

Philanthropie.be is the largest online database on Belgium's non-profit associations. Just 18 months after its launch, it is proving to be a useful source of information for citizens and for its members. On 1 October 2012, a similar database went live in Luxembourg.



Increasing the visibility of civil society

“Philanthropie.be provides a window so that people can see who we are and what we do.”

Father Guy Leroy, Chair of the Brussels-based association Les Amis d'Accompagner

European civil society is diverse in terms of the size of associations, their resources, the sectors in which they work and their level of professionalism. In many countries, non-profit associations play a significant role in society. However, the information available about associations is often scattered and incomplete.

Building public confidence

Guidestar International (GSI) aims to

increase the visibility of civil society in all of its diversity, contribute to greater transparency of associations and build public confidence in the sector. The first website – Philanthropie.be – was launched in Belgium in February 2011. More than 2,200 non-profit organizations have registered on the site.

With just a few mouse clicks, citizens, potential donors and volunteers have access to a wealth of data on a large



number of associations, foundations and not-for-profit businesses in Belgium. It includes contact details, mission statements, activity reports, decision-making bodies and financial data provided by the National Bank of Belgium (NBB), one of the King Baudouin Foundation's partners in Philanthropie.be. The database is also very important because the non-profit sector is sometimes criticized for not being transparent enough. Registration is free. The NBB data are automatically put in the system.

"This is public information, obtained from the standardized annual accounts of associations and foundations," says Cécile Buydens, Head of Department at the Central Balance Sheet Office of the NBB. "The information was accessible before, but only by going through the process of applying to the NBB. The advantage of this site is that it brings together in one place the various types of information that it holds about the associations and makes them available to citizens in a convenient way. This accords perfectly with the spirit of the

Law on Non-Profit Associations, which aims to improve transparency in the sector."

Credibility, transparency and visibility

One of the non-profits listed on Philanthropie.be is the Brussels-based association Les Amis d'Accompagner (Friends At Your Side). "Our mission is to assist people in difficulty at the grass-roots level, helping them to defend their rights and recover their independence," says Chair Father Guy Leroy. Having a mediator who is on your side can make all the difference to the outcome of a visit to the public welfare centre, the hospital or a court appearance. The mediator accompanies people to appointments and explains administrative jargon but does not go in their place. "It is a little helping hand towards independence," says Leroy.

What motivates a grass-roots association like Les Amis d'Accompagner to register on Philanthropie.be? "It is really about credibility, transparency and visibility," he adds. "The site provides a win-

dow so that people can see who we are and what we do. It helps us to become better known. People on the outside do not always find it easy to understand what we do. It also makes the registration procedures as simple as possible."

Free software

KBF's operational partner for Philanthropie.be is SOCIALware, an organization that provides free software to non-profit organizations. Associations that may benefit are contacted automatically. "It has allowed us to computerize our administration using some powerful software," says Guy Leroy. "For an association like ours, with quite a rapid turnover of volunteers, this is vital."

Now in Luxembourg

A site Philanthropie.lu was officially launched in Luxembourg on 1 October during the first Day of the Philanthropy in Luxembourg, and supported by the Oeuvre Nationale du Secours de la Grande-Duchesse and the Bank of Luxembourg.

Did you know?

- With a share of about 5% of Belgian GDP, the non-profit sector rivals others in importance, including the construction and financial sectors.
- The sector's impact on the Belgian economy has increased since 2000 thanks to vigorous average annual growth, surpassing the rest of the economy.
- The sector's dominant activity is in health and social action.
- 11.5% of Belgium's total salaried workforce is employed by non-profit organizations.

More info?

- > www.philanthropie.be
- > www.philanthropie.lu