

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

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Existence of a National Strategy

Regional Development Concept (REK)

There is no proper strategy on youth volunteering in the German-speaking Community. However, volunteering plays a central role in its [Regional Development Concept](#). The [Regional Development Concept](#) was conceived as a long term strategy by the Government of the German-speaking Community, without any kind of legal basis. The process was initiated in May 2008 with a comprehensive stock-taking and regional analysis, whereby the strengths and weaknesses, chances and challenges of the German-speaking Community were closely examined. On the basis of this study, strategic approaches and concrete recommendations were crystallized into a mission statement which characterized the German-speaking Community as a Frontier Region, an Economic Region, a Learning Region, a Caring Region and a Living Region. The REK was published in four volumes: the first contains the regional analysis, the second contains the mission statement, development strategy and suggested measures, while the third outlines specific and concrete projects. Volume four looks back on the first implementation period and introduces the future and cross-sectional projects within the framework of the second implementation period, including the project “Engagement commits”.

In line with the challenges identified by the European Commission during the [European Year of Volunteering](#) in 2011, among others the changing nature of volunteer work and the discrepancy between the needs of voluntary organisations and expectations of young volunteers due to lack of knowledge and a rising number of organisations, the German-speaking Community has included one main project, “Engagement commits” in its [Regional Development Concept “Living East Belgium – 2025”](#) (REK: Regionales Entwicklungskonzept). This project sets three priorities in order to improve the conditions for volunteering:

1. Qualification of volunteers

2. Recognition and awareness-raising on volunteering
3. Counselling, information and placement of volunteers

Scope and contents

Qualifying volunteers

There are two levels of training and qualification:

1. Training of volunteers to promote and develop their skills in their respective field of activity. These trainings must remain the responsibility of the various volunteering areas. Many appropriate offers already exist.
2. Trainings aimed at all volunteers, regardless of the field of activity. These trainings offer information on legislation, tax, finances and actuarial practice as well as more fundamental issues, e.g. how to win, keep and integrate volunteers within an organisation (volunteer management).

Workshop on volunteer management

The biggest challenge in volunteering lies in different expectations on forms of voluntary activity and the mismatch between expectations of today's volunteers and what organisations have to offer. To address these issues, the German-speaking Community organised workshops on volunteer management, with emphasis on organisational and staff development. These training opportunities are aimed at board members and managers in organisations, associations and projects. The workshop "Volunteer Management" is offered every two years.

Information sessions

Regular information sessions, entitled "*Ich hab da mal ne Frage ...*", are organized every year to advise on NPO legislation, tax law and insurance issues.

Recognition and awareness of volunteering

According to a Forsa survey commissioned by the German-speaking Community in 2014, up to 62% of citizens questioned are interested in volunteering (Conclusions of a public opinion survey commissioned by the German-speaking Community, Forsa Institute for social studies, fall 2014, page 60). In order to further encourage volunteering, there is a need for better marketing at all levels to raise awareness of volunteering in the German-speaking Community and ensure a high recognition of volunteer work. To raise awareness on the topic "Volunteering in the German-speaking Community", the German-speaking Community strengthened media partnerships (broadcasting and press), inter alia by methods of "storytelling", to ease the understanding of volunteering through stories and pictures.

Counselling, information and placement of volunteers

In addition to regular workshops and information events, the support point for voluntary work located at the Ministry of the German-speaking Community offers personalized advice on request. This also includes the placement of people interested in volunteer work but who don't know how and where this is possible.

A dedicated [website](#) offers regular updated information, policy papers, good examples, concepts and methods for volunteering. Organisations can present themselves and their work through a dedicated web-based exchange platform for volunteering, in order to attract new volunteers. At the same time, it provides an overview of the various possibilities of volunteer work in the German-speaking Community for interested citizens.

Responsible authority

The government as a whole is responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the REK.

Revisions/ Updates

As the REK outlines future developments in the German-speaking Community up to 2025, it may undergo revisions and updates over the period of its implementation, in order to deduce and elaborate measures as can best meet the German-speaking Community's current and future needs.