

VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT – BELGIUM

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

1.1 Tradition and contextual background

Belgium had a national sport policy up to the late sixties, when the country was still a unitary state. From 1936 to 1956, the sport sector was managed by the Ministry of Public Health. NILOS, the National Sports Institute, was founded by a Parliament Act of March 1956 as a semi-governmental body supervised by the Minister of Public Health. In 1964, this body was closed and its tasks and personnel transferred to the Ministry of Health and Culture.

The consecutive revisions of the country's constitution in 1970, 1980, 1988 and 1993 established a unique federal state with segregated political powers divided into three levels (the federal government, three language communities and three regions).

The sport sector was involved in these reforms from the very beginning. In 1969, cultural autonomy was introduced splitting up the unitary Ministry of National Education and Culture into a Ministry of National Education and Dutch Culture and a Ministry of National Education and French Culture. For the implementation of their sport policy the Flemish Community established BLOSO (Dutch abbreviation for the Administration of Physical Education, Sports and Outdoor life), while the Walloons established ADEPS (Administration de l'Education Physique, du Sport et de la Vie en Plein Air). These new public services are managed by the Minister of Dutch Culture and the Minister of French Culture respectively.

Most sport federations have adapted to the situation, and have split up into a Flemish and a Walloon section, with an umbrella organisation to support national interests at an international level.

1.2 Definitions

There is no specific definition of volunteering in sport. The general definition set up in the Law on Volunteering of 2005 is as follows:

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 (non profit) organisations.

Many individuals active within the sport sector can be considered as volunteers and therefore fall under the legal framework set out by the Law on Volunteering. Among others, it is important to mention clubs' managers, trainers and referees.

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers in sport

It is very hard to provide reliable estimates of the number of volunteers in the sport sector, in particular, and the number of volunteers, in general. The same applies to the data regarding the profile of volunteers as well as the economic value of volunteering. These conclusions were made by het Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid Leuven (Higher Institute for Labour in Louvain) and le Centre d'Economie Sociale Liège (Centre for Social Economics

Liège), which were commissioned in 2007 by the King Baudouin Foundation to produce a critical analysis of existing statistical sources on volunteering in Belgium.¹

Therefore, in the remainder of this section statistical data from the following five main sources on volunteering are presented:

- Sport and Volunteering: This study was conducted in 2000 by ULB and commissioned by the King Baudouin Foundation (henceforward, referred to as KBF 2000);
- La mesure du volontariat en Belgique: The critical analysis of existing statistical sources on volunteering in Belgium, which was undertaken in 2007 by het Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid Leuven (Higher Institute for Labour in Louvain) and le Centre d'Economie Sociale Liège (Centre for Social Economics Liège) and commissioned by the King Baudouin Foundation (henceforward, referred to as KBF 2007);
- The survey on social-cultural trends in Flanders, which targets a representative sample of Flemish individuals and covers questions concerning regular/frequent volunteering (henceforward, referred to as SCT 1997, 2005 or 2007);
- The survey of sport clubs, which was conducted in 2003 by Bloso (henceforward, referred to as Bloso 2003); and
- The indicators of the Flemish government, whose measurements are presented in the periodical Vrind (henceforward, referred to as Vrind + year).

The total number of volunteers in sport (clubs and federations) in Flanders was 260,000 in 1991 (KBF 2000) and 313,170 in (19,000) sport clubs in 2003 (Bloso 2003). The 313,170 volunteers in sport (Bloso 2003) represented **5.2% of the total population in Flanders**.

Trend

The percentage of the total population in Flanders who volunteers (regularly) in sport evolved from 3.9% in 1997, to 4.3% in 2005 to **5.3% in 2007** (SCT 1995/2005/2007).

The proportion that volunteers in sport make up vis-à-vis the total number of volunteers in Flanders steadily increased from 23% in 1997, to 23.7% in 2005 to **28.6% in 2007** (SCT 1995/2005/2007).

In general, several studies (reviewed in KBF 2007) have indicated a growth within the volunteer sector in Belgium over the last decade. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that this trend is also applicable to volunteering in sport.

Volume of voluntary work

It is difficult to estimate the volume of voluntary work in sport. In relation to the volume of voluntary work, in general, in Belgium, estimations vary from less than half a day per week to more than 7 hours per week (KBF 2007).

The KBF 2000 report indicates that, in Flanders, volunteers in the sport sector dedicate on average 5 to 6 hours per week to voluntary activities. Surveys with regular volunteers in sport point towards **6.44 hours per week in 2007** (SCT 2007). However, BLOSO qualified this finding, stating that the survey participants may have overestimated the volume of the work they voluntarily perform as the sport season lasts only 30-35 weeks (instead of 52).

¹ Problems derive, among other things, from different definitions of volunteering (e.g. regular volunteering vs. occasional volunteering), research sample (e.g. volunteers vs. organisations that make use of volunteering) and different time periods.

Age

According to the *King Baudouin Foundation* report (2000), in Flanders the average age of volunteers in sport is 40 years. Among those who regularly volunteer in sport in Flanders (SCT 2007):

- 10.3% is between the age of 16–24
- 15.4% is between the age of 25–34
- 33.3% is between the age of 35–44
- 25.6% is between the age of 45–54
- 11.5% is between the age of 55–64
- 3.9% is above the age of 65

Over time, the proportion of persons who volunteer in sport between the age of 25 and 44 appears to have increased, while that of persons above the age of 55 has decreased (SCT 1997/2005/2007).

Gender

According to the KBF 2007 report, **women are under-represented** within sport associations. This is confirmed by the KBF 2000 report, which points out that, at least in Flanders, the percentage of men involved in sport associations is higher than the percentage of women.

Among those who regularly volunteer in the sport sector, 83,1% were men and 16,9% women in 2007 (SCT 2007). Considering that men made up 77,6% of the volunteers in sport in 1997 (SCT 1997), the gender gap in volunteering in sport seems to have grown over the years.

The KBF 2000 report also draws a distinction between sport federations and clubs. In fact, within sport federations, women are largely underrepresented within the management while they are better represented within secretary posts. Amongst the volunteering technical staff, women constitute less than 3% of the personnel. Within sport clubs, the presence of women within the administration and amongst the technical staff is very weak.

The article *Evolution du Volontariat en Belgique* also indicates that volunteering in the sport sector has always been and is still dominated by men².

Level of education

The KBF 2000 report describes the qualification and educational background of the technical volunteering staff within sport federations of the French Community. According to the report, 64% of the technical volunteering staff within sport federations has a specific qualification. Only 5% of the staff has no specific educational background.

The KBF 2000 report also indicates that the employed and remunerated staff within sport federations have overall a higher level of qualification than the volunteers.

As far as the qualifications and educational backgrounds of the technical volunteering staff within sport clubs of the French Community are concerned, the KBF 2000 report points out that, in the French Community, the average experience of volunteers is 10 years. The

² Article extrait du dossier "Du Bénévolat au Volontariat" de l'Observatoire n°49/2006, Evolution du Volontariat en Belgique, Les racines du volontariat, <http://www.revueobservatoire.be/parutions/49/DieuD49.htm>

percentage of volunteers being sport instructors, coaches and referees having a specific qualification within sport clubs is 48% (compared to 64% of federations).

In Flanders, medium skilled individuals represent the largest group among those who regularly volunteered in sport in 2007, with 37.7% (SCT 2007). A similar proportion of volunteers in sport are medium-skilled (36.45%). A quarter (26%) of those who regularly volunteer in sport in 2007 were low-skilled.

The proportion of individuals with a medium or high level of education who regularly volunteer in sport has risen over the last decade, from 66,9% in 1997 to 74,1% in 2007 (SCT 1997/2007).

1.4 Number and types of sport organisations engaging volunteers

The KBF 2000 report points out the existence of two different structures within the sport sector: the sport federations and the sport clubs.

Four types of federations have been identified in the report:

- Federations structured in a professional way, recognised for their high level of specialisation;
- Federations with a technical structure, recognised for their high level of specialisation;
- Federations supported by volunteers, with high levels of involvement of the participants in their training; and
- Federations with a simple and centralised structure and a lower level of specialisation.

As for the sport clubs, three main types have been identified:

- Clubs supported by volunteers;
- Clubs with a simple structure; and
- Professional football clubs with a professional administrative structure.

There are 58 sport federations recognised in the French Community³ and 88 sport federations recognised in the Flemish Community⁴.

According to latest figures (Vrind 2009), there are 19,000 sport clubs in Flanders.

Sport federations employ both remunerated staff and volunteers. As for the sport clubs, they are, in the majority of cases, managed by volunteers.

Share of volunteers and paid staff in the sport sector

The 2000 KBF report makes a comparative analysis of remunerated work and voluntary work within sport federations and sport clubs in the French Community as follows:

- Sport federations - the total FTEs of volunteering administrative staff corresponds to 1.5 times the FTEs of remunerated administrative staff. Similarly, the total FTEs of volunteering technical staff is twice the volume of the total FTEs of remunerated technical employees.

³ LISTE DES FEDERATIONS SPORTIVES RECONNUES, (Décret du 8 décembre 2006 visant l'organisation et le subventionnement du sport en Communauté française) <http://www.adepts.be/index.asp?m=page&i=771>

⁴ <http://www.vlaamspportfederatie.be/nl/over-vsfl/Leden.aspx?item=63>

- Sport clubs – the total FTEs of volunteering administrative staff equals the volume of work produced by a part-time administrative employee.

Data on the number of FTEs in the sport sector in Flanders is incomplete. The information available indicates that 4445,78 FTEs are employed at different governmental levels in the sport sector. In the sport federations recognised by Bloso, 562,31 FTEs work. However, no information is available on the number of FTEs active in sport clubs and in the commercial sector. Given this lack of information and the limited information on the total number of volunteers in sport in Flanders (313,170 in 2003), it is currently not possible to estimate the share of volunteers vis-à-vis employees in the sport sector.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

Level of volunteering in different sport segments

No information is available.

Level of volunteering in different sport disciplines

No information is available at present. Furthermore, figures may be biased due to instructors or coaches performing undeclared work under the cloak of volunteering (see section 7 on challenges).

Type of activities carried out by volunteers

The report of the *King Baudouin Foundation* organises volunteering work in three categories: the administrative volunteering staff, the technical staff and the sport-related staff.

- The administrative volunteering staff is elected by the general assembly of the sport federation and clubs. This staff includes the president, vice-president, the general secretary, the treasurer as well as the members of the board of directors;
- The technical staff can be elected or is more often chosen according to its competences. Coaches, technical directors, referees, instructors, medical staff, doctors and physiotherapists are usually included in this staff category; and
- Sport-related volunteering staff can be elected or chosen according to its competences. The tasks fulfilled by this staff can include: support in travel arrangements of sportsmen, support in the transfer and maintenance of sport equipment, support to lucrative activities of federations (such as organisation of events, receptions, catering, etc.), the organisation of courses, the organisation of stands, etc.

The KBF 2000 report shows that volunteers in the French Community undertake more administrative activities in sport federations than in sport clubs. In federations, the average volunteering time spent on administrative tasks is 8 hours a week while the average volunteering time spent on administrative tasks in sport clubs amounts to 4 hours a week.

Similarly, the average volunteering time spent on technical tasks within sport federations is 8 hours a week while the average volunteering time spent on technical tasks in sport clubs amounts to 6 hours a week.

As far as sport-related volunteering is concerned⁵, only 39% of federations engage volunteers dedicated to these tasks compared to 79% of sport clubs.

Table 1.1 below shows the technical volunteering activities within sport federations in French Community.

Table 1.1 - technical volunteering activities within sport federations	
Technical director	24%
Instructors	23%
Referees	20%
Coaches	10%
Officers	7%

These activities represent 94% of the technical volunteering activities within sport federations. The number of hours dedicated to these activities is comprised between 6 and 10 hours.

Table 1.2 below shows the technical volunteering activities within the sport clubs in French Community.

Table 1.2 - technical volunteering activities within sport clubs	
Trainers	46%
Instructor	13%
Referee	11%
Technical director	9%
Coach	9%

These activities represent 88% of all technical volunteering activities within sport clubs. The average time dedicated to these activities is 31 to 35 days per year or an average of 9 hours per week.

BLOSO ranked the activities undertaken by volunteers as follows (with the most common activity listed first):

- Instructing and coaching, which requires specific skills, but can be undertaken by low-skilled;
- Club and duty management and administration, which requires medium to high skills;
- Organisation of sport events, which can be undertaken by low-skilled (e.g. help on the terrain, setting up tents) as well as by medium to high-skilled depending on the task (e.g. actual organisation of events);

⁵ Including support in travel arrangements of sportsmen, support in the transfer and maintenance of sport equipment, support to lucrative activities of federations (such as organisation of events, receptions, catering, etc.), the organisation of courses, the organisation of stands, etc.

- Sales / fundraising, which requires low (e.g. waffle baking and sales) to high skills (e.g. meeting with private companies) depending on the task;
- Media/marketing, which call for medium skills; and
- Technical maintenance, which can be performed by low-skilled.

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering in sport

There is no specific public body or other organisational form specifically responsible for volunteering, in sport.

The High Council of Volunteers is the main public institution dealing with volunteering in general. It has been established at the end of 2002 by the Ministry of Social Affairs. 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.

Decentralised bodies

In 1969, cultural autonomy was introduced splitting up the unitary Ministry of National Education and Culture into a Ministry of National Education and Dutch Culture and a Ministry of National Education and French Culture⁶. For the implementation of their sport policy, Flanders established BLOSO (Dutch abbreviation for the Administration of Physical Education, Sports and Outdoor life), while the Walloons established ADEPS (Administration de l'Education Physique, du Sport et de la Vie en Plein Air).

Other important organisations active in the sport sector are:

- The Belgian Olympic Committee (BOIC);
- Association Interfédérale du Sport Francophone (AISF); and
- Vlaamse Sportfederatie vzw

A short description of BLOSO and ADEPS is provided in the boxes below.

Box 1.3 – description of BLOSO

BLOSO

For years, BLOSO functioned as a public institution in charge of executing the policy delineated by various ministers of Culture. The year 1980 saw the establishment of the Ministry of the Flemish Community to which BLOSO was incorporated under the official name of "Administration for Sport and Outdoor Recreation".

This changed in 1990 when, following the reform of the Ministry of Flemish Community, a number of public institutions were re-structured by the Decree of December 1990 concerning administrative policy. Chapter 6 of this decree provided the establishment of the "Commissariaat-generaal voor de Bevordering van de Lichamelijke Ontwikkeling, de Sport en de Openluchtrecreatie" (General Commissioner's Office for the Advancement of Physical Development, Sports and Outdoor Recreation).

As from April 1, 1991, BLOSO became a para-regional institution. Its policy is no longer determined by the competent minister, but by a Board of Directors and that the Flemish government - and thus the Minister of Sports - only exercised supervision over BLOSO. The decree states (art.35, section I) that BLOSO is entrusted with the general organisation,

⁶ <http://www.bloso.be/public/summary/summary.asp>

coordination and advancement of sport practice, sport recreation and outdoor recreation. More specifically, BLOSO is in charge of (art.35, section 1):

- the study, planning, development and promotion of sport both at home and abroad;
- the supervision and implementation of regulations pertaining to sport and outdoor recreation;
- the organisation and co-ordination of international relations and necessary collaboration related to sport and outdoor recreation at home and abroad;
- the provision of information and documentation concerning technical aspects of sport;
- the provision of counselling, co-ordination and stimulation of activities organised by national, provincial and local associations and institutions;
- sport promotion through:
 - the organisation of sport classes, sport camps, sport courses, etc....,
 - the organisation of national promotion campaigns, assistance initiatives and support activities,
 - support to school sport;
 - the organisation of staff training by creating training programmes for sport-technical and executive staff;
 - general sport counselling by granting subsidies to both private and public initiatives;
 - the collaboration in the development of a solid top-level sport policy;
 - the administration and stimulation of its own existing or planned sport centres and the co-ordination of all building activities;
 - the control of the Sport Fund (finances and expenditures).

Box 1.4 – description of ADEPS

ADEPS

Known as Administration for Physical Education and Sports, the general directorate for sport is part of the Ministry of the French Community since 1983.

ADEPS is present at local level through :

- 17 sport centres;
- 6 sport council centres;
- Through its collaboration with 62 recognised federations, the local public bodies and more than 60 sport centres.

Its tasks consist in promoting physical and sport activities in Wallonia and Brussels through:

- Activities targeted to pupils as well as to a general public;
- The organisation of summer holidays/activities within the 17 sport centres;
- Financial support to sport activities organised by the public administrations and the youth associations;
- Financial support to the 62 recognised sport federations and the 6,250

affiliated sport clubs; and

- Financial support to high-level sport in Wallonia and Brussels and support to the Belgian Olympic Committee

2.2 Policies

The Flemish government has recently passed two decrees concerning sport organisations:

- The Decree of April 5th, 1995, that came into force on January 1, 1996, enhanced the recognition of the sport services provided by the local authorities (cities and communes) and strengthen the subventions for the personnel of these sport services.; and
- The decree of 13 July 2001, on the recognition and funding of the Flemish sports federations, provided subventions for high-level sport, youth sport, sport camps and other priorities determined by the Flemish Government.

2.3 Programmes

There are no national programmes stimulating volunteering in Belgium. The High Council of Volunteers is the main public body at federal level in charge of volunteering, however, it only has an advisory role. The Council is not responsible for the implementation of programmes such as training and awareness raising campaigns.

Some programmes have been however promoted by the organisations active in the sport sector. For example, the AISF regularly organises information sessions to inform volunteers of the new provisions included in the Law on Volunteering⁷. During these sessions, the main rules are explained by a lawyer and included in a booklet, which is distributed to the audience.

⁷ <http://www.frstel.be/Les-benevoles-seront-mieux.html>

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

3.1 General legal framework

The legal framework on volunteering is composed by four main laws and regulations defining the associative sector and its components:

- Law of June 1921 modified by the law of May 2002 regarding non profit organisations and foundations;
- Articles 220 to 226 of the income tax code (1992) for organisations under the structure of non profit organisations;
- Article 104, 3°, b, d, e, g, i, j, k, l, 4° or 4°bis of the income tax code connected to tax-deductible donations made to non profit organisations (1992); and
- Law of July 2005 concerning the rights of volunteers, known as the Law on Volunteering.

Starting from the 1st of August 2005, all the sport clubs and federations being an ASBL (non profit association) or a de facto organisation have the obligation to conform to the new Law on the rights of volunteers.

The French and Flemish Communities are the bodies responsible for passing decrees regulating and supporting the recognised sport associations. In order to receive subventions from the Communities, sport federations have to obtain the status of non profit organisations (ASBL), in line with the law of June 1921.

The French and Flemish Communities have also provided sport federations with the possibility to elect the members of their executive committees. These members can be volunteers. This implies an indirect recognition, by the Communities, of the volunteering work in the sport federations.

As for the sport clubs, there is no legal regulation imposing them to have the status of non profit organisations. However, most of the sport clubs are non profit organisation.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers in sport

There is no specific provision for volunteers in sport. Any volunteer can receive a reimbursement for costs made during his/her voluntary activities, provided that the organisation is willing to pay (however, the Law does not provide a legal right to volunteers to receive this reimbursement of costs). The Law describes 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 30.22 Euro a day, for a maximum of 1,208.72 Euro a year; and
- The organisation can opt for a system of “reimbursement of real costs”. 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 for each expense.

3.3 Legal framework for sport organisations engaging volunteers

The law sets an obligation for all organisations engaging volunteers to provide information to the latter. Every organisation engaging volunteers has to inform the volunteers of some aspects related to the organisation: its aims, its legal status, 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 obligation, either verbally or in a written form (a volunteer contract), or on an individual or collective base.

Therefore each sport club and federation wishing to engage volunteers:

- Has to inform the volunteers of the provisions included in the Law on Volunteering; and
- Can draft a “volunteering Convention” with the volunteers creating rights and responsibilities for both parties and including all the legal provision.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

4.1 Financing of volunteering in sport

BLOSO has provided some information on the financing of volunteering in sport within the Flemish Community. According to this body, the sport federations, which are recognised and subsidised by the Flemish government, are on average financed as follows:

- 43% subsidies;
- 29% other types of income;
- 22% membership fees and licences;
- 6% sponsorship.

The proportion that subsidies constitute in relation to the sources of income of **sport clubs** is lower. **Membership fees** together with fundraising (e.g. waffle sales, “mussel evenings”) make up the largest share of income sources.

As to trends over time, while the subsidising of recognised sport federations have increased by more than 20% over the past five years, the actual proportion that subsidies represent regarding their total income has remained stable (2005-2009). While clubs can now draw on financial means allocated by the Flemish government via municipalities, it is difficult to state whether there is a de facto increase of (public) financial means available to sport clubs.

Public financing of sport consists of subsidies granted by:

- Local governments, i.e. operational subsidies, project subsidies and investment subsidies, and allocated to sport clubs;
- Provincial governments, i.e. operational subsidies and project subsidies, and allocated to provincial sport organisations;

- Flemish government, i.e. operational subsidies, project subsidies and investment subsidies, and allocated to sport clubs and sport federations.

In addition, the federal government is providing, since 2006, financial support to voluntary organisations through the National Lottery. The funding is allocated annually and aims to finance a collective insurance for small de facto associations engaging volunteers. The management of these funds is entrusted to the Provinces.

The federal government has allocated, for the year 2006, an amount of 850,000 Euro.

4.2 Other support schemes and benefits

NA

4.3 Private financing and support schemes

NA

4.4 Specific issues: state aid, public service and general interest

NA

4.5 Economic value of volunteering in sport

This section includes information on the economic value of volunteering in sport. The section firstly presents the estimates made by the KBF 2000 report for the French Community and then outlines the estimates provided by BLOSO for the Flemish Community.

The KBF 2000 report includes an evaluation of the costs of volunteering work in the sport sector. Even if the report has been published in May 2000 and therefore the data is outdated, it is the only assessment of the economic value of volunteering in the sector, which has been published.

The evaluation undertaken by the Foundation has been carried out on the basis of the average cost of remunerated work in the sector.

According to the report, within sport federation, the cost of volunteering administrative work amounts to 24,176 Euro per federation. In total (90 federations), if this work was remunerated, the cost of volunteering administrative work would amount to **2.7 million Euro** or 212,559 Euro more than the normal remunerated work.

For the 90 sport federations of the French Community, the cost of the volunteering technical cost, if this work was remunerated, would amount to **5.1 million Euro**, namely three times more than the technical remunerated work.

The average cost of volunteering administrative work within sport clubs would amount to 4,339 Euro. In total (6,964 clubs within the French-speaking Community), this cost would amount to **38.3 million Euro**. Therefore, the volunteering administrative work within sport clubs would cost 4.5 times more than remunerated administrative work.

A volunteer undertaking technical tasks within sport clubs and working 0.4 FTE, would cost 3,149 Euro. In total (for the 6,964 clubs within the French-speaking Community), the cost of this type of work would amount to almost **22 million Euro**. The volunteering technical work would cost 3.5 more than the remunerated work.

The cost of sport-related work is estimated to amount, for the 6,964 clubs within the French-speaking Community, to 70,175 Euro.

BLOSO estimated the economic value of volunteering in sport in Flanders to be at least half a billion Euro. This calculations is based on the assumptions that:

- There are approximately 313,170 volunteers operating in sport clubs in Flanders (2003 Bloso study);
- They work on average 5 hours per week (low estimation);
- During 35 weeks (i.e. sport season); and
- The minimum wage is 8.43 Euro per hour.

This amounts to at least **462 million Euro**.

The share of volunteers vis-à-vis the total number of paid staff in the sport sector would provide another estimation of the economic value of volunteering in sport. However, the total number of paid staff in the sector is not known.

Finally, BLOSO emphasised that without volunteers only the commercial (dimension of the) sport sector would remain, resulting in a less diverse and more expensive sport offer.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

5.1 Key benefits of volunteering for sport volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Volunteering is considered as beneficial to society, in that it strengthens the social fabric, contributes to good health by countering a growing lack of movement and promotes positive, societal values⁸. Volunteering in sport not only promotes positive values specific to sport, such as:

- Fair play;
- Solidarity;
- Team spirit;
- Respect for the rules of the game and one's fellow players; and
- How to deal with victory and loss;

It also advances (more general) societal values, such as:

- Responsibility;
- Personal commitment towards others;
- Independence; and
- Societal involvement.

Those who volunteer in sport also gain in terms of social contacts, which in turn prevent social isolation. The volunteer may feel that s/he spends his/her time usefully / puts it to good use, benefiting his/her personal (psychosocial) health and self-esteem. As mentioned, the physical efforts that volunteering requires positively affect the individual's physical health.

Volunteering in sport may be of particular value to specific social groups. The youth benefit in terms of the societal values that they are confronted with, the elderly in terms of improvement in their psychosocial and physical health, and the socially marginalised in terms of social inclusion.

As to the direct beneficiaries, volunteering in sport has been shown to allow for a sport offer that is not only greater and more diversified, but also cheaper and more accessible by a larger proportion of society. Furthermore, the passion that volunteers in sport display also motivates those who are taught by them, play with them, etc.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer in sport

The KBF 2000 report lists the factors that motivate volunteers to undertake different kinds of volunteering activities.

The volunteering technical staff

⁸ This has been indicated by BLOSO but could be interpreted as a general statement covering the whole Belgium

The motivations put forward amongst staff without technical education are focussed on the need of belonging and self-esteem. Staff with specific technical education are driven by a desire to develop their skills.

The volunteering administrative staff

As far as the presidents and the secretary of sport clubs and federations are concerned, the factors motivating them to undertake volunteering activities are summarised in table 1.5 below. These factors have been gathered through a survey carried out by Levarlet in 1990.

Table 1.5 - factors motivating volunteers in sport to undertake volunteering activities		
Motivations	Sport Federations	Sport Clubs
Contribute to the promotion of sport	36%	34%
Strengthen human contacts	22%	32%
Being active in the sport sector	17%	18%
To be active in another environment	8%	5%
Choose an intellectual activity	5%	4%
Desire to travel	5%	1%
Other	7%	6%

Volunteering sport-related activities

As far as sport-related activities are concerned, the King Baudouin Foundation report points out factors such as the feeling of belonging, desire to travel and human contacts.

6 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

The main impacts of EU policies on volunteering are described in the main report on volunteering in Belgium.

7 MAIN OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

7.1 Main challenges

Four challenges were identified by the interviewee with regard to volunteering in sport. These are:

- To mobilise sufficient volunteers;
- To recognise the effort and contribution made by volunteers;
- The evolution towards a materialistic approach to recognition of efforts made, i.e. “what do I gain from volunteering?”;
- Pseudo-volunteering, i.e. de facto undeclared work.

The latter was presented by the interviewee as the key challenge facing volunteering in sport, i.e. the “abuse” of the status of volunteer in the sport sector threatening the position of the “genuine volunteer”.

A general trend in several sport sectors is that instructors and coaches perform undeclared work under the cloak of volunteering. These instructors and coaches are formally registered as volunteers, while in fact the sport clubs and municipalities pay them a wage through the legal provision of reimbursement for volunteers. As mentioned in Section 3, the Law on Volunteering of 2005 allows for reimbursement on a flat rate basis for volunteers (“forfaitaire vrijwilligersvergoeding”), which consists of 30.22 Euro per day. On an annual basis, up to 1,208.72 Euro can be reimbursed to the volunteer this way, which in addition to the reimbursement of transportation costs of maximum 2000km, amounts to 1,842.53 Euro per year. Divided over 35 weeks – the average duration of the sport season – this provides an instructor or coach with 52.64 Euro per week for, on average, 1 to 2 hours of teaching. This stands in stark contrast with the hourly wages foreseen in the sector, i.e. minimum wage: 8.43 Euro; lowest diploma: 11.55 Euro/hour; higher diploma: 14.81 Euro. As a result, undeclared work in the sport sector is laundered via the legal provision of reimbursement on a flat rate basis for volunteers.

According to BLOSO, this abuse of the status of volunteering in the sport sector is commonly recognised and openly discussed. At the political level, proposals have been made to introduce a new status, i.e. that of “semi-agorale arbeid”⁹, which would address the grey zone between volunteering and minimal declared work. But questions were raised by BLOSO as to what extent this proposal would be politically feasible (trade unions and/or employers organisations may oppose it, as there was already considerable opposition when the Law on Volunteering was introduced).

7.2 Main opportunities

The opportunity that was identified by BLOSO for volunteering in sport in Flanders is to value and validate competences acquired through volunteering in the labour market and job environment.

⁹ semi-agorale arbeid: beperkte tewerkstelling met beperkt loon (lager dan officiële 1/3 arbeid), met minimale bedrijfsvoorheffing, beperkte solidariteitsbijdragen aan de sociale zekerheid en beperkte administratie.”

SOURCES

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La mesure du volontariat en Belgique: Analyse critique des sources statistiques sur l'importance du volontariat dans le secteur associatif belge", Centre d'Economie sociale et Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid, Septembre 2007

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Article extrait du dossier "Du Bénévolat au Volontariat" de l'Observatoire n°49/2006, Evolution du Volontariat en Belgique, Les racines du volontariat

Activity report of the General Council of volunteers (Rapport d'activité du Conseil supérieur des Volontaires)

The survey on social-cultural trends in Flanders, which targets a representative sample of Flemish individuals and covers questions concerning regular/frequent volunteering

The survey of sport clubs, which was conducted in 2003 by Bloso

The indicators of the Flemish government, whose measurements are presented in the periodical Vrind

Interview

BLOSO (Administration of Physical Education, Sports and Outdoor life) - Afdeling Subsidiëring