



VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY IN BELGIUM

FACTS AND FIGURES

Note on Belgium:

Belgium is composed socially, culturally and linguistically of three distinct regions:

- 1. The Flemish Region (Flanders)*
- 2. The Walloon Region (Wallonia)*
- 3. The Region of Brussels Capital*

There is also a small community of German speakers (approximately 100,000.00) to the east of the country.

The information provided in this country report looks at the different communities separately, in particular in relation to concrete statistical data. This is because this type of information is more often collected on a community basis. In some instances however, information has been available for the whole country. This has then been provided in this country report.

A. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

- **National and Regional Volunteer Centres**

National Volunteer Centres can be found in both the Flemish and French Communities of Belgium.

1/ Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk, Antwerp

“Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk” (<http://www.vrijwilligerswerk.be/>) in Antwerp, Flanders is the community’s central, national volunteer centre. It is flanked by a number of regional volunteer centres:

- The centre of the province of Antwerp <http://www.provant.be/>
- Het Punt volunteer centre, Brussels <http://hetpunt.vgc.be/>
- The centre of the province of Limburg <http://www.limburg.be/vrijwilligers/>
- The centre of the province of East Flanders <http://www.oost-vlaanderen.be/vrijwilligerswerk/index.cfm>
- The centre of the province of Vlaams Brabant <http://www.vlaamsbrabant.be/>
- The centre of the province of West Flanders <http://www.west-vlaanderen.be/>

“Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk” was established in 1977. It aims to obtain favourable legislation and regulations for volunteers from the Belgian Government, and to make voluntary work accessible to all. The centre provides volunteer-involving organisations with information related to voluntary work and it works to raise awareness about voluntary work; ensuring it is respected and appreciated.

The centre has also received funding, most notably from the King Boudouin Foundation, in order to develop a process of gathering together key actors to discuss and examine the development of

volunteering. The project ended with the publication of a book. A new project funded jointly by the King Boudouin Foundation and by DIVA (Co-operational structure between the Ministries of Education, Employment, Culture and Economy), will look at “volunteer competencies” (the valuing and measurement of competencies gained via voluntary activities).

The Centre works closely with the various regional volunteer centres and other organisations. Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk does not itself recruit, place and train volunteers. This is the responsibility of the regional centres. It does however operate an extensive database of volunteer opportunities in Flanders. See: <http://www.vrijwilligerswerk.be/>

2/ Association pour le Volontariat, Brussels

The “Association pour le Volontariat”(<http://www.volontariat.be>), established in 1974, services French-speaking Belgium. The aim of the association is to promote wider recognition of volunteers, their legal status, and to respond to requests of associations for volunteers, volunteer training and more general information. The Association pour le Volontariat’s recruitment and placement service operates in the Brussels region and in six other Belgian cities (Liège, Mons, Namur, Charleroi, Ottignies and Braine l’Alleud). Finally, the association aims to encourage better coordination between francophone volunteer-involving organisations throughout the Walloon Region.

- **National Volunteer Centre’s Income**

The French-speaking organisation’s funding (± 55,000.00 €) comes from public funds (60%), donations (the smallest contributor) and their own income, derived from training courses for volunteer managers and volunteers for example.

The Flanders volunteering organisation (*Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk*) receives an annual grant from the regional government of approximately 100,000.00 € This comes from the Ministry of Welfare on the condition that an annual report and a work programme are submitted (however the grant has sadly not been raised for several years).

For the last three years, the Centre has taken part in partnership projects, which has provided the organisation with some extra income and the opportunity to expand its work force.

- **The Recruitment and Placement of Volunteers by Volunteer Centres**

Flemish Community

The following regional volunteer agencies recruit, train and place volunteers in Flanders, Belgium:

- Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk Antwerpen
- Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk Vlaams-Brabant
- Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk West-Vlaanderen
- Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk Limburg
- Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk Oost Vlaanderen
- Het Punt, Brussels

There are no figures available in relation to overall numbers.

French Community

While the “Association pour le Volontariat” interviewed 464 prospective volunteers during 2002/2003 (in Brussels only – figures not received for the other cities), it is not known how many of these actually go on to do voluntary work. The association merely advises interested future volunteers at interview and

attempts to match their interests with the needs of organisations registered on their database, as well as give them contacts of several possible organisations. However the association is currently setting up a database in order to keep in touch with people who have gone on to volunteer as a result of their efforts, so they can have feedback in the future (Hélène de Callataÿ, Director of 'l'Association pour le Volontariat', 2003).

B. BASIC FACTS

- **Statistical Data: Number of Volunteers in Belgium**

Belgium

According to the "Association pour le Volontariat", and based on statistics produced by the University of Liège, there were 1,5 million active volunteers across the whole of Belgium in 1999 (approximately one fifth of the total population).

In addition, the number of new, non-profit associations (associations sans but lucratif – a.s.b.l.) has increased 8 times over the last 30 years, suggesting that the number of volunteers has also significantly increased.¹

Flemish Community

According to the survey "VRIND" (2000), 1.2 million Flemish adults (those aged over 16 years) are regularly volunteers in both formal and non-formal volunteer activities.²

C. THE TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS

- **Volunteer Training: National Volunteer Centres**

French Community

Training (for both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations) is a key part of the objectives of the Association pour le Volontariat. According to the association, training improves the quality of volunteers' work and enables them to better integrate into the activities and projects of the organisation for which they are volunteering. A variety of training courses are organised on issues such as listening, welcoming and managing/organising volunteers.

Flemish Community

Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk does not itself offer training. Instead this is the responsibility of regional volunteer centres, many of which do offer training courses for both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

- **Number of Volunteers that Receive Some Form of Training in Belgium**

There are no figures available on how many volunteers receive some form of training for their voluntary activity in Belgium.

- **Most Common Forms of Training**

¹ 'Pour le Volontariat', published by 'l'Association pour le Volontariat', 1999 (p. 34)

² From the survey "VRIND" 2000

According to Lesley Hustinx of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, certain forms of voluntary engagement will need specially trained volunteers. These could include for example, telephone support lines and palliative care work. She argues that volunteers also appreciate this training.³

- **Do Volunteers Want Training?**

Volunteer training courses are often in response to a demand from volunteers themselves, who increasingly want their voluntary experience to be beneficial to their personal development and to their professional careers. This is particularly the case among young people. One recent trend in Belgium is the increasing professionalisation of the voluntary sector and volunteerism: not only are volunteers increasingly skilled which helps to improve the working techniques of voluntary sector associations, but volunteerism itself is becoming increasingly professionalised in the form of more research into volunteerism, volunteer management, training and infrastructure etc.

D. ACTIVITES/SECTOR AREAS OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

- **In Which Activities Are Volunteers Involved?**

Within Belgium, volunteers are involved in numerous activities in a range of sectors concerned with the economy, health, leisure, culture and the environment etc. There are however some activities that are more popular than others. These fall under the banner of “social action” (helping those in difficult situations, for example refugees and the socially excluded) and sports activities. Other popular activities include helping the family, childcare and helping out in schools.

Volunteers are also active, and play a fundamental role, within the administrations of many non-profit associations (on average 5/6 per association). This contribution cannot be overlooked.⁴

The Scout movement is also worth mentioning because it is exceptionally strong in Belgium, and is a form of voluntary activity. Scouting is based on the principles of solidarity and volunteering, and the Scout movement within Belgium feels that one of its role's is to highlight the benefits of voluntary work to society.⁵

- **Statistical Data Regarding Volunteer Involvement by Sector Area**⁶

- Sport: 17.2%
- Social Action: 17.1%
- Professional associations: 10.7%
- Teaching and education: 10%
- Art and literature: 9.1%

- **Impact of United Nations 2001 Year of Volunteers on Volunteerism in Belgium**

French Community

Unfortunately the French Community did not participate actively in the United Nations' Year. However, the Year does appear to have made both the French community and the Walloon region more sympathetic to the needs and concerns of those involved in voluntary activity.

³ Quoted from 'Bizz', December 2002-January 2003, p.66

⁴ Philippe LAURENT, Président de « l'Association pour le Volontariat », Inter Volontariat N° 15 : 2003

⁵ « L'Association pour le Volontariat », Inter Volontariat N° 15: 2003

⁶ Source of figures: INS, in Pour le Volontariat, 1999, p. 26

Flemish Community

The Minister of Welfare, Health and Equal Opportunities used the International Year to begin an annual funding programme for the regional centres allowing them to develop common campaigns and initiatives.

Different sectors and organisations have also noticeably begun to focus more and more on volunteers. For example, the sport sector organised a large event to fully appreciate the important contribution of volunteers in its field.

The King Baudouin Foundation also stepped up its support of volunteers and their organisations, and started some projects in partnership with the Flemish centre.

Effects for Belgium as a whole

Thanks to the joint action of the Presidents of the two Community associations, helped by a representative to the UN, there was an official, federal-level unveiling of declarations of intent for volunteering, followed by some concrete initiatives: designation of a Secretary of State to Volunteering, discussions for a private bill on the statute of volunteers and the creation of the Higher Council of Volunteers, a federal body of representatives of volunteers in the three communities, which offers its opinion, insight and new initiatives to the Federal Parliament. The High Council of Volunteers is now active. Its President is Raf de Zutter.

E. VOLUNTEER PROFILES

- **Proportion of Men-Women Volunteers**

French Community

In the Walloon region, of the total number of people who have come for interview at “L’Association pour le Volontariat” in 2002-2003, 60% were women and 40% were men.

Flemish Community

In the Flemish community, evidence suggests that around 50% of volunteers are men and 50% are women.

- **Age of Volunteers**

Belgium

As a proportion of the adult population that volunteers in Belgium (over 16 years), adults aged between 34 and 54 years old are the most dominant group. However, volunteering is also popular by older people, and is very much on the increase.

French Community

Figures released by the Association pour le Volontariat show the following distribution of ages of those who volunteer: (percentages have been ‘rounded off’)

- Less than 18 years old: 1%
- From 19 to 24 years old: 10%
- From 25 to 34 years old: 24%
- From 35 to 44 years old: 20%
- From 45 to 54 years old: 20%
- From 55 to 64 years old: 16%

- From 65 to 70 years old: 6%
- More than 70 years old: 2%

- **Educational Attainment of Volunteers**

Belgium

According to one study (1997, Archambault, E. & Boumendil, J., Paris: in Volontariat, December 1999), those with a higher level of educational attainment are more likely to volunteer. For example, according to the research just under 15% of volunteers hold primary education only, while those with a secondary education make up over 30% of volunteers.⁷

Flemish Community

The VRIND Survey of Flanders (2000) reports that in Flanders, volunteers' levels of educational attainment are:

- Primary education: men: 13.7% / women: 12.9%
- Secondary school: men: 22.6% / women: 15.1%
- High school: men: 25% / women: 22%
- University education: men: 32.7% / women: 31%

(Secondary school is the 6 years after the elementary level (primary school); High School follows secondary school for those who want to continue to study, but who don't want to go to University (for example nurses and teachers)).

French Community

The Association pour le Volontariat gave the following figures:

- University education: 32%
- High School education: 29%
- Secondary School education: 16%
- Technical and Professional education: 11%
- Other education: 12%

- **Who Volunteers in Belgium?**

1. **Young People:** A little less than 25% of volunteers are young people aged between 18 and 24 years old.⁸
2. **Students:** No figures found.
3. **Professionals:** Around 16% of employed professionals volunteer in Belgium.⁹ However, it is also true that far more part-time workers than full-time workers volunteer (in addition to working). The figures stand at almost 40% compared to 25%.¹⁰
4. **Unemployed:** A little more than 20% of volunteers are unemployed.¹¹

⁷ Archambault E., Boumendil J., « Les dons et le Bénévolat en France » Fondation de France, Paris, 1997 - « Pour le Volontariat, l'Association pour le Volontariat » Fondation Roi Baudouin, 1999.

⁸ Archambault. & Boumendil J., 1999, op cit

⁹ Figures from "l'Association pour le Volontariat", June 2003

¹⁰ Archambault & Boumendil J., 1999, op cit

¹¹ Archambault & Boumendil J., 1999, op cit

5. **Retired/about to retire:** About 17% of volunteers are people aged over 65 years.¹²
 6. **People with disabilities:** No figures found.
 7. **Refugees/migrants:** No figures found.
- **Are Those with a Higher Income more Likely to Volunteer? Is Income an Important Factor in a Person's Decision to Volunteer?**

It seems that the higher level of education reached, and the more money earned, the more likely it is that people will volunteer.

This is backed up by a recent study, which suggested that people with a higher education tended to have better opportunities to engage in active citizenship than those with less education. This can be for any number of reasons, including the social and cultural environment they live in and their ability, due to their stronger positions, to organise and “stand-up” for themselves.

It should be noted as well that businessmen, and the very rich, tend to be classed as volunteers if they help with the services of large associations like the Lion's Club, Rotary International, Fifty One and Kiwanis.

F. VOLUNTEERS' MOTIVATIONS

- **Why People Volunteer: Motivations**

Belgium

According to Ferrand (1992), 71% of volunteers contribute their time in order to:

- Defend a cause;
- Help society;
- Be useful.

However, reasons of personal development/advancement also figure highly: 57% of volunteers volunteer their time in order to meet people and to socialise; 33% in order to occupy their free time; 17% wish to use their skills, while 10% wish to use volunteering to advance their career.¹³

French Community

The Association pour le Volontariat provided the following figures (percentages have been ‘rounded off’) regarding volunteer motivations that they received from the volunteers that they directly support. Those surveyed said they volunteered:

– To give help	27%
– To be useful	18%
– To use their skills	15%
– To get professional experience	14%
– To meet people	10%
– To give free time	7%

¹² Archambault & Boumendil J., 1999, op cit

¹³ Ferrand D., Bénévolat et Solidarité, Syros Alternatives, 1992 in « *Le bénévolat, ça vous tente ? Concilier un job temps plein et une activité bénévole, c'est possible !* », Loes Geuens in BIZZ, December 2002-January 2003.

- To defend a cause 4%
- To give meaning to their life 4%

- **Have Motivations Changed Recently in Belgium?**

Belgium

Recent trends suggest that 15-30 year olds volunteer more and more within specific short-term projects that interest them, that they volunteer to have a good time, do something worthwhile and not necessarily to do it regularly. While altruistic reasons still figure highly, more and more young people wish to get something useful out of their volunteer experience. This may include volunteering giving added meaning to their lives, help them develop new skills and competences or enable them to remain part of the social structure of the community in which they live in light of increasing individualisation at home and at work (BIZZ, 12/2002-01/2003).

Flemish Community

In Flanders, the VRIND Survey (2000) showed that, for 25-44 year olds, making friends and doing an interesting activity were the top two motivations for volunteering.¹⁴

G. ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEERING

- **Traditions and Cultural Acceptance of Volunteerism**

Belgium

Belgium has a long tradition of voluntary engagement by its citizens in their local communities and one of the highest densities of volunteers in Europe (1,5 million active volunteers in 1999, "Association pour le Volontariat"). Traditionally however, political recognition of the value and importance of volunteerism has been extremely low. Reasons for this include a hostile political left, an indifferent right, weak centralists, and perhaps most importantly the origins and good quality of state social security.¹⁵ In this context, volunteerism has traditionally been afforded much less institutional support than in other European Union countries such as the United Kingdom. Government attitudes are changing however, partly due to the enormous impact of the United Nations International Year of Volunteers 2001 (for further information, see section D).

Flemish Community

In Flanders, people have traditionally been extremely active as volunteers in the social welfare and charitable sectors within the Catholic framework. This tradition is reflected even today: at Christmas time "Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk" receives a significant numbers of phone calls from people that wish to help those less fortunate themselves over the festive period.

- **Government Policies Towards Volunteering in Belgium**

As mentioned earlier, traditionally volunteerism has not featured highly on the political agenda in Belgium. This is however changing, partly as a result of the increased visibility the United Nations International Year of Volunteers 2001 gave to volunteerism in Belgium. Most importantly, the International Year contributed to the conditions that made the creation of the "Conseil Supérieur des Volontaires" (High Volunteers' Council) by the Federal Government in October 2002 possible. This "High Council" is composed of 22 representatives of volunteers who are chosen by relevant civil society

¹⁴ VRIND, 2000

¹⁵ Léon Lemerrier, « Le Volontariat et la Belgique »

organisations and the academia, and is charged with handling questions and proposals related to the development of volunteerism in Belgium. The first question tackled by the High Council was the creation of a legal status for volunteers in Belgium, which details the rights and responsibilities of individual volunteers as well as the organisations for whom they volunteer. According to the Secretary of State, Van Gool (2003), the High Council is a consultative body that gives the volunteer sector the opportunity to “become a dynamic, credible, participative and authoritative partner” for Government.¹⁶ While Raf de Zutter, President of the new High Council almost certainly agrees, he regrets that this initiative is certainly the only one rescued by the Belgian Government following the International Year of Volunteers.¹⁷

- **Have Government Policies Changed in Recent Years**

See above.

Furthermore, Belgium also recently created a “Coordination Committee for Volunteering” (“Comité de Coordination pour le Volontariat”) adjoined to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Pensions. Unfortunately, the committee failed to work on an operational level (except at the moment of its creation) or to produce anything concrete; it was not an active body.

This Commission (composed of representatives of relevant Government Ministries) should have been responsible for questions related to the official “status” of volunteers but in reality, nothing came of it. Its creation seems to be linked to the International Year of Volunteers.

H. ECONOMIC VALUE

- **Statistical Data: Hours Devoted to Voluntary Activities**

On average, Belgians devote 5 hours per week to non-paid voluntary activities.¹⁸

More specifically:

- **Under 25 years of age:** 4 hours a week
- **Between 25 and 34 years of age:** 2 hours a week
- **Between 35 and 34 years of age:** 2.5 hours a week
- **Between 45 and 54 years of age:** 4.5 hours a week
- **Between 55 and 64 years of age:** 6.5 hours a week
- **Over 65 years:** 10 hours a week¹⁹

- **The Estimated Economic Value of Volunteering in Belgium**

According to the Social Economy Centre of the University of Liège, Belgium, voluntary activities represented over 160 000 full time jobs in 1999.²⁰ However, according to another estimate, the impact of voluntary activities in 1999 was estimated to be around 220 000 full time jobs.²¹

¹⁶ Declaration of Van Gool in “*De Hoge Raad voor Vrijwilligers is geïnstalleerd*”, Raf de Zutter, in Niet Zomaar, Over vrijwilligers in Vlaanderen, Koning Boubewijnstichting, 2003

¹⁷ From “*De Hoge Raad voor Vrijwilligers is geïnstalleerd*”, Raf de Zutter, in Niet Zomaar, Over vrijwilligers in Vlaanderen, Koning Boubewijnstichting, 2003

¹⁸ From Vlaamse Regionale Indicatoren, Administratie Planning en Statistiek, Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap in « *Le bénévolat, ça vous tente ? Concilier un job temps plein et une activité bénévole, c’est possible !* », Loes Geuens in BIZZ, December 2002-January 2003.

¹⁹ From APS Survey, 1999

²⁰ Figures from the Social Economy Centre of University of Liège, in *Association Pour le Volontariat*, 1999, op cit

²¹ Estimates in *Pour le Volontariat*, Fondation Roi Baudouin, 1999, in « *Le bénévolat, ça vous tente ? Concilier un job temps plein et une activité bénévole, c’est possible !* », Loes Geuens in BIZZ, December 2002-January 2003.

- **Social/Economic Benefits of Volunteering in Belgium**

According to both Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk and Association pour le Volontariat, voluntary work contributes to the well being of Belgian society, for example by providing company to lonely people, making sport more accessible to young people among many other activities. It is more often than not irreplaceable by paid work: if the services volunteers provide became paid activities or were taken over by public bodies for example by town councils, they would quickly be sidelined and eventually disappear for reasons of funding shortages (Eva Hambach, 2003).

I. EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM IN RECENT YEARS IN BELGIUM

- **Recent Developments within the Volunteer Sector, Belgium**

French Community

A new organisation, named “Plate-Forme Francophone pour le Volontariat” was created in 2002 in the French Community of Belgium. The organisation is composed of various volunteer-involving associations and other voluntary and community groups within French-speaking Belgium. In total, the organisation groups together 350.000 volunteers from over 24 associations and federations. The Platform takes their “collective voice” to the recently created “Conseil Supérieur des Volontaires”. The objectives of the organisation are:

- Recognition and promotion of volunteering
- Development of voluntary activities and quality of volunteering
- Representation of volunteering and competence in general matters concerning volunteering
- Any other initiatives for volunteering²²

The “Association pour le Volontariat” is developing a significant new pilot project that will involve workshops within schools to show children (10 years) the importance and value of community commitment and involvement. The project will involve practical work and will become effective in 2004. In the first instance, the project will involve three schools in Brussels. If the outcome is significant, the project will be extended to other interested regional volunteer centres (Walloon Region).

Flanders

In Flanders, a new publication (published September 2003) includes a range of volunteer testimonies, profiles of new volunteers (statistical data), details of policy-making affecting volunteers, and future challenges for the sector in Flanders. It concludes a project (which involved six study days on recruiting and motivating volunteers) that was funded by the Belgian King Baudouin Foundation.

Belgium

²² From <http://www.ucp.mc.be/benevol.htm>

Corporate/Employee Community Involvement

Employee volunteering is only just getting off the ground in Belgium with larger multi-national companies the one's becoming involved in the first instance. Activities have tended to focus however on publicity-grabbing one-day events as opposed to longer term structural partnerships with volunteer centres or the voluntary sector. The following couple of examples show the kind of company volunteer engagement that has taken place so far in Belgium.

The insurance company **AXA**, which employs more than 6000 people in Belgium, is one of the leading international companies in Belgium to develop an employee-volunteering programme. Its corporate volunteering programme, "**AXA Atout Cœur**", was launched at the end of 2000 and is managed full-time by Cédric Borzée. In 2 years, no less than 300 staff have taken part in one or more voluntary activities – which represents 5% of the total Belgian staff. They have organised activities on the company's sites – such as collecting up and counting 2 ½ tonnes of foreign currency during lunch breaks since the introduction of the euro – and other practical work in local communities, for example painting, accompanying disabled people on walks, helping to organise and attend fêtes. The programme has a particularly high take-up by staff members who have recently retired and by those who are about to.²³

Douwe Egberts has organised one-day volunteer initiatives at Christmas time, and several American companies have made contact with the "Association pour le Volontariat" when employees wish to do one-off painting tasks.

Also worth mentioning is a network of large companies called "Business Society Belgium", which includes Janssen Pharmaceutica, Fortis, Cera Holding, Coca Cola, Shell, Umicore and Glaverbel. This network is linked to "Cecile" whose primary goal is to promote the social responsibility of companies. In 2002, they presented a programme of "Employee Involvement", however the results of this action are unknown.

The Fortis Foundation, created by Fortis Group, regularly informs the personnel in their companies of the call for volunteers received by various organisations. They also have a special service, called "help to help", which encourages a network of retired employees to give assistance to various associations in need. (Marc Nederlandt, 2003)

- **Methods for the Recruitment of Volunteers**

Flanders

Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk has recently redeveloped its website (www.vrijwilligerswerk.be). There are now large numbers of people visiting the site. The site includes an on-line searchable database of volunteer opportunities, which has proved extremely popular.

French Community

In the past, the advertising of volunteer vacancies (and the publicising of volunteerism in general) was always via the written media (newspapers, magazines etc.). While placing advertisements in newspapers and within magazines to encourage people to volunteer are still used, the Association pour le Volontariat's Internet site (www.volontariat.be) is becoming increasingly the main focus for publicity because it seems simply to be more effective. For example, the organisation received over 600 requests for information in 2003 via the Internet site. In 2003/4 the Association pour le Volontariat plans to develop it even further.

- **New Developments in the Nature of Volunteering**

²³ Bizz article, 12/2002-01/2003 & www.axa.be/fr/bi_ht_mecenaat.html, 07/ 2003

As people are becoming increasingly dependent on computers, more and more requests for volunteer opportunities arrive via this medium.

Another trend is that some people are changing their voluntary activity, or which association they volunteer for, more often. (Marc Nederlandt, 2004)

The current theme in the sector is to turn attention towards the *diversity* of volunteering. An increasing number of organisations are complaining that it's becoming harder to recruit volunteers, and that the attitude of volunteers has changed to the extent that some theories distinguish between a 'traditional' and a 'new' volunteer. Many organisations are having to develop a more active policy towards their volunteers using management skills and working with projects more than before.

There are already several organisations in which student volunteering is integrated, but the concept of employee involvement is still less developed. Some companies have a potential interest in piloting employee involvement, however except for one or two exceptions little progression has been made on this level yet. (Eva Hambach, 2004)

J. REWARDING VOLUNTEERS

- **Recognition of Volunteerism by Belgian Society**

One organisation that recognises the importance of thanking volunteers (and as one of the ways of keeping them motivated!) is the Rotary Club of Belgium – Luxembourg. Examples of ways in which they thank their volunteers are by ensuring that at every meeting they are thanked either through commemorative plaques or by writing them a word of thanks.²⁴

During 2001, the municipalities of the French Community were encouraged to arrange some kind of reward to acknowledge their volunteers. Unfortunately, only one municipality is known to have arranged such an event: the municipality of Braine l'Alleud.

- **Common Ways of Thanking/Acknowledging Volunteers**

Common ways of thanking and acknowledging the efforts of volunteers include the organisation of annual parties or trips for volunteers, giving of a small gift (for example pens with organisation's name on) and finally, nominations for "Volunteer of the Year".

- **Do Volunteers Want Recognition Of Their Work?**

According to both Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk and Association pour le Volontariat, volunteers on the whole like to be rewarded in some way for their voluntary contribution.

- **Is It Important To Recognize Volunteers' Work In Belgium? If So, Why?**

Volunteers not only help others within society (and in so doing bring a lot to our communities), they also play an important role in an open, democratic society. Volunteerism should therefore be recognised as fundamental to building a socially cohesive society and to economic development.

K. CONCLUSION/ FINAL REMARKS

Flemish Community:

²⁴ http://www.rotary.belux.org/le_rotary/club/commissions/collecte.shtml#coordination, information for 2003/2004

Short-term aims (next few years) of Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk:

1. Get recognition by the Flemish Government as the regional centre for volunteer work to ensure future stability of the organisation and assurance of the governmental grant.
2. Attainment of the first aim would allow greater research to be carried out into the current state of volunteering, and further promotion of it in Flanders.
3. Call for a Federal *National Law on Volunteers and Volunteers' Rights*, and support the High Council in its work towards this aim.

French Community:

Short-term aims of Association pour le Volontariat:

1. Get recognition by the French Community and by the Walloon region and receive more financial aid.
2. Develop the network.
3. Promote volunteering.

Middle to long term aims:

- Create a structure for the different entities.

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