

2.8 Current debates and reforms

As of 2019, the implementation phase of the third regional development concept (Regionales Entwicklungskonzept III) has commenced. A part of this concept is the project „Committed in and for East Belgium“ (Engagiert in und für Ostbelgien), which is a follow up project of the aforementioned project „Engagement commits“ (Engagement bewegt) of the second regional development concept. The current project aims at

- Valorisation and raising awareness of volunteering
- Strengthening the work of the board
- Implementation of federal legislation
- Establishment of structural connection and participation

Especially for young people, the need of opening up for a „digital volunteering“ is recognised.

Another source of discussion was the introduction of the "Law on the work of associations" (Gesetz über die Vereinsarbeit, in french [Loi relative au travail associatif](#)). This law allowed, under certain conditions, to work for associations up to EUR 6,000 per year tax-free and social security-free. The problem was the demarcation between unpaid voluntary work and association work. The Constitutional Court annulled this law in 2020 on grounds of equal treatment and reintroduced it in amended form for the sports sector in 2021.

Apart from that, the following points remain in discussion:

- Volunteering could be an official element of the integration of long-term unemployed and recipients of welfare benefits in the labor market.
- The "Law concerning the companies and associations" (Gesetz bezüglich der Gesellschaften und Vereinigungen, in french [Code des Sociétés et des Associations](#)) of 23 March 2019 has been published on 4 April 2019 in the Belgian Official Journal and entered into force on 1 Mai 2019. Thus, the "Law on non-profit associations (NPIs), foundations, European political parties and European political foundations" (Gesetz über die Vereinigungen ohne Gewinnerzielungsabsicht, die Stiftungen, die europäischen politischen Parteien und die europäischen politischen Stiftungen, in french [Loi sur les associations sans but lucratif, les associations internationales sans but lucratif et les fondations](#)) of 27 June 1921 is obsolete.
- The conditions of the volunteer fire department is in discussion. On 19 November 2018, the Parliament of the German-speaking Community passed a [resolution](#) concerning the improvement of the statute of the voluntary fire department aimed both at the federal

government and the government of the German-speaking Community of Belgium. In reaction to this resolution, the government of the German-speaking Community of Belgium made the education of the voluntary fire department part of its "Ongoing Work Program 2019-2024" ([Laufendes Arbeitsprogramm 2019-2024](#)). The process is expected to take place until December 2021.