vacancies, they use this instrument rather as a service towards organisations than towards the volunteer as an individual.

The figures show that the minimum number of organisations targeted by the support body varies from 27 to approximately 2,000 organisations. Of course, there are some overlaps as organisations can turn to the most pertinent support body for the specific assistance needed at a given moment.

More than half of support bodies state that the number of rendered services has increased in the past three years. When questioned on the types of services requested by organisations but not provided, most support bodies say they lack certain know-how, or that there is no time/no means to provide personal or individual assistance (or coaching) to organisations, that they are unable to offer educational programmes or training ‘on demand’ or directed to specific target groups, or have no time to develop or cooperate in projects.

Mostly, services are granted free of charge, although some (sometimes specific services or products) are provided to organisations for a certain price. Often the support bodies have a price policy in which they make a distinction between members and non-members, or organisations related to the sector or outside the sector.

Organisation can use services without formal contracts. Exceptions are when the organisation develops a more ongoing and constant link with the support body or when the services or products are very particular. Some support bodies (though not the majority) request an annual membership fee. The membership may be a criterion to be able to use services or not, though members mostly receive certain advantages, such as services that are mainly provided to all interested organisations. Formal contracts are drawn up for each collaboration with an external organisation and/or enterprise, service office, public authority, etc.

Registration of rendered services is common. Every support body applies its own registration system. An overview of activities has to be presented to the government in order to account for the activities carried out and to motivate a new request for financial support.

3 STRUCTURE OF SUPPORT BODIES

Defined by law?

The majority of support bodies at a sectoral level are recognised by the government, and have a government decree (similar to a law, but at a community level) that ratifies their establishment and role, in which the general objective and specific scopes are given.

For support bodies at intersectoral level, the situation is different. There is no law or decree that defines intersectoral support bodies. This is due to the cross-sectoral character of the support body, the fact that previously the support body may have had another kind of formal relation with the government (e.g. the regional centres were previously part of the regional authorities) or are set up by the local government itself. The absence of formal regulations does not mean that

the organisations cannot be supported financially. Most subventions are *ad nominatum*: it is the organisation that receives financial support as an organisation, not as recognised supporting centre.

Human resources

All support bodies have sufficient resources to hire paid staff, as most of them receive financial support from the government or are self-supporting (regional and local centres). The total number of paid staff varies according to sector, the scope of the support body, and more importantly, whether the support body comes with a law (or a decree). The support bodies without any defined legal status, have to struggle for survival.

Financial resources

Support bodies all receive financial support which varies from 30% to nearly 100 % of the financial resources. The subvention is paid mostly by their own (Flemish or Walloonian) community, as the support bodies are in most cases linked to the Community in which they operate. The sectoral support bodies have a higher subvention rate than the intersectoral ones.

4 GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Standard procedures to obtain government support are extremely diversified and are connected to the various political levels.

At federal level

The federal Belgian state is not an active supporter of volunteering. The establishment of the High Council for Volunteers was a concrete action taken by the federal government as a follow up to IVV 2001. The federal law on volunteering triggered some extra attention to volunteering, but contacts between the volunteer sector and policymakers is not easy with all ministries.

At Community level

At the Flemish community level, there is already a longer tradi-

tion of supporting volunteering and the volunteer sector. The Ministry for Welfare and the Ministry for Culture are aware of the importance of volunteers, their organisations as well of the importance of infrastructures, such as support bodies.

The volunteer sector is financially backed in a direct way, for example through funding the *VSVw* and the additional support of the regional centres and *Het Punt*, Brussels. As stated before, there is a subvention system for autonomous volunteer organisations. Approximately 150 organisations that operate in the health and welfare sector receive a subvention annually (although the amount of money is not high enough to be earmarked as structural subvention).

But the Flemish community also provides indirect support for volunteer organisations by decrees and general financial backing of sectoral support bodies, umbrella associations and organisations that engage volunteers.

Another means of providing financial support is through projects launched by the Flemish Community and which are implemented by support bodies. The *VSVw* has also had several opportunities to carry out projects for the Flemish Community. These projects have the advantage that specific issues can be dealt with in detail, but the enormous disadvantage is that every project, essentially ends. Without funding, it is often impossible to continue, so the uncertainty remains.

The Flemish Community is sensitive to the needs and demands of the volunteer sector. In general, contacts between supporting bodies and the government is satisfactory, which however does not always mean they share the same opinion.

A challenge for the Flemish Community is to develop a sustainable, global vision on volunteering and volunteer policy.

At a regional level

It is difficult to say whether regional centres have developed a clear volunteer policy nor strategy. Every region includes a regional volunteer support centre whose staff are paid by the region itself. As these centres support organisations through different initiatives they fulfil a very useful task. However a regional policy is absent.

At a local level

Every city or local community has the freedom whether to develop a volunteer policy or a support system. Although not every local government is convinced of the necessity to support volunteers or volunteer organisations, awareness is increasing. The local authorities are themselves supported by their own support organisations (the Association of Flemish Cities and Communities). This organisation itself deals with the issue of volunteering. Some communities have developed a concrete volunteer policy by involving the volunteer organisations, appointing a politician who is responsible for monitoring volunteer issues, stipulating insurance policies and introducing the possibility for organisations to borrow or use material and lodgings free of charge (or at a reduced rate), subsidising organisations, etc.

“Support should mainly be provided by local authorities. If they supported these local organisations, even with a small amount of money, life for volunteer organisations would be much easier”.

Although volunteering is certainly not on the political agenda in each community, the awareness is increasing.

Evaluation by organisations regarding governmental support

Organisations have sensed a certain change in attitude by governments. It seems that the government is more receptive towards the demands and needs of the volunteer sector. Generally speaking, the government has done a good job of providing information on volunteering, but organisations still expect more support, especially with respect to funding.

According to our research, organisations are quite satisfied with the Flemish and local government. The Federal government has a significantly lower score.

“Before deciding on new rules, the government should verify what the impact could be on volunteer organisations. This would avoid overregulation.”

Most organisations are convinced that governments can still make a greater effort to support volunteering. In the first place, organisations need money to evolve and they also expect the government to assist them in promoting volunteering.

Organisation of support

(information based on interviews)

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

We interviewed eleven organisations, of which six can be considered umbrella associations, and five as autonomous volunteer organisations. Information was compiled also by setting up an online questionnaire for volunteer organisations regarding support to volunteering in the Flanders. 207 organisations responded to the call to cooperate. The information gathered from this Flemish research provides additional information.

As mentioned earlier, the following organisations may engage volunteers:

- Umbrella associations (for the head office as well as for regional and local branches).
- Organisations under the form of not for profit organisations including:
 - international not for profit organisations;
 - local, regional authorities;
 - public institutions;
 - local governments.
- Institutions of public interest.
- De facto organisations (without juridical personality).

1.1 FACTS ON VOLUNTEER ORGANISATIONS

About ten percent of all volunteer organisations were established before 1949, but there are many recent organisations (established from 1990 onwards). As mentioned in the historical background, the 1970s was a period in which associative life flourished. Although most organisations have juridical personality (private or public legal personality), it is obvious that the number of de facto organisations is quite large.

Field of activity

Nearly every sector of civil society involves volunteers. Traditionally, the welfare sector has a high rate of volunteers, as well as the socio-cultural, youth and sports sectors. Sectors such as the environment, cooperation development, human rights, politics, etc., attract volunteers as well, but fewer than the first mentioned.

Most organisations are not directed towards a specific target group (the elderly, immigrants, women, the disabled, etc.), but perform activities for the general public. However, many organisations have their own particular character (e.g. on the basis of an ideology), what might have an impact on their capacity to attract volunteers. However, owing to an increasingly individu-

alistic and more critical society, many organisations consider that traditional boundaries such as 'culture, political and/or ideological preferences' are no longer selective criteria for volunteers searching for an appropriate organisation in which to work. In its place, they look for reputable organisations that offer quality, support and a volunteer-friendly environment.

Paid and unpaid staff

Approximately 30 to 40 percent of organisations work without paid staff. These organisations can be considered 'grassroots organisations': as they are established, run, developed, and led by the volunteers themselves. They may receive some form of financial support from (local) governments, but insufficient to pay staff.

On the other side of the spectrum, we find organisations in which paid staff is far more numerous than unpaid staff. Volunteers are only a small part of the total number of persons in an organisation. This situation is mostly found in health and welfare-oriented institutions (hospitals, institutions for the disabled, etc.) and also local and regional administrations.

In between, we find organisations that combine paid and unpaid staff, as in most organisations and associations that are active in civil society. Paid staff are often managed by volunteers. Their main task is to support volunteer activity. Often paid staff will execute what has been decided on by volunteers, as volunteers have an important place and say in the organisation; they are active on the Board of Directors and in the General Assembly (as formal decision-making bodies), or in advice and/or planning groups.

Average number of volunteers

As there is a great difference among organisations regarding scope, territorial coverage, etc., it is difficult to indicate the actual 'average' number of volunteers within an organisation. On the one hand, there are huge organisations such as the Red Cross, or campaigns concerning development cooperation and other kind of campaigns that attract many thousands of volunteers. In one case, the organisation can count on a permanent large source of volunteers (such as the Red Cross, *Oxfam Wereldwinkels*, some socio-cultural

organisations and youth movements), in another case, organisations call up volunteers for certain temporary large events which volunteers may choose to participate in only once or twice a year.

Very large volunteer organisations are not the majority. Most organisations have an average of 25 volunteers or less.

1.2 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

In terms of gender, the number of male and female volunteers are very similar. Traditionally, females tend to perform 'caring' activities, while male volunteers are more commonly found in the sports sector, on boards, etc.

All age categories perform volunteer activities. Young people are active and remain active, although certain studies have indicated a slight decrease. What is remarkable, is that the age bracket of 55 years and over are more present in volunteering than before. Studies indicate that older persons remain active longer.

Quite a few volunteers are active in more than one organisation, but until now, accurate figures have not been forthcoming. Each volunteer employs an average of 3 hours a week on volunteering (but this figure is based on involvement in only one organisation, therefore the actual weekly activity could be higher). A very small minority of volunteers dedicate more than 20 hours a week to volunteering.

There is no reason to state that volunteer activity is decreasing. On the contrary, many organisations indicate (although quite a few face difficulties concerning recruitment) that they engage more volunteers than before, that they perform more tasks and activities and as a consequence, more working hours are necessary.

1.3 NETWORKING

Umbrella associations

Umbrella associations already form a network in themselves. They set up programmes, initiatives and guidelines (in cooperation

with and) for the organisations that belong to the umbrella association. The umbrella association is often connected to a European or international network, and mostly participates in sectoral federations and/or unions.

Organisations

Organisations with juridical personality of public nature have their own network. Their support body is specialised in public affairs and provides suitable support.

Public organisations that utilise volunteers (or at least their supporting body) can of course participate in networks or become members of other sectoral or intersectoral support bodies.

"I have to admit it. We are not that active in networking. We are much too busy on our own island."

There are various possibilities for private organisations with legal personality:

- The organisation is not a member of any association whatsoever: it works on its own, and looks for information and support wherever and whenever if need be.
- The organisation is a part of an umbrella association and receives information and support from this association.
- The organisation belongs to a network of similar organisations and receives support through the network.
- The organisation is a part of a certain sector and relies on sectoral information to be supported.
- The organisation has no ties with a sector, or has ties, but becomes member of an intersectoral volunteer centre.
- The organisations utilises a combination of different options.

Organisations without legal personality mostly opt for the same support possibilities as the organisations with legal personality.

"Networking is good and useful. But for our organisation it is still in evolution; it is hard to find time to network. While networking, the work within the organisation is put aside."

2 SUPPORT STRUCTURE

2.1 SUPPORT NEEDS

Volunteer organisations have numerous needs. They need assistance in terms of 'internal' volunteer policy: recruitment, selection, evaluation, conflict mediation, training, etc. More and more organisations set up internal communication and information systems, thus favouring also the participation of their volunteers. Other organisations have a background of being volunteer-oriented which leads to specific challenges and problems concerning internal relations between volunteers, paid staff, and specialised staff.

Moreover, organisations have to set up a system that monitors and records the activities of the volunteers. The large majority of organisations (80%) has some form of monitoring system. The organisations that are branches of an umbrella association have to transfer a part of the information to the association (e.g. to fulfil administrative needs concerning volunteer insurance).

Alongside matters of volunteer policy in terms of volunteer management, organisations have to follow regulations applied on them by (Federal) Law, (Community) Decree, and often by local authorities. Regulations may require organisations to provide at least one training programme a year, for example, and the Law on Volunteering requires every organisation to inform volunteers on certain issues, while the Law on Associations obliges them to ensure transparent and controlled bookkeeping, etc.

2.2 HOW ARE VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTED

The way organisations support their own volunteers depends on the structure of the organisation itself. There are:

- Simple volunteer organisations: volunteers themselves organise activities, there is no paid staff to assist them. The promoters of the initiative are responsible for all the activities. The activities can be carried out by not for profit organisations as well as by de facto organisations.
- Professionalised initiatives: the initiative may have originally been a volunteer initiative but it became so successful that they

received recognition and/or financial support, including a shift to engage paid staff. Volunteers are thus set aside.

- Simple professional initiatives: the organisation is set up and run by paid staff, but it is open to volunteers who wish to conduct other tasks and support activities.
- Mixed initiatives: paid personnel cooperate with volunteers. The volunteers often draw up the guidelines.

The features described above and the internal relationship between volunteers as unpaid staff and paid staff will be decisive in the way volunteers are supported in the organisation.

2.3 WHERE DO ORGANISATIONS FIND SUPPORT

Alongside sectoral and intersectoral support bodies (as described above), also umbrella associations provide significant support to volunteers involving organisations.

Umbrella associations possess a lot of know-how. They support their regional and local branches out of their own initiative or on request. The support is almost permanent. The majority of umbrella associations have at least one paid educational staff member. His or her task is to provide information and practical support to the organisations that are part of their structure. Some of the bigger associations are even able to provide a regional and local support structure to ensure close contact and cooperation with regional and local branches.

“Larger associations are nearly all self reliant, they organise insurance, fulfil administrative obligations, etc. They are able to take a lot of the workload off their branches.”

The larger umbrella associations can rely on their own experience and are not in great need of extra or external support. Smaller-sized umbrella associations with a smaller number of staff, need to rely on sectoral and intersectoral support bodies for their information. Umbrella associations mostly ensure the following support strategies:

- They define their own experience-based know-how to transform it into tools and good practices.
- They develop an active support policy: they look out for trends

within their own association, collect remarks and problems from their members to ensure the development of an effective and updated support system.

- They also provide a huge quantity of ‘passive’ information. The member organisations can use this information as they wish (available via the website, manuals, etc.).
- They ensure that governments establish a volunteer-friendly atmosphere, therefore, they often fulfil the active role of advocacy.
- They cooperate with other (sectoral and intersectoral) umbrella associations both nationally and abroad.

In Belgium, volunteer organisations find support for the day-to-day running of the organisation from different places.

Although many organisations know well how to orientate themselves in the vast scenario of support bodies, for several organisations, cooperation with others is not evident. This consideration is very important for the support bodies in that it means that a greater effort to reach out to smaller structures and initiatives is needed.

2.4 THE TOP FIVE SUPPORT REQUESTS

Although certain organisations (and especially newly-formed organisations) have specific requests, we can say that organisations look for support regarding:

- Information concerning the Law on Volunteering and legislation.
- Training and education opportunities.
- Recruitment of volunteers (e.g. through the database).
- Information about volunteer insurance.
- Information and tools on recruiting volunteers, how to support them, how to stimulate motivation.

Support organisations and support bodies meet most of these demands. As regards training programmes for volunteers, there is still a shortage of specific volunteer programmes. The demands for individual, organisation-oriented coaching are growing, but have not been met yet. A few training centres, apart from offering general educational programmes, also offer courses relative to volunteering.

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS WHO COLLABORATED TO THE RESEARCH

SUPPORT BODIES - QUESTIONNAIRES

Association pour le Volontariat, Bruxelles

Heemkunde Vlaanderen, Mechelen

Het Punt vzw, Bruxelles

SoCiuS, Bruxelles

Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk, Berchem

Steunpunt Jeugd, Bruxelles

Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk Leper, Leper

Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk West-Vlaanderen vzw, Sint-Andries

Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw - VSVw, Antwerp

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11.11.11, Bruxelles

Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Bruxelles

Bond zonder Naam, Antwerp

Federatie Tele-Onthaaldiensten in Vlaanderen vzw, Gent

Kazou, Bruxelles

Kifkif vzw, Antwerp

Opendoek vzw, Antwerp

Rode Kruis Vlaanderen, Mechelen

Talent op Wieltjes (Samenlevingsopbouw Antwerpen), Antwerp

Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen, Antwerp

Seniorencentrum Brussel, Bruxelles

Vlaamse Atletiekliga, Bruxelles

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Vrijwilligerswerk

Provinciale Steunpunten Vrijwilligerswerk, Het Punt vzw, Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw
<http://www.vrijwilligerswerk.be>

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For publications, initiatives and collaborations please contact:

SPES - Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio

Via Liberiana, 17

00185 Rome - Italy

Tel.: +39.06.44702178

Fax: +39.06.45422576

E-mail: europa@spes.lazio.it

Website: www.volontariato.lazio.it