



***Bénévolat* and the Human Rights-Based Approach: Participation, Non-Discrimination, and Civic Sustainability in Luxembourg**

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## Abstract

Set against Luxembourg's exceptional demographic diversity and civic dynamism, this dissertation examines how Luxembourg's policy framework for *bénévolat* (volunteering) reflects the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) principles of participation and non-discrimination. Although volunteering is widely promoted in Luxembourg as a social and moral value, it remains only partially institutionalised in law, raising questions about equality, recognition, and sustainability in civic engagement.

Adopting a qualitative, interpretive methodology, the research combines documentary analysis of national legislation and policy reports with six semi-structured interviews conducted between November and December 2025. The study analyses how institutional frameworks, linguistic diversity, and cultural norms shape access to and recognition within *bénévolat*. Comparative reference is made to *Belgium's 2005 Law on the Rights of Volunteers*, which offers a more comprehensive rights-based model.

Findings indicate that while Luxembourg strongly encourages participation, it does not yet guarantee it as a right. Barriers linked to language, time constraints, and administrative formality limit inclusiveness, while recognition remains largely symbolic rather than legal. The study concludes that the current framework embodies formal openness but lacks substantive equality and accountability.

The study contributes to understanding how HRBA principles can illuminate hidden inequalities in civic participation within high-income democracies, offering lessons for other multilingual and transnational contexts.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Research Problem

In contemporary democratic societies, volunteering and civic participation represent essential dimensions of social cohesion and democratic vitality. Yet the extent to which these practices are institutionally recognised as rights rather than voluntary moral acts remains contested. In Luxembourg, the landscape of civic engagement—known locally as *bénévolat*—has grown increasingly visible through state-supported initiatives such as *Ech si Benevole* and the *Agence du Bénévolat*. However, despite strong social valorisation of voluntary action, its legal and policy framework remains partial and fragmented, with no overarching law defining the rights or protections of volunteers.

This dissertation examines how Luxembourg’s framework for *bénévolat* reflects the HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination. While HRBA is most commonly applied to development or humanitarian contexts, this study extends it to a high-income, multilingual European state, thereby testing its analytical value in assessing civic inclusion within mature democracies.

The HRBA frames participation as a *right*, not a privilege, and requires that states ensure inclusive, equitable, and accountable opportunities for individuals to engage in civic life. While Luxembourg promotes volunteering as a social good and a pillar of its *vivre ensemble* ethos, this study investigates whether those values are supported by institutional mechanisms that guarantee participation and non-discrimination in practice.

The research thus addresses a critical paradox: *How can a state with strong democratic traditions and civic culture still lack a coherent rights-based framework for volunteering?*

## 1.2 Research Question and Objectives

The central research question guiding this study is:

*To what extent does Luxembourg’s policy framework for bénévolat reflect the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) principles of participation and non-discrimination, and how do these shape the sustainability and recognition of civic engagement?*

From this overarching question emerge the following objectives:

- To examine how Luxembourg’s legal and policy frameworks conceptualise and regulate *bénévolat*;
- To explore how volunteers and researchers perceive participation, recognition, and inclusion within the civic sector;
- To identify the structural and motivational factors influencing the sustainability of engagement; and
- To assess whether existing policies and practices align with HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination.

While the study does not begin from a fixed hypothesis, it evaluates *participation* and *non-discrimination*, and it proceeds from the working proposition that Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* framework prioritises moral appreciation and organisational flexibility over formalised rights and institutional accountability, leading to a partial realisation of HRBA principles.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework: The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

The HRBA provides the conceptual foundation for this research. Rooted in international human rights law and developed through United Nations (UN) and development practice (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; OHCHR, 2006), the HRBA requires that policies and institutions advance participation, non-discrimination, accountability, and empowerment.

Within this framework, participation is understood as a substantive right enabling individuals to influence decisions that affect their lives, while non-discrimination ensures that participation is equitable and inclusive. Applying this approach to volunteering repositions *bénévolat* from an act of altruism toward a manifestation of civic rights.

This theoretical framing is significant because existing scholarship on volunteering—largely sociological or organisational—tends to emphasise motivation and community benefit rather than the rights-based dimensions of participation. By integrating HRBA principles into the analysis of Luxembourg’s volunteering landscape, this study contributes a normative and legal perspective to a field often treated as apolitical or morally neutral.

### 1.4 Rationale and Significance

The significance of this research lies both in its national relevance and its broader implications for civic governance in Europe. Luxembourg provides a valuable test case for understanding how legal frameworks shape civic participation in small, multilingual, and high-income democracies. The study therefore addresses not only Luxembourg’s domestic challenges—such as language barriers, administrative fragmentation, and declining engagement—but also the broader question of how HRBA principles can inform civic policy in developed states.

Despite Luxembourg’s reputation for strong social cohesion, several empirical indicators point to structural limitations: engagement rates remain uneven across linguistic and socioeconomic groups (TNS Ilres, 2021), and associations report persistent difficulties in retaining volunteers (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022). The absence of a comprehensive legal definition of *bénévolat* creates ambiguity regarding volunteers’ rights, insurance, and recognition.

By analysing these issues through the HRBA lens, the study contributes to understanding how human rights principles can strengthen civic inclusion beyond the traditional focus on vulnerable groups or development contexts. The Luxembourg case also offers comparative insights for other European states balancing flexibility in civic participation with the need for structural guarantees of equality and accountability.

### 1.5 Methodological Overview

The study employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology combining documentary analysis with semi-structured interviews. Six interviews were conducted between November and December 2025: four with active *bénévoles* and two with researchers specialising in civic participation. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure variation in experience and institutional affiliation.

Documentary sources include Luxembourg’s *Law of 31 October 2007 on Voluntary Service*, the *Law of 7 August 2023 on Associations and Foundations*, and policy documents such as the *Rapport d’Activité 2024* of the *Agence du Bénévolat, Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* (2022), and the *Coalition Agreement 2023–2028*. Comparative reference is made to Belgium’s *Law of 3 July 2005 on the Rights of Volunteers*, which provides a coherent regional benchmark for formalising volunteer rights within a civil-law framework.

The analysis follows Braun and Clarke’s thematic approach (2006), coding data according to the two HRBA pillars—participation and non-discrimination—while remaining open to emergent themes such as sustainability, recognition, and institutional accountability. This methodology is well suited to exploring perceptions, meanings, and systemic patterns rather than quantifying trends, consistent with the study’s interpretive aims.

## 1.6 Contribution to Scholarship

This dissertation contributes to three overlapping bodies of scholarship:

- Volunteering and civic engagement studies, by moving beyond motivational or sociological explanations to examine *bénévolat* as a site of rights realisation and policy design.
- Human Rights-Based Approach literature, by applying HRBA principles in a high-income, EU context—demonstrating their analytical value outside the global South or development policy.
- Comparative public law and governance, by illustrating how small European states operationalise (or fail to operationalise) rights-based participation through voluntary frameworks.

By situating Luxembourg within this comparative and theoretical matrix, the dissertation fills a gap between human rights discourse and everyday civic practice. It shows that even in established democracies, the *right to participate* can remain under-institutionalised, with implications for inclusion, accountability, and equality.

## 1.7 Personal Motivation

The research topic was also chosen out of a personal commitment to the idea of civic participation as a cornerstone of social justice. Having observed Luxembourg’s multilingual civic landscape as both a participant and researcher, I was intrigued by the contrast between the country’s vibrant associative culture and the limited formal recognition of *bénévoles’* rights. This intersection of social engagement, legal structure, and human rights provided a meaningful opportunity to contribute empirically grounded insights to an under-researched field.

## 1.8 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured into six chapters, including this introduction:

- Introduction – introduces the research problem, outlines the theoretical and analytical framework, and presents the research question and objectives.
- Background and Conceptual Clarification – provides the national, demographic, and institutional context of Luxembourg’s civic landscape and clarifies the distinction between *bénévolat* and *volontariat*, situating both within the broader HRBA framework.
- Analytical Framework and Literature Review – situates the study within scholarship on volunteering, civic participation, and the HRBA, identifying conceptual gaps in linking rights frameworks to civic engagement in developed contexts.
- Methodology – explains the qualitative research design, ethical considerations, and analytical framework.
- Findings and Discussion – organised around five thematic areas that emerged from the data:
  - *Theme 1: Participation as a Central but Loosely Defined Principle*

- *Theme 2: Non-Discrimination in Practice — Between Formal Openness and Hidden Barriers*
  - *Theme 3: Policy Fragmentation and Emerging Frameworks of Accountability*
  - *Theme 4: Sustainability Challenges in Civic Engagement*
  - *Theme 5: Recognition, Value, and Civic Legitimacy*
- Each theme examines the relationship between HRBA principles and specific dynamics within Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* sector.
- Conclusion – synthesises the findings, reflects on their implications for HRBA theory and civic governance, and presents policy recommendations for strengthening equality and sustainability in Luxembourg’s volunteering framework.

## 1.9 Concluding Overview

This dissertation ultimately seeks to reframe volunteering in Luxembourg not merely as an act of solidarity but as an expression of civic rights. By applying the HRBA to the analysis of *bénévolat*, it highlights both progress in promoting inclusive participation and persistent gaps in ensuring equality, sustainability, and recognition. In doing so, it contributes to broader debates on how democratic states can institutionalise participation as a right—ensuring that engagement in civic life is not a privilege of the few but a universal and dignified opportunity for all.

## 2 Background and Conceptual Clarifications

### 2.1 Luxembourg's Civic and Demographic Landscape

Luxembourg offers a distinctive context for analysing civic participation and volunteering through an HRBA. Despite being one of the smallest EU member states, it is marked by exceptional demographic growth, transnational mobility, and cultural diversity. Between 2011 and 2021, the population increased by 25.7% to reach 643,941 inhabitants, compared with an EU average growth of 1.7% (STATEC, 2021).

This growth is largely driven by immigration: 47.2% of residents are foreign nationals from nearly 180 countries, with the largest communities being Portuguese (14.5%), French (7.6%), Italian (3.7%), Belgian (3.1%), and German (2.0%) (STATEC, 2021). This demographic mix reflects Luxembourg's integration within the European labour market and its dependence on cross-border workers.

Luxembourg's trilingualism—Luxembourgish, French, and German—alongside the widespread use of English and Portuguese, reflects deep cultural plurality. This multilingualism enriches civic life yet also creates subtle barriers to participation, as many associations operate primarily in French or Luxembourgish, unintentionally excluding newer residents or migrant workers (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022).

Civic engagement is central to Luxembourg's ethos of *vivre ensemble* (“living together”), yet the voluntary sector remains fragmented and unevenly regulated. The *Agence du Bénévolat* reported an 80.9% increase in registered volunteers on *benevolat.lu* in 2024 compared with 2023 (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 14). However, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework for *bénévolat* continues to affect recognition, protection, and equality of access.

From an HRBA perspective, Luxembourg's civic culture reflects both strength and limitation: strong social cohesion and participation coexist with limited institutional guarantees. In a country where nearly half the population are foreign nationals, the lack of a unified volunteering framework risks reinforcing inequalities based on language, status, or organisational affiliation. Understanding how *bénévolat* operates within this demographic and institutional setting is therefore central to assessing Luxembourg's fulfilment of HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination.

This demographic complexity makes Luxembourg an ideal case for examining how civic participation and equality are operationalised beyond formal rights. By viewing *bénévolat* through an HRBA lens, the study explores whether inclusive rhetoric is matched by institutional guarantees of participation.

### 2.2 Conceptual Clarifications: *Bénévolat* and *Volontariat* in Luxembourg

Civic engagement in Luxembourg operates through two related but distinct concepts — *bénévolat* and *volontariat* — whose differentiation is key to understanding the country's fragmented governance of volunteering.

The *Charte Luxembourgeoise du Bénévolat* defines *bénévolat* as “a freely chosen engagement, without financial remuneration, in an activity for the benefit of others or the community, carried out within an organisational structure and beyond the sphere of family or friendship” (Le Gouvernement Luxembourgeois, 2001). This definition underscores its collective and

associative nature, distinguishing it from *bénévolat interpersonnel* — informal, personal support provided to family, friends, or neighbours.

Two main forms are recognised (European Commission, 2010, p. 2):

- **Associative *bénévolat*** – engagement within associations or non-profit organisations;
- **Interpersonal *bénévolat*** – informal care or assistance within personal networks, socially valuable but outside the institutional scope of organised volunteering.

By contrast, *volontariat* has a formal legal status under the *Law of 31 October 2007 on Voluntary Service* and the *Grand-Ducal Regulation of 2009*. It defines *voluntary service* (*service volontaire*) as a structured civic activity of general interest that is non-professional, freely chosen, unpaid except for expenses, and undertaken within recognised non-profit organisations (*Journal officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2007, Art. 2*). Typically lasting three to twelve months, it mainly applies to youth and represents a legally protected, time-bound form of participation.

This dual system highlights Luxembourg’s hybrid approach: *volontariat* is formalised and state-regulated, while *bénévolat*—the more widespread and socially embedded form—remains governed by moral and organisational norms rather than enforceable legal standards. From an HRBA perspective, this creates a structural gap: participation is encouraged but not guaranteed, relying on goodwill rather than rights-based assurance.

The coexistence of these two forms reflects Luxembourg’s civic pluralism but also exposes a structural asymmetry: *volontariat* enjoys legal protection, whereas *bénévolat* depends on moral norms. This imbalance highlights the central HRBA concern that participation is encouraged but not yet guaranteed as a right.

### 3 Analytical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter establishes the conceptual foundation and analytical lens of the research. It defines the HRBA as the principal framework guiding the study and examines how its key principles—participation and non-discrimination—apply to civic engagement and volunteering. It then explores the evolution of *bénévolat* and *volontariat* in Luxembourg, situating the discussion within broader European literature on volunteering and policy frameworks. Finally, it identifies the conceptual and empirical gaps that this dissertation addresses by linking human rights principles with volunteering policy in Luxembourg.

While existing scholarship on volunteering in Europe emphasises civic virtue, social capital, and active citizenship, it rarely frames participation as a *right*. The HRBA provides a normative and analytical lens to address this gap, treating participation not merely as a social good but as a universal entitlement grounded in equality and accountability.

#### 3.1 Conceptualising the Human Rights-Based Approach

The HRBA emerged from the integration of human rights norms into development and governance practices in the 1990s. Drawing on Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2004), a human rights-based approach provides a normative and political framework that grounds development in legal obligations rather than discretionary goodwill (p. 1416–1417). It re-politicises participation, reframing citizens not as passive recipients of aid but as active claimants of rights (p. 1424–1425), and identifies accountability as the key element distinguishing HRBA from conventional development practice (p. 1433). This conceptual framing underpins the present study’s analysis of *bénévolat* as both a form of civic participation and a potential expression of equality and inclusion within Luxembourg’s policy environment.

The *UN’s Common Understanding on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation* (2003) provides the foundational consensus across UN agencies. It defines development as a process grounded in international human rights standards and identifies five interdependent principles: participation and inclusion; non-discrimination and equality; accountability and the rule of law; empowerment; and legality (United Nations, 2003).

Building on this, the *OHCHR’s Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation* (2006) operationalised the HRBA, translating its principles into practical guidance for governance and civic processes (OHCHR, 2006). Together, these documents form the normative foundation for assessing civic inclusion and equality in public life.

In this dissertation, the HRBA provides both a normative and analytical framework for evaluating Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* system. The focus is narrowed to two key pillars: participation and non-discrimination. These are selected because they most directly address civic inclusion and equality of access in the voluntary sector, aligning with the research question’s focus on recognition and sustainability. While accountability and empowerment are integral to the HRBA, they fall beyond the empirical scope of this study.

Participation, under International Human Rights Law, is not merely a civic value but a right. Article 25 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) enshrines the right of every citizen to “take part in the conduct of public affairs” (United Nations, 1966), while Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) guarantees the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community (United Nations, 1948).

The HRBA reinterprets participation as both a means and a goal: “it requires that development processes are informed by and responsive to the voices and priorities of those whose rights are at stake,” and that participation must be “active, free and meaningful” (OHCHR, 2006, p. 26). This principle implies that all people are entitled “to contribute to and enjoy civil, economic, social, cultural and political development” (OHCHR, 2006, p. 26). Institutional structures, therefore, must facilitate such inclusion to ensure genuine participation in civic and policy processes.

Non-discrimination, the second pillar, ensures that participation is equitable and accessible across boundaries of nationality, gender, language, or social status. The HRBA “requires a particular focus on discrimination and inequality,” as non-discrimination is “a cross-cutting principle that applies to all rights,” demanding the elimination of discrimination “in law and in practice” (OHCHR, 2006, p. 23). Communes report declining volunteer engagement, particularly among younger and non-Luxembourgish residents, with language barriers and limited social inclusion cited as key obstacles. This suggests that linguistic and migratory factors continue to shape unequal access to civic participation in Luxembourg (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 46).

Thus, the HRBA offers an evaluative framework through which the study examines how far Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* system facilitates meaningful and equitable participation. Participation reflects the extent of civic inclusion, while non-discrimination measures its quality. Together, these pillars provide the analytical criteria guiding both thematic analysis and the interpretation of institutional and policy structures in the subsequent chapters.

### 3.2 From Volunteering to *Bénévolat*: A Human Rights Perspective

Volunteering occupies a complex position at the intersection of civic engagement, social solidarity, and public policy. Within Europe, the concept encompasses multiple traditions, ranging from formalised service-oriented programmes to informal, community-based initiatives. In Luxembourg, this distinction is marked linguistically and institutionally between *volontariat* and *bénévolat*.

Conceptually, the distinction between *volontariat* and *bénévolat* requires attention to their differing analytical contexts. The former is primarily defined within institutional and legal frameworks, as reflected in policy-oriented studies such as the AVSO and CEV National Report (2005). The latter, by contrast, is grounded in sociological understandings of civic engagement, exemplified by Meyers (2006), who explores its associative, informal, and participatory nature. This dual-source approach acknowledges that volunteering in Luxembourg operates simultaneously within regulatory structures and community-based practices.

According to the AVSO and CEV *National Report – Luxembourg* (2005, p. 4–11), *volontariat* refers to structured, often state-supported volunteer service, particularly within youth or social sectors. It is governed by specific legal provisions, notably the *Law of 31 October 2007 on Voluntary Service* and the *Grand-Ducal Regulation of 2009 on Youth*. By contrast, *bénévolat* denotes a more informal, associative form of engagement embedded in cultural, sporting, and community contexts. It reflects civic and altruistic motivations rather than formal or institutional obligations (Meyers, 2006, p. 9–12). This associative and community-driven dimension positions *bénévolat* as a key site for analysing civic participation through the lens of the HRBA, particularly regarding the principles of participation and non-discrimination.

While both forms contribute to social cohesion, they differ significantly in recognition and institutional support. *Volontariat* enjoys legal safeguards, insurance coverage, and official certification, whereas *bénévolat* remains largely outside statutory frameworks. This asymmetry

constitutes what may be described as a partially coherent policy environment—not a failure, but a partial institutionalisation of civic participation. The HRBA provides a useful lens for interpreting this fragmentation as a rights issue: when recognition and protection differ across forms of participation, equality of civic access is compromised.

The HRBA also underscores the transformative potential of volunteering as an expression of rights. Bekkers (2005, p. 439) notes that participation in voluntary associations contributes to a healthy democracy by fostering civic engagement and social integration, linking individual involvement with collective accountability. Kiuna (2003, p. 6) emphasises that voluntarism should be institutionalised within development systems, ensuring that social contribution is recognised as a right rather than a charitable act. This reinforces the HRBA’s focus on participation as both a right and a duty shared between citizens and the state. Martela and Ryan (2015, p. 761-762) demonstrate that benevolent action enhances individuals’ senses of autonomy, competence, and relatedness—the basic psychological needs that underpin well-being. This psychological perspective complements the HRBA by framing volunteering not only as a means of realising participation rights but also as an expression of human flourishing grounded in dignity and mutual respect.

Souto-Otero and Shields (2016, p. 487–491) identify the rise of an “*investment model*” of volunteering in European policy discourse, where participation is increasingly valued for its contribution to employability and skills development. While this framing enhances institutional recognition, it also reflects a shift toward instrumentalising civic engagement for labour-market objectives.

### 3.3 Policy and Institutional Landscape in Luxembourg

Luxembourg’s volunteering sector operates within a plural policy context, where formal *volontariat* is codified, but *bénévolat* remains only partially institutionalised. The *Law of 31 October 2007 on Voluntary Service* (Journal officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2007) established a legal framework for voluntary service, outlining conditions for recognition, insurance, and training for young volunteers. The subsequent *Grand-Ducal Regulation of 9 January 2009 on Youth* (Journal officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2009) introduced ministerial certification of volunteer experience, further formalising the state’s engagement with structured volunteering. However, these measures primarily concern *volontariat*—defined in contractual and service-oriented terms—rather than informal civic engagement.

The *Agence du Bénévolat* plays a coordinating role in promoting and supporting *bénévolat* across sectors. Its *Rapport d’Activité 2024* provides valuable insight into the sector’s development. The report notes an 80.93% increase in registered volunteers on *benevolat.lu* between 2023 and 2024 (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 14), reflecting heightened public engagement and visibility. It also highlights multilingual outreach efforts, such as the “*Ech si Benevole*” campaign, designed to promote inclusion and accessibility across linguistic and cultural groups (p. 27). Additionally, the introduction of the *Label de Qualité Bénévolat* represents an important step toward institutional recognition and standardisation (p. 17).

From an HRBA perspective, these initiatives suggest partial fulfilment of participation and non-discrimination principles. On one hand, outreach campaigns and increased registration indicate stronger participation mechanisms and civic inclusion. On the other, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework means that equality of recognition remains contingent on institutional support rather than guaranteed by right. This tension reflects what could be termed *asymmetric recognition*—a situation in which formal *volontariat* is legitimised through policy while informal *bénévolat* relies on voluntary institutional goodwill.

These findings align with broader European analyses of volunteer policy. Angermann and Sittermann (2011, p. 2–8) observe that member states adopt markedly different approaches to regulating volunteering, depending on historical traditions and the perceived role of the state. While some countries have introduced comprehensive legal frameworks, others operate with partial or sectoral provisions. They emphasise that the challenge lies in “providing a general legal frame to the right degree,” balancing flexibility with adequate protection. Within this European context, Luxembourg’s framework appears evolving but incomplete: it promotes engagement through legal recognition of *volontariat* yet stops short of fully institutionalising *bénévolat* as a right of civic participation.

The current policy trajectory also reflects renewed governmental commitment to strengthening the volunteering ecosystem. The Coalition Agreement 2023–2028 explicitly identifies *bénévolat* as a policy priority, pledging to enhance cooperation with the *Agence du Bénévolat* and to develop supportive measures for civic engagement (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75–76). This political intention reinforces the interpretation of Luxembourg’s framework as gradually advancing toward fuller institutional recognition of volunteering.

### 3.4 Comparative Context: Belgium as a Reference Case

Belgium offers a relevant comparative model for assessing the HRBA dimensions of participation and non-discrimination in Luxembourg’s civic context. The two countries share a multilingual environment, a high proportion of non-national residents, and EU membership obligations promoting equality and social inclusion. However, Belgium’s *Loi du 3 juillet 2005 relative aux droits des volontaires* provides a more comprehensive legal recognition of volunteering.

The 2005 Belgian law defines volunteering broadly to include both formal and informal forms of engagement and explicitly guarantees insurance coverage, non-discrimination, and recognition of volunteer experience (Service Public Fédéral Justice, 2005). It also enshrines volunteers’ right to equal treatment regardless of age, gender, nationality, or socio-economic background—directly reflecting HRBA principles. By contrast, Luxembourg’s policy framework remains more limited, with rights implied through programmes rather than explicitly stated in law.

Comparatively, Belgium’s model operationalises HRBA principles more systematically. Participation is facilitated through legal guarantees of access and recognition, while non-discrimination is institutionalised through equality clauses and accessibility measures. This makes Belgium a useful benchmark for evaluating the *extent* to which Luxembourg’s approach fulfils similar standards. The comparison does not aim to rank systems normatively but to illuminate pathways for strengthening policy coherence and equal recognition in Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* landscape.

### 3.5 Scholarly Debates on Volunteering and Rights

The academic literature on volunteering and civic participation spans several disciplines, including sociology, public policy, and psychology. However, most studies examine volunteering through the lenses of motivation, social capital, or organisational structure, rather than human rights. Dury *et al.* (2015, p. 1107–1110) observe, drawing on prior sociological research, a trend toward the professionalisation of volunteering, whereby civic engagement becomes increasingly embedded within institutional and policy frameworks. Van Ingen and Dekker (2011, p. 682–686) link changes in volunteering patterns to broader socio-economic transformations, notably secularisation, shifts in the labour market, and educational expansion.

Briggs, Peterson, and Gregory (2010, p. 74) find that younger volunteers are more likely to engage in volunteering for self-focused reasons such as career or skill development, suggesting a shift toward more individualised and short-term forms of engagement.

These perspectives provide important sociological context but rarely address equality or rights of access. Lindenberg (1999, p. 161–162) situates volunteering within the retreat of state welfare and expansion of civil society, cautioning that voluntarism cannot substitute for state responsibility. This argument is relevant to Luxembourg, where state funding plays a significant role in sustaining civil society organisations, but where informal *bénévolat* receives limited institutional support.

Psychological research, particularly Martela and Ryan (2015, p. 750–760), links benevolent action to intrinsic motivation and well-being, underscoring its human value but not its formal recognition as a right. The HRBA lens complements this perspective by framing participation as both a moral and legal obligation that states must facilitate and protect. This dissertation therefore situates itself within an underexplored intersection between civic engagement studies and human rights theory, extending the debate from questions of motivation and participation toward equality and normative entitlement.

### 3.6 Identifying Conceptual and Empirical Gaps

A review of existing literature reveals several gaps that this study seeks to address. First, although European research provides extensive analyses of volunteering trends, few studies apply a rights-based analytical framework to national volunteer policies. While the HRBA is well established in development and governance literature, it remains underexplored in relation to civic participation within Western European contexts.

Second, existing research in Luxembourg has focused primarily on demographic participation patterns (Meyers, 2006; Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022) or institutional reports (AVSO & CEV, 2005; Agence du Bénévolat, 2025). While these sources provide valuable descriptive insights, they do not systematically evaluate how participation and recognition align with HRBA principles — a gap that this study directly addresses.

Third, comparative analyses of volunteering in small European states are rare. Belgium’s inclusive framework provides an opportunity to explore how legal recognition shapes equality of access, particularly in multilingual and multicultural societies. By situating Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* within this comparative lens, the study contributes both empirical and conceptual value.

Finally, few works examine the intersection of participation and non-discrimination as mutually reinforcing conditions for sustainability. Most analyses treat sustainability as financial or organisational continuity. This dissertation reframes it as continuity of engagement and policy support, arguing that equitable access and recognition are essential to long-term civic vitality.

### 3.7 Conceptual Summary

This chapter has defined the HRBA as the central analytical framework of the research, focusing on the pillars of participation and non-discrimination. It has shown that these principles provide normative criteria for evaluating the inclusiveness and equality of civic engagement in Luxembourg. The review of literature and policy documents highlights both progress and fragmentation: while Luxembourg’s institutional landscape shows growing engagement through initiatives like the *Agence du Bénévolat* and the *Label de Qualité Bénévolat*, the absence of a unified legal framework limits equal recognition of all volunteers.

The comparative case of Belgium demonstrates how legal codification of volunteering rights can strengthen participation and non-discrimination in practice. The chapter also identifies a significant gap in existing research: the lack of a rights-based analysis of volunteering policies in small European states.

In response, this dissertation applies HRBA principles to assess how Luxembourg's *bénévolat* framework promotes or restricts civic inclusion and equality. It thereby contributes to bridging the conceptual divide between human rights theory and civic policy, offering new insights into how participatory and non-discriminatory governance can sustain vibrant civil societies.

The following chapter builds on this analytical foundation by outlining the methodological design used to operationalise these HRBA principles and assess their implementation within Luxembourg's *bénévolat* system.

## 4 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology combining documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine how Luxembourg’s current policy and institutional framework for *bénévolat* fulfils the principles of a rights-based approach to civic participation. The HRBA, as applied here, emphasises two core pillars—participation and non-discrimination—and serves as both the analytical and evaluative framework guiding data collection and interpretation. This methodological approach enables the research to explore how participation in *bénévolat* is experienced, recognised, and supported, and to identify whether policy conditions promote inclusivity and equality in civic engagement.

Because the HRBA emphasises voice, agency, and equality of participation, an interpretive qualitative design is particularly appropriate, allowing those directly engaged in *bénévolat* to articulate how rights and recognition are experienced in practice.

The qualitative design is particularly suited to understanding *how* individuals perceive civic participation and recognition, focusing on the meanings, motivations, and institutional conditions that shape their engagement. The study is grounded in an interpretivist epistemology, recognising that meanings of participation and equality are socially constructed and best understood through participants’ narratives rather than through measurement. Given that *bénévolat* in Luxembourg has been only partially institutionalised, a qualitative approach allows for interpretive insight into participants’ experiences of agency, access, and fairness—dimensions often overlooked in quantitative policy analysis (Bryman, 2016, p. 10-12).

### 4.1 Research Design

The research design integrates two primary components—documentary and policy analysis, and semi-structured interviews—supplemented by a targeted comparative contextualisation with Belgium. This triangulated design ensures that findings are empirically grounded while remaining sensitive to broader European policy trends and normative frameworks.

### 4.2 Documentary and Policy Analysis

The first component of the research involves documentary and policy analysis of both legal instruments and organisational reports relevant to *bénévolat* in Luxembourg. The analysis includes:

- National laws and regulations such as the *Loi du 31 octobre 2007 sur le volontariat* and the *2009 Règlement grand-ducal relatif au service volontaire des jeunes*, which institutionalised contractual, insurance, and recognition mechanisms for *volontariat* but not *bénévolat*;
- Recent government and NGO reports, including the *Rapport AMIF 2022* (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022), commissioned by the Ministry of Family, Integration and the Greater Region and co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF 2014–2020), and *Rapport d’Activité 2024 de l’Agence du Bénévolat*;
- International and regional policy documents, notably the *European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers* (2012), the *Council of the European Union Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU* (2022), and the *United Nations Volunteers (2009) Report on Volunteering and Sustainable Development*.

The *Rapport d’Activité 2024* is especially valuable, as it provides the most current data on the development of the voluntary sector in Luxembourg. It reports an 80.93% increase in registered

volunteers on *benevolat.lu* in 2024 compared with 2023 (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 14), and highlights efforts to expand participation through multilingual campaigns such as “*Ech si Benevole*”, which promote inclusion and accessibility across linguistic and social groups (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 27). The introduction of the *Label de Qualité Bénévolat* further reflects a growing, if still partial, institutionalisation of recognition and standards within the civic sector (p. 17). These developments are particularly relevant to the HRBA dimensions of participation and non-discrimination.

Each document was read critically to identify how participation and non-discrimination are framed — whether as legal entitlements, moral duties, or administrative goals — thus linking the textual analysis directly to the HRBA principles guiding this research.

In comparative perspective, Belgium’s *Loi du 3 juillet 2005 relative aux droits des volontaires* provides a model of formalised recognition, defining the legal status of volunteers and establishing insurance, safety, and non-discrimination safeguards (Service Public Fédéral Justice, 2005). The Belgian case thus serves as a point of reference for assessing Luxembourg’s progress and identifying potential policy lessons for embedding rights-based principles within national volunteering frameworks.

The documentary analysis will be used not only to trace legal and institutional developments but also to identify the normative assumptions underpinning Luxembourg’s civic engagement policies—particularly whether they conceptualise *bénévolat* as a civic right, a social service, or a voluntary act of charity.

### 4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The second component consists of six semi-structured interviews: four with active *bénévoles* and two with researchers who have published on civic participation and volunteering in Luxembourg. Interviews were conducted between November and December 2025. This approach allows for triangulation between practitioners’ lived experiences and expert interpretations of institutional conditions.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement with voluntary activities or research on the voluntary sector. Recruitment occurred via personal networks, referrals, and targeted email requests for interviews. All participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study’s objectives, ethical safeguards, and consent procedures.

The semi-structured format allows participants to express their experiences in their own terms while ensuring consistency across key thematic areas. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted in either English or French, depending on participants’ preference. The following guiding questions were used to structure the interviews:

- How do you perceive the current policy environment for *bénévolat* in Luxembourg?
- What barriers or inequalities affect participation in voluntary activities?
- How is recognition—formal or informal—experienced by *bénévoles*?
- In your view, how could legal or institutional frameworks better promote inclusion and participation?

These questions—aligned with HRBA operational indicators—were derived from existing literature on civic engagement and HRBA frameworks (Bekkers, 2005; Dury et al., 2014; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004), ensuring conceptual coherence between theory and empirical inquiry.

Due to time constraints and limited institutional responsiveness, interviews with government representatives and the *Agence du Bénévolat* could not be conducted. This limitation is acknowledged, but the data obtained from *bénévoles* and researchers still provide valuable insight into lived experiences and expert perspectives on participation and recognition.

#### 4.4 Comparative Contextualisation

Belgium was selected as the comparative reference point because of its geographic proximity, shared EU policy environment, language diversity, and similar socio-political structure, coupled with a more advanced legal framework for volunteering. The 2005 Belgian law formalises participation and explicitly prohibits discrimination in volunteer involvement, establishing clear parallels with the HRBA pillars guiding this study.

By contrast, Luxembourg's policy framework for *bénévolat* remains partial and dispersed across different instruments. Comparing the two systems enables an evaluation of how legal frameworks shape participation and equality in practice, offering a grounded understanding of what a rights-based approach could entail in Luxembourg's context.

Although Luxembourg has introduced limited legal recognition through the *Loi du 31 octobre 2007 sur le volontariat* and its 2009 regulation, these provisions apply primarily to formalised *volontariat* programmes, leaving *bénévolat*—the broader, community-based practice—largely outside any legal framework. This partial recognition strengthens rather than undermines the comparative design, as the study contrasts Luxembourg's selective approach with Belgium's comprehensive *Loi du 3 juillet 2005 relative aux droits des volontaires*. The comparison thus highlights how varying degrees of institutionalisation affect participation and non-discrimination—the two pillars of the HRBA underpinning this research. The comparison is not intended to generalise but to illuminate contrasts that clarify the conditions under which participation becomes a right rather than a discretionary opportunity.

#### 4.5 Data Collection and Analysis

All interviews were recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were anonymised to protect participants' identities, unless explicit permission was given for attribution. While the sample is small, the emphasis is on analytical rather than statistical generalisation — identifying mechanisms and meanings rather than measuring prevalence.

Interviews were conducted in English or French, depending on participant preference. For French transcripts, the researcher's working proficiency in French ensured accurate comprehension, and translation software was used only for clarification of complex phrases during transcription.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and meanings within the data. Following Braun and Clarke's framework, analysis progressed through several iterative stages: familiarisation with the transcripts; generation of initial codes; identification and refinement of broader themes; and synthesis of findings in relation to the HRBA framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

The coding process was conducted manually using Microsoft Excel, which allowed systematic organisation of excerpts, codes, and subthemes. These two HRBA pillars were operationalised as analytical dimensions in the coding process:

- Participation: covering access, agency, motivation, and perceived opportunities for engagement.

- Non-discrimination: encompassing linguistic, socio-economic, cultural, or institutional barriers affecting equal participation.

The analysis focused on identifying thematic patterns related to recognition, institutional dependency, accessibility, and continuity of engagement, while remaining open to additional themes emerging inductively from the data.

Documentary data were also coded to identify discursive and policy trends related to participation and inclusion. Cross-analysis between the interview data and documentary evidence served to triangulate findings and enhance analytical validity (Flick, 2018). Reflexive memoing was used during coding to document analytical decisions and ensure transparency in theme development.

The combination of participant narratives and documentary evidence allows the study to map both individual and structural dimensions of participation, bridging lived experience and policy intent.

## 4.6 Validity, Reflexivity, and Limitations

To enhance credibility, the study employed triangulation across multiple data sources—interviews, legal texts, and policy reports.

Researcher reflexivity was maintained through a positionality journal noting assumptions, reactions, and potential biases. As the researcher is not formally embedded in Luxembourg’s associative sector, positional detachment was beneficial in maintaining neutrality but required heightened cultural sensitivity during data collection. At the same time, being a non-native participant in Luxembourg’s civic context provided valuable outsider perspective, helping to question taken-for-granted assumptions about inclusion and recognition.

The small sample size limits statistical generalisability but aligns with qualitative inquiry’s emphasis on depth and interpretive understanding (Silverman, 2017, p. 638). While the absence of institutional interview data constrains insights into government perspectives, this is mitigated by the inclusion of two expert researchers and extensive documentary triangulation.

## 4.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to the University of London’s ethical standards for research involving human participants and has been prepared for Category B approval. All participants were informed of the study’s purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

Participants were also given the option to decide whether they wished to be identified by name or remain anonymous in the final dissertation. Two *bénévoles* and two researchers consented to be identified by name, while two participants preferred to remain anonymous and are therefore referred to as Bénévolat 2 and Bénévolat 4. This approach respects participants’ autonomy and privacy while maintaining transparency in attribution, in full compliance with institutional ethics and data protection standards.

Confidentiality was ensured through anonymisation and secure storage of all data on an encrypted, password-protected external drive accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion and successful submission of the dissertation, all identifiable data will be securely deleted in accordance with the University of London data protection policy and the UK GDPR.

Given the qualitative and non-sensitive nature of the study, risks to participants were minimal. Care was taken to avoid leading questions and to ensure respect for cultural and linguistic diversity during interviews.

## 4.8 Expected Outcomes

The methodology is designed to produce an empirically grounded understanding of how Luxembourg's current policy and institutional framework aligns with HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination. This reflects the ongoing negotiation between moral and rights-based understandings of civic participation. It is expected that the study will reveal a mixed pattern of HRBA implementation—strong associative engagement but limited institutional guarantees—reflecting the ongoing negotiation between moral and rights-based understandings of civic participation (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 13–16).

The research aims to identify pathways for strengthening *bénévolat* as a sustainable and inclusive form of civic participation, contributing to both national policy discourse and broader debates on human rights and civil society in Europe.

## 5 Findings and Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

Building on the methodological framework outlined in Chapter 6, the following analysis the empirical findings of the study, integrating data from six semi-structured interviews and documentary evidence to examine how Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* framework reflects the HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination. The analysis follows a thematic structure, derived through iterative coding of the interview transcripts and triangulated with legal, institutional, and policy documents, including national legislation, government reports, and publications from the *Agence du Bénévolat*.

In line with Braun and Clarke’s (2006) framework for thematic analysis, the findings are organised around five overarching themes that emerged from the data:

- Participation as a Central but Loosely Defined Principle
- Non-Discrimination in Practice: Between Formal Openness and Hidden Barriers
- Policy Fragmentation and Emerging Frameworks of Accountability
- Sustainability Challenges in Civic Engagement
- Recognition, Value, and Civic Legitimacy

Each theme encapsulates multiple sub-themes and is supported by verbatim excerpts from interviewees and corresponding documentary evidence, allowing for analytical triangulation between lived experiences and institutional perspectives. The integration of qualitative and documentary data provides a multidimensional understanding of Luxembourg’s civic participation landscape.

The discussion is guided by the HRBA’s two normative pillars: participation, which concerns the right to active inclusion in civic and public life, and non-discrimination, which ensures equality of access and recognition across linguistic, social, and legal boundaries. These principles serve both as interpretive categories and evaluative benchmarks throughout the analysis.

By integrating practitioner, researcher, and policy perspectives, the chapter situates Luxembourg’s experience within wider debates on civic inclusion and accountability. It assesses not only how *bénévolat* functions, but how far it realises HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination.

### 5.2 Theme 1: Participation as a Central but Loosely Defined Principle

Participation consistently emerged across interviews and documents as one of the defining yet ambiguously realised features of Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* system. In line with the HRBA, participation represents more than activity; it is the precondition for equality, accountability and inclusion. However, in the Luxembourg context, participation is celebrated as a civic virtue but insufficiently institutionalised as a right. The following analysis explores how policy discourse, cultural norms and administrative structures shape this paradox.

#### 5.2.1 Participation as a Value Rather Than a Right

Interviewees and official documents converge on a view of participation as a moral and social value. *Bénévolat 2* framed service as an intrinsic aspect of life—“something very important not to be only centred on you and your family”—and as an element that “should be part of the education of young people”(Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025). This resonates with the *Law of 31 October 2007 on Youth Voluntary Service*, which defines voluntarism as a tool to “develop

solidarity among young people, promote active citizenship, and foster mutual understanding” (Art. 1).

Government policy mirrors this approach. As Lejealle observed, Luxembourg’s political narrative “focuses heavily on encouraging everyone to participate in *bénévolat*,” (Lejealle, interview, 2025), an orientation operationalised through awareness campaigns such as *Ech si Benevole* (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 7). The Coalition Agreement similarly pledges to “continue efforts to inform and raise awareness... [and] actively encourage social engagement” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75). Yet, as Bénévolat 4 remarked, these initiatives can appear “disconnected from reality... it’s advertising *bénévolat*, well you have to give two hours of your time instead of saying you have to shift your priorities differently” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025).

This critique echoes Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden (2022, p. 8), who identify citizen mobilisation as the main challenge for “living together” (*vivre ensemble*). Quantitative data reinforce the paradox: TNS Ilres (2021, p. 22) reports that 73% of residents express willingness to volunteer, while *STATEC* (2024, p. 1) defines volunteering as a “donation of time taken from one’s own free time.” The discourse thus centres on generosity, not entitlement. As Tenikue summarised, “the issue was more how do we bring them in, how do we get them to participate more.”

From an HRBA perspective, participation grounded solely in goodwill risks selective inclusion, as engagement depends on personal motivation and networks rather than enforceable access.

## 5.2.2 Institutional and Cultural Gateways to Participation

Participation in Luxembourg is primarily channelled through formal associative structures rather than informal initiatives. Mohan, president of a cultural ASBL — Many community organisations in Luxembourg operate as *associations sans but lucratif* (ASBLs), the legal form for non-profit associations — explained that his association “helps participants integrate culturally and socially through various events” (Mohan, interview, 2025). Bénévolat 2 similarly described community co-financing of projects within club associations. This institutional mediation ensures accountability and access to public facilities but constrains spontaneity. As Bénévolat 4 observed, “to get rooms for activities we need to have a legal association... you cannot get them as individuals” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025).

The legal framework reinforces this gatekeeping role. The *2007 Law and Grand-Ducal Regulation 2009* stipulate that voluntary service must occur within accredited organisations (Arts. 3–5), while the *Law of 7 August 2023 on Associations and Foundations* defines associations as bodies governed by a board and general assembly (Art. 4). These provisions institutionalise participation but also bureaucratise it.

For Lejealle, this associative model is the operational heart of *vivre ensemble*, the principle through which the Ministry of Family Affairs promotes social cohesion. The *Agence du Bénévolat*’s portal *benevolat.lu* facilitates matching between volunteers and organisations (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 7). According to Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden (2022, p. 10), such associative life “is a long-recognised factor of integration,” creating shared civic spaces. Yet this design also privileges structured, legally recognised engagement. *STATEC* (2024, p. 1) defines “formal volunteering” as activity conducted through organised entities, while TNS Ilres (2021, p. 29) confirms that most recorded volunteering occurs within associations.

Tenikue observed that “by regulating associations, you indirectly regulate *bénévolat*” (Tenikue, interview, 2025). The HRBA reading here is ambivalent: regulation ensures transparency but

may exclude those lacking linguistic, legal or financial capacity to form associations. Although the Coalition Agreement promises to “create framework conditions so that associations... can benefit from the potential of volunteers” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), it stops short of guaranteeing participation outside formal entities. Civic engagement thus remains both encouraged and constrained—accessible through institutions, but less so through individual initiative.

### 5.2.3 “*Vivre Ensemble*” as a Social Ethos

Luxembourg’s participatory philosophy is encapsulated in the concept of *vivre ensemble* (“living together”), which operates simultaneously as a social ideal and governance strategy. Lejealle explained that “within the Ministry of Family Affairs... there’s this notion of *Vivre ensemble*,” marking a policy shift “from integration to living together, where everyone reaches out to one another for national cohesion” (Lejealle, interview, 2025). Tenikue added that the phrase expresses a “bilateral process” of integration, in which Luxembourgers and foreign residents mutually adapt (Tenikue, interview, 2025).

Legislation embeds this ethos. The 2007 Law promotes “active citizenship” and “mutual understanding” (Art. 1), while the 2023 Law on Associations mandates that organisations pursue “a general interest purpose of a social or cultural nature, or one that defends and promotes human rights” (Art. 33). Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden (2022, p. 10) describe associative life as “the place where a bilateral process of integration develops.”

Institutional actors operationalise this principle. The *Agence du Bénévolat*, under the Ministry of Family Affairs, seeks to “create an environment conducive to civic engagement” (2025, p. 4), and the Coalition Agreement again commits to “actively encourage social engagement across all areas of society” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75). Empirical data strengthen the link between participation and cohesion: STATEC (2024, p. 1) found that feelings of well-being and social integration correlate with volunteering. TNS Ilres (2021, p. 4) likewise stresses that volunteering “occupies a specific place in civil society, complementary to paid work.”

From an HRBA angle, *vivre ensemble* translates the normative principles of participation and non-discrimination into national discourse. Yet the concept’s reliance on voluntary initiative rather than enforceable rights means inclusion depends on goodwill and institutional access. The challenge remains to convert *vivre ensemble* from aspiration into entitlement—ensuring all residents, regardless of status, can participate equally in public life.

### 5.2.4 Knowledge and Visibility Gaps

Despite growing policy attention, Luxembourg’s voluntary sector remains poorly documented. Lejealle acknowledged that “it’s not a very developed topic... we haven’t been able to document that” (Lejealle, interview, 2025), pointing to high turnover and limited data. The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* report similarly concedes that “little data exist on the associative sector to highlight its scope and impact” and that existing figures are “not statistically representative” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 45-67).

The *Agence du Bénévolat*’s 2024 report provides operational metrics—314 new registrations on *benevolat.lu*, reaching about 34% of the population (2025, p. 16)—but these remain descriptive. By contrast, Belgium’s *Loi du 3 juillet 2005 relative aux droits des volontaires* establishes a *Conseil supérieur des volontaires* to collect and analyse volunteering data (Art. 22bis). Luxembourg lacks a similar body, leaving research fragmented between ministries and NGOs.

The Coalition Agreement cites *TNS Ilres* statistics that 59% of residents volunteer and 69% of non-volunteers are willing (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), yet even TNS Ilres (2021, p. 34) notes that “the effects of actions carried out by associations are considered limited.” The *Law of 7 August 2023* obliges boards to submit annual activity reports (Art. 36), but these remain internal and uncoordinated. *STATEC* (2024, p. 5) highlights the interpretive ambiguity of current data by asking whether “people volunteer because they are happy, or are they happy because they volunteer.”

From an HRBA perspective, such informational deficits are rights issues: without disaggregated evidence, it is impossible to assess equal access or accountability. The absence of a centralised volunteer observatory constrains the state’s ability to monitor participation inclusively. As Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2004) argue, accountability requires both legal and informational transparency; data are not neutral but a precondition for equality of participation.

### 5.2.5 Defining the Boundaries of Participation

Taken together, the findings portray a system in which participation is vigorously promoted but unevenly institutionalised. Luxembourg’s legal architecture—the *2007 Law on Youth Voluntary Service*, *Grand-Ducal Regulation 2009* and *Coalition Agreement 2023–2028*—signals strong governmental commitment to civic engagement. These frameworks echo the HRBA principle of “active, free and meaningful participation” (OHCHR, 2006, p. 26). Yet, in practice, engagement remains voluntary, mediated and fragmented.

Interviewees described participation as encouraged through communication campaigns and digital platforms rather than supported through structural guarantees. *Bénévolat 4* viewed official messaging as superficial; Lejealle stressed mobilisation over empowerment. Access often depends on navigating formal associations—“to get rooms we need to have a legal association” (*Bénévolat 4*, interview, 2025), which privileges those with administrative literacy. This reliance on legal form narrows the universality of participation, challenging HRBA expectations of equal opportunity.

The ethos of *vivre ensemble* provides an inclusive narrative—mutual recognition across linguistic and national lines—but, as both researchers noted, remains aspirational. Linguistic diversity, administrative complexity and limited outreach continue to restrict equal participation. Moreover, the lack of sufficient data prevents assessment of who is effectively included. Lejealle’s observation that participation “is not a very developed topic” (Lejealle, interview, 2025), underscores the gap between rhetoric and measurement.

From an HRBA standpoint, Luxembourg shows strong normative commitment but limited institutionalisation of participatory rights: encouragement replaces entitlement, and policy visibility substitutes for accountability.

## 5.3 Theme 2: Non-Discrimination in Practice — Between Formal Openness and Hidden Barriers

The second HRBA pillar, non-discrimination, concerns not only the absence of exclusion but the presence of equitable access. In Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* system, equality is largely framed through *formal openness*—the idea that volunteering is accessible to all—rather than through targeted inclusion measures. Interviews and policy documents depict an environment “non-discriminatory by design,” yet with few mechanisms to address structural barriers. Within an HRBA lens, this distinction between formal and substantive equality is crucial: the former

ensures neutrality in law, while the latter demands active steps to guarantee equitable participation.

### 5.3.1 Formal Legal Openness and Limited Equity Measures

Across interviews, respondents portrayed Luxembourg's *bénévolat* as open and non-exclusive. Schaber, who is a Chairperson of a Foundation working on Community development and Education, observed that "everyone has the same opportunity... there is no barrier" (Schaber, interview, 2025), while Mohan similarly noted that volunteers are "seen on par; there is no discrimination" (Mohan, interview, 2025). Both reflect a civic culture valuing equality through neutrality rather than affirmative action.

Researchers confirmed this perception but pointed to limited legal clarity. Lejealle remarked that "there isn't a framework law that really governs the status of *bénévolat*," whereas Tenikue concluded that "by design, I don't see anything discriminatory in the legal context" (Lejealle, interview, 2025; Tenikue, interview, 2025). Such neutrality, while laudable, leaves no explicit guarantee of equitable access.

The *Law of 31 October 2007* defines voluntary service as "the expression of a free and personal decision" (Art. 2 (3)), but confines eligibility to those "under 30 years" (Art. 4 (1)). Likewise, the *Grand-Ducal Regulation (2009)* repeats this limitation, unintentionally excluding older volunteers. Policy texts celebrate accessibility—"Volunteering is accessible to all and essential to the Luxembourg social fabric" (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 13)—yet, as Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, (2022, p. 46) observe, activities "target the whole population and not specific groups." This universality risks overlooking marginalised residents.

Belgium's *Law of 3 July 2005*, by contrast, explicitly states that "foreign nationals... may engage in volunteering" (Art. 9, § 2), embedding inclusion directly into legislation. Luxembourg's approach thus embodies *formal openness* without proactive equity.

### 5.3.2 Language as a Key Participation Barrier

Language emerged as the most pervasive informal barrier. Although volunteering is legally open to all, linguistic expectations determine who can meaningfully engage. *Bénévolat 4* stated that "meetings are in Luxembourgish only... single individuals joining would need to adapt, speak fully fluently Luxembourgish" (*Bénévolat 4*, interview, 2025). Mohan described similar barriers: "Most of the people in our community don't speak French, German, or Luxembourgish... and the whole registration process is in French or German" (Mohan, interview, 2025).

"We lost close to a week just trying to understand the person in the municipality... he didn't know English" (Mohan, interview, 2025). These linguistic expectations extend to public services, creating indirect discrimination where access depends on language proficiency rather than legal exclusion.

Lejealle confirmed institutional awareness: "The Ministry... is addressing the first obstacle to participation: language," including local "language *cafés*" and multilingual training (Lejealle, interview, 2025). The *Rapport d'Activité 2024* echoes this, describing a multilingual approach as "indispensable in a country marked by strong cultural diversity" (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 14). Still, data from TNS Ires (2021) show that "80% of people who do not understand Luxembourgish are not formally engaged" (p. 38).

The 2007 *Law* even references "initiation into the language" (Art. 6 (2)), but its scope remains limited to youth programmes. Under HRBA principles, linguistic accessibility constitutes a

requirement for substantive equality. Without sustained multilingual provision, Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* remains open in theory but linguistically gated in practice.

### 5.3.3 Differential Participation across Social Groups

Despite its inclusiveness narrative, volunteering in Luxembourg remains socially stratified. Lejealle observed that “association leaders are mostly men, highly educated, middle-aged, and often in the civil service” (Lejealle, interview, 2025). She added that participation “is higher among Luxembourgers than among foreigners,” with non-EU nationals least represented. Quantitative data support this: TNS Ilres (2021, p. 6) confirms higher participation among Luxembourgers and the well-educated; STATEC (2024, p. 1) notes that volunteers are predominantly “affluent, older, and highly educated.”

Bénévolat 4 highlighted language again as a driver of inequality—“it’s often the three languages, Luxembourgish, English, and French, that need to be addressed”—while Schaber pointed to demographic change: “The next generation is not here anymore; they leave Luxembourg and don’t come back” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025; Schaber, interview, 2025).

Institutional reports recognise these divides. The *Agence du Bénévolat* (2025, p. 29) notes that “elderly and socially disadvantaged individuals seek personal advice” because they struggle with digital platforms. Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden (2022, p. 25) similarly report that “integration of third-country nationals is the area to which associations contribute the least.”

Although the Coalition Agreement (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75) promises to “develop volunteering... for older persons, persons with disabilities, or socially vulnerable persons,” it sets no binding targets. The HRBA lens exposes this as a case of *de facto* inequality: participation depends on education, networks, and language more than on equal opportunity.

### 5.3.4 Self-Selection and Informal Barriers

Beyond legislation, social dynamics play a decisive role. Bénévolat 4 noted that although language is “not written anywhere,” “those enrolled are mostly Luxembourgish speakers” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). Tenikue explained that “people who are similar tend to get together... they self-select where they go” (Tenikue, interview, 2025).

Such social affinity—where individuals gravitate toward those with similar linguistic or social profiles—creates *soft exclusion*. While the *Law of 2007* describes volunteering as a “free and personal decision” (Art. 2 (3)), freedom of choice is meaningless if organisational culture deters participation. This distinction between freedom to choose and freedom to access lies at the core of HRBA analysis.

Evidence supports this interpretation: 11% of non-participants cite “unsuitable organisational structures” (TNS Ilres, 2021, p. 39); Portuguese residents are “half as numerous as Luxembourgers in engaging in formal volunteering” (STATEC, 2024, p. 3). Inclusion of third-country nationals remains concentrated in a small subset of associations (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 9 -10).

Moreover, internal governance autonomy under the *Law of 7 August 2023*—allowing associations to define their own membership conditions (Art. 3 (2)(6°))—limits state oversight. HRBA standards require proactive correction of such informal exclusion, through multilingual facilitation and inclusive membership procedures.

Self-selection shows how equality on paper coexists with structural advantage in practice.

### 5.3.5 Inclusion Strategies with Limited Evaluation

Although inclusion features prominently in policy discourse, systematic evaluation remains scarce. Lejealle conceded: “No, we don’t have a measure of that... You have to want to evaluate it... It’s complicated” (Lejealle, interview, 2025). *The 2007 Law* entrusts a national committee to propose evaluation measures (Art. 7 (1)), and *the Grand-Ducal Regulation* (2009, Art. 17 (b)) calls for assessment of youth programmes. Yet both remain confined to the youth sector.

The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* (2022, p. 65) report admits that “few data are comparable,” and the *Agence du Bénévolat* (2025, p. 16) describes outreach results qualitatively without impact metrics. The Coalition Agreement (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75) commits to “more flexible forms of volunteering,” but sets no measurable goals. Consequently, inclusion efforts remain descriptive and unmonitored.

Under HRBA standards, the absence of disaggregated evaluation data undermines accountability and equality monitoring.

### 5.3.6 Inequality within Inclusion

Taken together, these findings show that overall, non-discrimination in Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* is more aspiration than achievement. Legal frameworks define volunteering as universally open, yet practical participation remains uneven across linguistic, social, and national lines. Schaber’s claim that “everyone has the same opportunity” (Schaber, interview, 2025) manifests *formal equality*, while Tenikue’s remark that the system is “non-discriminatory by design” (Tenikue, interview, 2025) captures its neutrality—but not its effectiveness.

Participation correlates with education and nationality (TNS Ilres, 2021; STATEC, 2024). Leadership roles are dominated by highly educated men within established networks (Lejealle, interview, 2025). Linguistic demands, described by *Bénévolat 4* as a need to “speak fully fluently Luxembourgish,” further restrict access. Although initiatives like *Ech si Benevole* promote diversity, 80% of non-Luxembourgish speakers remain disengaged (TNS Ilres, 2021, p. 38).

Self-selection compounds this inequality: “People who are similar tend to get together” (Tenikue, interview, 2025). Meanwhile, weak evaluation practices—acknowledged by Lejealle as “we don’t have a measure of that”—impede accountability.

From an HRBA perspective, Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* demonstrates formal openness but limited transformative capacity. Equality of opportunity is assumed rather than ensured. True non-discrimination would require shifting from encouragement to obligation—embedding multilingual accessibility, targeted outreach, and evaluation frameworks as state duties rather than voluntary initiatives.

In its current state, *bénévolat* in Luxembourg remains inclusive in rhetoric but unequal in structure: a system that invites participation yet quietly reproduces privilege.

## 5.4 Theme 3: Policy Fragmentation and Emerging Frameworks of Accountability

Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* system operates through a dispersed web of laws, institutions, and voluntary mechanisms rather than a unified statutory framework. While *volontariat* benefits from *the 2007 Law on Youth Voluntary Service* and its *2009 Regulation*, *bénévolat* — the broader form of civic volunteering — lacks direct codification. Instead, it functions within the scope of association law, administrative agreements, and the discretionary work of the *Agence du Bénévolat*. This fragmented structure affords flexibility but limits institutional

accountability, as no single authority defines the rights and obligations of volunteers or ensures equality of access. From an HRBA perspective, this dispersion weakens participation and non-discrimination, making civic engagement dependent on institutional goodwill rather than on enforceable guarantees.

#### 5.4.1 Indirect Regulation of *Bénévolat*

Across the interviews, participants described a regulatory void surrounding *bénévolat*. Mohan summarised this absence briefly:

“So, as far as I know, there is nothing; you register, and people forget about you” (Mohan, interview, 2025).

His statement encapsulates the uncertainty surrounding volunteers’ legal status once active within associations. *Bénévolat* 4 explained that “you have to create an *ASBL*, you get an insurance, and there you are protected” (*Bénévolat* 4, interview, 2025), confirming that the volunteer’s protection and legitimacy derive from association law rather than from a dedicated statute.

Lejealle clarified that Luxembourg’s “law for associative structures” was updated in 2023, modernising non-profit governance but leaving volunteers’ rights undefined (Lejealle, interview, 2025). Similarly, Tenikue described *bénévolat* as “a by-product of association life,” noting that while it sustains civil society, it lacks the direct legal recognition granted to *volontariat* (Tenikue, interview, 2025).

The legal framework corroborates this view. *The Law of 31 October 2007* explicitly defines *voluntary service* for youth, stating that “the provisions of the Labour Code do not apply” (Art. 2(5)), thereby distinguishing voluntarism from employment. However, *bénévolat* — often adult, community-based, or informal — remains governed indirectly through *the Law of 7 August 2023 on Associations and Foundations*. That law addresses organisational structures and liability but omits individual volunteer protections.

Institutionally, the *Agence du Bénévolat* operates “under an agreement with the Ministry of Family Affairs, Solidarity, Living Together and Reception” (*Agence du Bénévolat*, 2025, p. 9). This arrangement provides coordination but not regulation. The Coalition Agreement recognises this gap, pledging to “create a status for volunteers in order to clarify their rights and duties” (*Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, 2023, p. 75), though no such framework exists yet.

Belgium’s *Law of 3 July 2005*, by contrast, provides explicit volunteer protections, underscoring Luxembourg’s regulatory gap.

From an HRBA standpoint, this absence of direct regulation undermines both participation and non-discrimination. Without codified rights or state oversight, equality and protection depend on each organisation’s internal policies. Indirect regulation preserves flexibility but creates uneven access to recognition and safety, highlighting the need for a unified legal framework that balances autonomy with accountability.

#### 5.4.2 Reliance on Soft Instruments

In the absence of binding law, Luxembourg relies on soft instruments—certificates, quality labels, and awareness campaigns—that reward engagement symbolically rather than legally.

*Bénévolat* 2 described this informality:

“I also gave some certificates to other volunteers... for participating in this or that project or in this or that training” (Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025).

Such gestures reflect appreciation but not entitlement. They represent what the HRBA would call *encouragement without empowerment* — recognition detached from enforceable rights.

*The Law of 31 October 2007* and the *Grand-Ducal Regulation of 2009* institutionalised certification within *volontariat des jeunes*, granting volunteers “a certificate describing their engagement and the skills demonstrated” (Art. 13). Yet these provisions apply only to structured youth programmes. Broader *bénévolat* remains excluded, with no equivalent recognition system for adults or informal civic actors.

The *Agence du Bénévolat* has filled this gap through initiatives like the “*Label de Qualité Bénévolat*,” which “distinguishes associations that provide high-quality reception and supervision for volunteers” (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 7). The Coalition Agreement reinforces this approach, promising to “enhance recognition through a system of digital ‘badges’” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75). These measures promote civic value but remain voluntary for associations and symbolic for individuals.

As Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden (2022, p. 8) note, state support often consists of “communication activities and financial or logistical support.” This partnership model aligns with Luxembourg’s pluralist civic tradition but lacks standardised accountability. *The Law of 7 August 2023* requires each association to submit “a detailed activity report” (Art. 36(2)), yet it imposes no duty to assess volunteer well-being or inclusion outcomes.

In HRBA terms, soft instruments advance the principle of participation through encouragement but fall short on accountability and non-discrimination. Because these mechanisms are voluntary, their adoption and quality vary, producing uneven recognition across organisations. For example, some associations award certificates or training credits, while others offer only informal thanks. The result is what might be termed *symbolic equality*: visible but not enforceable.

To align with HRBA standards, soft mechanisms must be complemented by binding commitments—ensuring that all volunteers, regardless of organisation or background, benefit from consistent recognition, safety, and inclusion. Without such safeguards, visibility becomes a substitute for equity.

### 5.4.3 Limited Accountability and Evaluation

A recurrent finding is the limited culture of evaluation and accountability within Luxembourg’s volunteering sector. Campaigns promote engagement, yet there are few mechanisms to measure impact, inclusiveness, or outcomes over time. This reliance on trust, rather than data, undermines HRBA principles of transparency and evidence-based governance.

Participants described bureaucratic inertia and weak institutional responsiveness. Mohan noted:

“Here we are waiting for an appointment [Ministry of Finance]... No reply” (Mohan, interview, 2025).

Bénévolat 4 similarly commented that “campaigns by the government to encourage it are often disconnected from reality” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). Lejealle confirmed the absence of evaluation systems, explaining: “It’s not a policy evaluation as such. There isn’t enough perspective yet to make that kind of assessment” (Lejealle, interview, 2025).

*The 2007 Law* requires youth programmes to submit “an annual report on volunteers’ activities” (Art. 3(7)) and *the 2009 Regulation* creates a certification commission “to contribute to the development and evaluation of the system” (Art. 17). However, these mechanisms remain narrowly scoped and do not apply to general *bénévolat*.

Empirical studies confirm this fragmentation. *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 46) observed “no activities specifically dedicated to the integration of third-country nationals,” illustrating how inclusivity remains rhetorically supported but rarely monitored. The *Rapport d’Activité 2024* pledged “to encourage transparency and accountability among certified organisations” (p. 25), but did not specify indicators or reporting procedures.

Where accountability mechanisms exist, they focus on financial transparency rather than social outcomes. *The Law of 7 August 2023* mandates that “accounting documents must be retained for ten years” (Art. 18(7)), and the Coalition Agreement (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75) proposes examining “state-funded accident insurance for volunteers.” Yet neither provision measures participation equality or policy effectiveness.

By contrast, Belgium’s *Law of 3 July 2005* integrates accountability through the *Conseil supérieur des volontaires*, empowered to “give opinions or make proposals” on volunteering policy (Art. 22bis, §2, 3°). Luxembourg lacks a comparable national consultative body, leaving evaluation fragmented and ad hoc.

From an HRBA perspective, accountability is more than administrative compliance—it is the capacity to measure whether rights are realised. Without disaggregated data by gender, age, or nationality, it is impossible to determine if participation opportunities are equitably distributed. The absence of evaluation also limits policy learning, making it difficult to identify and correct exclusionary practices.

Thus, while Luxembourg’s volunteering sector emphasises civic trust and autonomy, it underinvests in accountability mechanisms that could substantiate inclusion claims. HRBA compliance would require embedding participatory monitoring, establishing measurable equality indicators, and linking state support to transparent reporting on inclusion outcomes.

#### 5.4.4 Policy Coordination and Emerging Accountability

The findings under Theme 3 reveal that Luxembourg’s governance of *bénévolat* is characterised less by an absence of regulation than by its dispersion across multiple, loosely connected policy instruments. The system operates as a network of association law, administrative agreements, and voluntary initiatives rather than as a coherent, rights-based framework. This fragmentation allows flexibility and civic autonomy but limits consistency, accountability, and equity in practice.

Indirect regulation — whereby *bénévolat* functions through association law and the mediating role of the *Agence du Bénévolat* — means that state engagement occurs primarily at the organisational level rather than through individual rights. As a result, volunteers’ protection and recognition depend on each association’s governance practices, which vary considerably in inclusiveness and transparency. While this decentralisation aligns with Luxembourg’s pluralist civic tradition, it also diffuses responsibility for ensuring equal access and fair treatment.

Reliance on voluntary measures promotes civic freedom but limits enforceable equality. These mechanisms symbolically promote civic engagement and social recognition but lack the binding force to guarantee equitable treatment or accountability. From an HRBA perspective,

such instruments advance the principle of participation in form but not in substance. They facilitate engagement but do not establish the institutional guarantees necessary to secure non-discrimination and accountability.

Reporting obligations, such as those mandated by *the Law of 7 August 2023* (Art. 36(2)), focus on financial or administrative compliance rather than on assessing equality, diversity, or inclusion outcomes. Although the Coalition Agreement expresses political intent to “create a status for volunteers” and to “examine the possibility of state-funded accident insurance” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), these commitments remain at the level of policy aspiration rather than systemic reform.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* governance system is evolving but remains institutionally fragmented. The framework effectively facilitates the *freedom to participate* yet falls short of ensuring *equality in participation*. Accountability is primarily procedural, not participatory, and coordination between actors remains ad hoc. From an HRBA standpoint, the current model embodies a high degree of normative support for participation but insufficient structural alignment with the principles of non-discrimination and accountability.

A more coherent policy architecture—anchored in clear legal definitions, systematic evaluation, and participatory monitoring—would strengthen the state’s ability to safeguard equality within civic life.

## 5.5 Theme 4: Sustainability Challenges in Civic Engagement

While earlier themes examined participation’s structural and institutional dimensions, this theme focuses on its sustainability — the conditions that enable or hinder long-term engagement in Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* landscape. Sustained participation is central to the HRBA framework, as meaningful engagement requires not only access but continuity over time. Despite strong public goodwill, many associations struggle to retain volunteers due to personal, organisational, and systemic factors such as time constraints, limited incentives, and administrative complexity. Consequently, civic engagement often remains episodic rather than sustained, undermining inclusivity and resilience.

### 5.5.1 Difficulty Retaining Volunteers

Retention emerged as a central challenge across all interviews. Schaber estimated that “nine out of ten step out,” describing expectations of volunteering as “completely wrong” (Schaber, interview, 2025). Bénévolat 2 similarly stated that they “didn’t want to spend [their] time there anymore because [they] didn’t find the qualities [they] were looking for” (Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025), while Mohan linked withdrawal directly to exhaustion: “I actually had a lot of burnout just by investing my time in there [ASBL]” (Mohan, interview, 2025). Such administrative friction reinforces inequality, as only those with time and resources sustain involvement.

Structural constraints compound these challenges. Bénévolat 4 noted that “people have no time” and that “processes are slow, it takes a lot of time just to get a room for one specific time” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). Such administrative friction reinforces inequality, as only those with sufficient time and resources can sustain involvement. Lejealle confirmed that “association leaders struggle to recruit and retain new members” (Lejealle, interview, 2025), while Tenikue observed that “people are not getting involved” (Tenikue, interview, 2025).

National evidence supports these testimonies. The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* report identifies “a decline in engagement” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 46); the

*Rapport d'Activité 2024* notes that “many non-profit associations are seeking volunteers” (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 23); and the Coalition Agreement acknowledges that “a large proportion of former volunteers have discontinued their engagement due to a lack of time” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75).

Legally, the *Law of 31 October 2007* fixes voluntary service between “three and twelve months” (Art. 5(2)), while the *Law of 7 August 2023* confirms that “any member is free to withdraw from the association” (Art. 17(1)). These provisions preserve voluntarism’s autonomy but fail to ensure continuity. From an HRBA perspective, participation without sustainability risks becoming symbolic. Enabling conditions — flexibility, supportive organisational culture, and recognition — are essential to prevent exclusion and burnout.

### 5.5.2 Shift toward Short-Term Volunteering

Both interview and documentary evidence indicate a clear trend toward short-term, project-based volunteering. Schaber remarked that “today, we live in a society based on short view, immediate results” (Schaber, interview, 2025), while Bénévolat 4 insisted that volunteering “has to be part of your life and not just two hours every week” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). Lejealle confirmed that “young people prefer more occasional, short-term volunteering” (Lejealle, interview, 2025).

This cultural shift toward flexibility mirrors broader labour and lifestyle transformations but challenges the sustainability of civic engagement. The *Law of 31 October 2007* limits formal voluntary service to eighteen months (Art. 5(2)), institutionalising temporariness. The *Law of 7 August 2023* similarly allows that “the foundation may be established for a fixed duration” (Art. 40(6)), normalising short cycles of engagement.

Empirical studies reinforce this trend. The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* report notes “a high turnover rate of contact persons” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 46), and TNS Ilres (2021, p. 43) found that “14% of the reasons for non-involvement” relate to activities being time-limited. The Coalition Agreement explicitly promotes “different, more flexible forms of volunteering” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), while the *Rapport d'Activité 2024* highlights initiatives “to share testimonials illustrating the compatibility between engagement and professional life” (p. 13).

Flexibility broadens access but fragments engagement; under HRBA standards, participation must be both effective and empowering. If structural conditions limit certain groups to episodic involvement, equality of participation is compromised. Belgium’s *Law of 3 July 2005* — defining volunteering as “carried out without obligation” (Art. 3, 1°, (a)) — demonstrates that voluntariness can coexist with recognition, suggesting Luxembourg’s approach could better balance flexibility with sustained inclusion.

### 5.5.3 Limited Incentives

Sustainability is further constrained by a lack of institutional incentives. Mohan observed that “it’s not sustainable because there are very few motivating factors” (Mohan, interview, 2025), while Bénévolat 2 proposed that volunteering “count as a working experience, to count this also for the pension” (Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025). Mohan added that associations established by volunteers need “an initial startup fund, monetary support,” and expressed, “We don’t have a day off for voluntary work” (Mohan, interview, 2025). Bénévolat 4 noted that formal recognition “could definitely help shift the priorities that I need to set in my life” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025).

Lejealle confirmed that “existing incentives, including tax deductions or volunteering leave, are limited in scope and largely centred on sports activities” (Lejealle, interview, 2025). The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* study similarly calls for “more financial or material resources” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 47).

The *Law of 31 October 2007* offers a modest “pocket money allowance” (Art. 5(2), 9°), and the *Grand-Ducal Regulation of 2009* provides “attendance allowances” (Art. 12), but both remain limited to youth schemes. The *Law of 7 August 2023* stipulates that “administrative mandates are exercised on a voluntary basis” (Art. 5(3)) and that allowances must remain “compatible with social benefits” (Art. 21). These clauses reaffirm voluntarism’s unpaid ethos but do not address socioeconomic inequalities in who can participate.

Policy measures such as the *Label de Qualité Bénévolat* (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 36) and digital badges proposed in the Coalition Agreement (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75) enhance visibility but provide symbolic rather than material support.

From an HRBA perspective, limited incentives constitute a structural barrier to equality. When participation requires unpaid labour, only those with time and financial flexibility can engage consistently. Recognition, modest reimbursement, or integration with social rights frameworks could therefore strengthen sustainability without undermining voluntarism’s spirit.

#### 5.5.4 Participation Shaped by Life Circumstances

Participation in Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* is deeply influenced by socio-economic and personal circumstances. Schaber noted that “eight out of ten students study outside Luxembourg... most of them don’t come back anymore” (Schaber, interview, 2025), highlighting demographic loss within civic networks. *Bénévolat 2* cited employment pressures — “I also had a job that was very demanding... often I did things under pressure” (*Bénévolat 2*, interview, 2025) — while *Bénévolat 4* linked engagement to workload: “Now I work 80%, so I have quite some time to do all the activities [*bénévolat*]” (*Bénévolat 4*, interview, 2025).

Lejealle described associations as structurally fragile, “dependent on the will of individuals to build and maintain them,” adding that “life events cause associations to be born and disappear” (Lejealle, interview, 2025). The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* report highlights how urban and demographic changes, particularly the growth of so-called “*dormitory towns*”—residential areas where people live but seldom engage in community life—reduce opportunities for local participation and weaken associative ties (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 8). TNS Ilres (2021, p. 43) found that “family, professional, or health reasons strongly influence engagement,” and the Coalition Agreement (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75) recognises “lack of time” as the leading cause of disengagement.

Legal provisions acknowledge but only partially mitigate these challenges. The *Law of 31 October 2007* allows early termination of voluntary service (Art. 5(8)), while the *Law of 7 August 2023* stipulates that “a resigning member has no rights over the association’s assets” (Art. 17(2)) but affirms that “volunteering is compatible with unemployment, incapacity to work, and family allowances” (Art. 13). This recognition of compatibility is an important alignment with HRBA principles but remains under-implemented.

Overall, voluntarism remains contingent on personal stability rather than guaranteed by structural support. Engagement depends on flexible schedules, financial security, and geographic proximity — conditions not equally available to all. The HRBA thus interprets life-circumstance dependency as a subtle but pervasive form of inequality: participation is open in law yet uneven in practice.

### 5.5.5 Motivational and Structural Sustainability

Sustainability in Luxembourg’s volunteering ecosystem emerges as a balance between motivation, structural support, and life context. While civic spirit remains strong, continuity is increasingly constrained by time scarcity, weak incentives, and the prevalence of short-term engagement.

Across interviews, “time” dominated as the primary constraint. Bénévolat 4 summarised: “People are not connected... they have to work, they have a family to support” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). TNS Ilres (2021) and the Coalition Agreement (2023–2028) confirm this pattern empirically. Meanwhile, motivational and material incentives remain limited: although initiatives such as the Label *Bénévolat* and digital badges enhance recognition, they lack the substantive benefits that would democratise access.

Lejealle noted that “life events cause associations to be born and disappear” (Lejealle, interview, 2025), capturing the systemic volatility that mirrors individuals’ precarious circumstances. While the *Law of 7 August 2023* partially integrates volunteering with social rights, implementation remains modest.

From an HRBA perspective, sustainability is both motivational — rooted in recognition and purpose — and structural — dependent on institutional conditions that make participation viable and equitable. Luxembourg’s current system promotes civic goodwill but lacks the frameworks that guarantee continuity and inclusiveness.

Viewing participation as a social capability, not just goodwill, requires supportive structures that make engagement viable for all.

## 5.6 Theme 5: Recognition, Value, and Civic Legitimacy

While previous themes examined access, participation, and sustainability, this final theme explores how *bénévolat* is recognised within Luxembourg’s civic and legal landscape. Despite widespread appreciation, recognition remains largely symbolic — expressed through gratitude, certificates, and events — rather than substantive in law. From an HRBA perspective, this distinction matters: participation should be both encouraged and institutionally safeguarded as a right. Luxembourg’s framework, however, continues to treat volunteering as a social virtue rather than a civic entitlement.

### 5.6.1 Symbolic Recognition

Volunteering in Luxembourg is highly valued socially but lacks formal mechanisms of institutional acknowledgment. Schaber reflected, “this kind of service without being paid is appreciated” (Schaber, interview, 2025). Similarly, Bénévolat 2 observed that “people admire... when you do service” (Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025). Such statements show that appreciation functions more as moral esteem than as legal or material recognition.

Yet participants also voiced frustration with the limits of this symbolic gratitude. Mohan explained that volunteering “does carry a significance... but there has been no acknowledgement, no appreciation of the efforts” (Mohan, interview, 2025). Bénévolat 4 similarly stated, “no formal recognition... just thank you from all sides” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). These comments reveal a gap between social approval and institutional follow-up.

Tenikue expressed institutional confidence, suggesting that “the setting is good enough” (Tenikue, interview, 2025), indicating that from a policymaker’s perspective, symbolic recognition suffices. The *Law of 31 October 2007* and *Grand-Ducal Regulation of 2009* both

reinforce this by providing certificates that “indicate the dates and nature of the tasks carried out” (Art. 5(7)) and describe the “skills demonstrated” (Arts. 13–15). While valuable for youth employability, these measures are confined to formal *voluntariat*, leaving most *bénévolat* outside legal recognition.

Public institutions promote volunteering primarily through celebratory initiatives. The *Rapport d’Activité 2024* highlights Volunteer Day, which “aims to celebrate the essential role of volunteers” (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 17). The Coalition Agreement proposes “digital badges” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), and STATEC (2024) links volunteering to “quality of life” and even to GDP (p. 1). These actions enhance visibility but remain non-binding. Similarly, TNS Ilres (2021) found that “recognition is above all social and symbolic” (p. 32).

The *Law of 7 August 2023* extends recognition only to organisations “recognised as being of public interest” (Art. 33(2)), attributing value to collectives, not individuals. Symbolic recognition fosters belonging but not equality or protection. Under HRBA principles, volunteering should be treated as part of the right to public participation.

### 5.6.2 Economic Valuation Over Social Recognition

Luxembourg’s public discourse increasingly frames *bénévolat* through an economic lens — measuring its contribution to GDP and the “social economy.” This economic recognition risks overshadowing its social and rights-based dimensions. Bénévolat 2 noted, “people think that everything has to be paid [volunteering]” (Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025), signalling a perception that civic worth must be monetised.

Lejealle observed that STATEC “compiled a list of all businesses and associations working in the social and solidarity economy... assessing the sector’s share of GDP” (Lejealle, interview, 2025). Such quantification raises visibility but redefines volunteering as economic output. STATEC (2024) indeed describes it as “adding an additional dimension to GDP” (p. 1). Similarly, *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* identifies “financial support” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 8) as a key indicator of sector vitality.

Policy frameworks mirror this economic emphasis. The Coalition Agreement pledges to consider “state-funded accident insurance for volunteers” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75) — an administrative rather than rights-based measure. The *Rapport d’Activité 2024* aims to “strengthen the social impact and sustainability of voluntary engagement” (p. 19), again using managerial language of “impact.”

Legal frameworks reinforce this fiscal framing. The *Law of 7 August 2023* regulates “the applicable accounting regime” (Art. 18), ensuring financial accountability, while the Belgian *Law of 3 July 2005* caps volunteer reimbursements (Art. 10, p. 5), reflecting a shared European logic of economic governance. Such rules are necessary for transparency but do not enhance civic empowerment.

From an HRBA perspective, the visibility of *bénévolat* in GDP accounts constitutes recognition without empowerment. Volunteers are rendered measurable but not rights-bearing. Economic valuation may legitimise policy attention but risks commodifying social participation. Recognition should instead affirm volunteering as social citizenship — a right to contribute to communal life on equal terms, not merely as unpaid labour augmenting productivity.

### 5.6.3 Declining Cultural Transmission

Sustainability in volunteering depends not only on institutions but also on cultural continuity. Schaber expressed that “the culture of *bénévolat* changed, unfortunately” (Schaber, interview,

2025), while Bénévolat 4 remarked, “everybody wants a village, but nobody wants to be a villager” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025). These insights reveal a loss of communal ethos: people value social cohesion but are less inclined to invest in it.

Lejealle reflected that “the cultural tradition of family volunteering... is something that is passed down from generation to generation” (Lejealle, interview, 2025), yet Tenikue observed that “people are getting less involved” (Tenikue, interview, 2025). This signals an erosion of the intergenerational transfer of volunteering values.

The *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* report notes a “decline in engagement” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 8), and the *Rapport d’Activité 2024* explicitly seeks “to foster a culture of engagement” (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 4). The Coalition Agreement attributes disengagement partly to “lack of time” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), framing a cultural issue as a temporal one.

From an HRBA view, the erosion of volunteering culture reduces collective equality, turning engagement into an individual privilege rather than a shared right.

#### 5.6.4 Limited Recognition-Based Incentives

Recognition-based incentives — mechanisms linking volunteering to tangible benefits — remain limited in Luxembourg. Bénévolat 2 observed that “if you only think of external recognition as a motivation, it will not last long” (Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025), while Mohan argued that “volunteering should also be recognized as an official part of work” (Mohan, interview, 2025). Bénévolat 4 added that “people are scared [volunteering]... they could be charged... it comes back on them personally” (Bénévolat 4, interview, 2025), revealing insecurity and lack of legal protection. Lejealle confirmed that “some have also asked that it be taken into account for pension rights” (Lejealle, interview, 2025).

Legal and policy frameworks provide minimal incentives. The *Law of 31 October 2007* maintains “entitlement to family allowances... until the age of twenty-seven” (Art. 6(6)) and offers certificates describing acquired skills (Art. 13), but these apply only to youth volunteers. The *Rapport d’Activité 2024* calls for “a unified definition of volunteering to clarify roles” (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 36), and the Coalition Agreement notes that “motivation increases when clear rules exist” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75). Yet no concrete measures—such as tax deductions, pension credits, or protected leave—have been introduced.

TNS Iles (2021) found that “formal recognition remains marginal” (p. 33), while *Vie associative et Vivre-ensemble* observed that “associations are less numerous in wanting to engage further” (Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden, 2022, p. 7), partly due to limited support structures. The *Law of 7 August 2023* even specifies that “volunteering does not confer any right of residence” (Art. 9/1, p. 4), highlighting boundaries of recognition for non-nationals.

From an HRBA perspective, the absence of material and legal incentives transforms volunteering into a privilege rather than an equal opportunity. Recognition-based measures — whether in pensions, training, or employment contexts — should not be viewed as rewards but as enabling conditions ensuring that all residents, regardless of income or status, can participate meaningfully.

#### 5.6.5 Recognition, Value, and Civic Legitimacy

Across interviews and policy documents, a consistent pattern emerges: *bénévolat* in Luxembourg is celebrated as socially valuable yet remains institutionally under-recognised. Symbolic and economic framings dominate, while rights-based approaches remain limited.

Symbolically, volunteering is highly esteemed — “appreciated” and “admirable,” as participants described (Schaber, interview, 2025; Bénévolat 2, interview, 2025). Campaigns like Volunteer Day and the Label *Bénévolat* enhance moral recognition but lack structural depth. Legally, the *Law of 7 August 2023* regulates “the applicable accounting regime” (Art. 18), emphasising transparency over empowerment. The Belgian *Law of 3 July 2005* likewise caps reimbursements (Art. 10), showing a shared focus on fiscal oversight rather than rights protection.

Culturally, the fading “culture of *bénévolat*” (Schaber, interview, 2025) weakens intergenerational engagement, prompting institutions such as the *Agence du Bénévolat* to promote “a culture of engagement” (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 4). This institutionalisation of motivation reflects a shift from communal tradition to managed participation.

Finally, recognition-based incentives remain minimal. The *Law of 31 October 2007* and related measures reward only limited categories, leaving adult volunteers structurally unsupported. Participants’ calls for pension rights, recognition in employment, and legal clarity point to a deeper need for reciprocity — that civic contribution be matched by institutional respect.

In HRBA terms, Luxembourg’s recognition regime values volunteers morally and economically but not as rights-holders. Bridging this gap requires embedding volunteering in labour, social, and education policies so recognition reflects equality, not only appreciation.

Ultimately, *bénévolat* in Luxembourg is celebrated as a virtue, measured as an asset, but not yet upheld as a right. A rights-based approach would preserve its altruistic essence while institutionalising fairness — ensuring that every resident can participate and be recognised not only for goodwill but for their contribution to democratic life. These findings set the stage for the concluding discussion of how recognition can evolve from virtue to right.

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Returning to the Research Question

This dissertation set out to investigate to what extent Luxembourg’s policy framework for *bénévolat* reflects the HRBA principles of participation and non-discrimination, and how these principles influence the sustainability and recognition of civic engagement. Guided by a qualitative, interpretive design, the study analysed legal and policy documents alongside six semi-structured interviews with *bénévoles* and researchers.

The research was motivated by an initial paradox: Luxembourg demonstrates a vibrant culture of associative life and political endorsement of civic participation, yet the rights of volunteers remain only partially institutionalised. The analysis confirmed this tension. While participation is celebrated as a civic virtue and inclusivity is a stated policy goal, the legal and institutional framework continues to treat volunteering primarily as an act of goodwill rather than a right of participation.

Applying the HRBA as an analytical lens enabled this study to assess not only policy intentions but whether Luxembourg’s civic framework ensures equitable access, recognition, and sustainability in practice.

### 6.2 Participation: Encouraged but Not Ensured

The findings reveal that participation in Luxembourg is morally valorised but not legally guaranteed. Public discourse, shaped by the principle of *vivre ensemble* (“living together”), frames volunteering as a social duty rather than a civic entitlement. Campaigns such as *Ech si Benevole* and the *Label de Qualité Bénévolat* (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025) demonstrate state encouragement, yet engagement remains dependent on personal motivation and institutional mediation.

As Bénévolat 4 reflected, volunteering often requires “shifting one’s priorities differently,” while Lejealle, emphasised that policy still focuses on “how to bring people in,” rather than guaranteeing universal access (Interview, 2025). This distinction between promotion and protection lies at the heart of the HRBA critique: participation, when dependent on voluntary goodwill, risks reproducing inequalities of access.

Luxembourg’s model thus reflects what Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi (2004) term ‘participation as invitation rather than entitlement.

### 6.3 Non-Discrimination: Formal Openness, Practical Exclusion

The HRBA principle of non-discrimination requires that participation be not only open in law but accessible in practice. Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* sector is formally inclusive — no law restricts participation based on nationality, gender, or status — yet interviews and reports reveal persistent structural barriers.

Language remains the most significant. As Bénévolat 4 noted, “meetings are in Luxembourgish only... you need to speak fluently” (Interview, 2025). Mohan described administrative interactions where “we lost a week just trying to understand the person in the municipality” (Interview, 2025). These experiences illustrate how linguistic expectations create de facto exclusion.

Quantitative data confirm these disparities: 80% of non-Luxembourgish speakers are not engaged in formal volunteering (TNS Ilres, 2021, p. 38), while participation is highest among

older, affluent Luxembourgers (STATEC, 2024, p. 1). As Lejealle mentioned, “there isn’t a framework law that really governs the status of *bénévolat*” (Interview, 2025).

Despite rhetoric of openness, the absence of measures such as multilingual facilitation or data monitoring means that formal equality conceals substantive inequality. In HRBA terms, Luxembourg achieves legal neutrality but not transformative inclusion.

## 6.4 Fragmented Policy and Limited Accountability

The research also identified fragmentation and weak accountability as key systemic challenges. *Bénévolat* operates within a dispersed regulatory framework: while the *Law of 31 October 2007* governs youth voluntarism and the *Law of 7 August 2023* modernises association governance, no statute defines volunteers’ rights.

Tenikue, described *bénévolat* as “a by-product of association life,” dependent on internal governance rather than state oversight (Interview, 2025). Volunteers’ protection thus varies by organisation — a structure that favours flexibility but undermines equity.

Policy instruments such as certificates, awareness campaigns, and the *Label de Qualité Bénévolat* provide symbolic recognition (Agence du Bénévolat, 2025, p. 17), yet they remain voluntary and unenforceable. The Coalition Agreement 2023–2028 promises to “create a status for volunteers” and “examine state-funded accident insurance” (Gouvernement du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 2023, p. 75), but implementation has yet to materialise.

From an HRBA perspective, this governance model represents a high level of normative support but low institutional accountability. Participation is facilitated by trust, not by rights. Without disaggregated data or mandatory evaluation, civic opportunities remain unevaluated and unevenly distributed.

## 6.5 Sustainability and Recognition: Between Motivation and Structure

The sustainability of civic participation depends on both personal motivation and institutional support. Findings revealed a widespread difficulty in retaining volunteers, with Schaber estimating that “nine out of ten step out” (Interview, 2025). Interviewees linked this to limited incentives, time pressures, and organisational inefficiencies.

Government and NGO data echo these observations: Lejealle, Tenikue and Verheyden (2022) documented declining engagement, while *Agence du Bénévolat* (2025, p. 23) reported that “many associations are seeking volunteers.” Although policies encourage flexibility, they often result in short-term or episodic participation, undermining continuity and empowerment.

Recognition, meanwhile, remains largely symbolic. Volunteers receive social admiration but few tangible benefits. As Mohan expressed, “there has been no acknowledgment, no appreciation of the efforts” (Interview, 2025). The HRBA framework interprets this gap as a rights issue: when civic contribution lacks formal recognition, participation becomes precarious and unsustainable.

Economic framings — such as STATEC’s measurement of *bénévolat*’s contribution to GDP — raise visibility but risk commodifying civic engagement. Recognition should not merely measure contribution but affirm volunteering as an expression of civic rights and human dignity.

## 6.6 Theoretical and Comparative Implications

This dissertation contributes to the underdeveloped intersection between human rights theory and civic participation studies. By applying the HRBA to volunteering policy in a European welfare state, it demonstrates that rights-based analysis can reveal hidden inequalities even in high-income, democratic contexts.

The comparative analysis with Belgium's *2005 Law on the Rights of Volunteers* strengthens this argument. Belgium's model illustrates how HRBA principles can be operationalised through legal guarantees of access, liability protection, and equal treatment. Luxembourg, by contrast, maintains flexibility but at the cost of coherence and equality.

The Belgium–Luxembourg comparison shows that codifying volunteer rights need not hinder voluntarism; rather, it institutionalises fairness while preserving civic freedom—a balance Luxembourg's evolving framework has yet to achieve.

## 6.7 Policy Recommendations

The HRBA's focus on accountability and empowerment invites several policy directions that logically follow from the findings:

### 6.7.1 Adopt a National Framework Law on *Bénévolat*

Establish a unified legal definition of volunteering that guarantees equal access, insurance, and recognition, drawing on Belgium's 2005 model.

### 6.7.2 Create a National Volunteer Observatory

Mandate data collection and reporting on inclusion by age, gender, nationality, and language to ensure transparency and accountability.

### 6.7.3 Enhance Multilingual Accessibility

Require all major volunteer platforms and public engagement services to operate in Luxembourgish, French, German, and English to remove linguistic exclusion.

### 6.7.4 Develop Recognition-Based Incentives

Introduce portable volunteering certificates linked to education, employment, or pension rights, reinforcing sustainability and equity.

### 6.7.5 Integrate Civic Education and Intergenerational Engagement

Embed volunteering and human rights education into school curricula to revitalise the cultural tradition of *bénévolat*.

These recommendations aim to institutionalise fairness without bureaucratising engagement, aligning Luxembourg's civic participation with HRBA standards.

## 6.8 Broader Significance: The “So What?”

Luxembourg's experience reflects a broader European dilemma: how can states preserve voluntarism's spontaneity while ensuring equitable access and protection?

The findings suggest that soft governance — based on moral encouragement and partnership — can mobilise civic participation but cannot guarantee equality.

Luxembourg's experience reflects a wider European dilemma: how to preserve voluntarism's spontaneity while ensuring equality and protection. The case shows that soft governance can

mobilise participation but cannot guarantee rights. Embedding HRBA principles in civic policy would help small, multilingual states democratise engagement without overregulation.

These findings confirm the HRBA proposition that participation and equality are mutually constitutive dimensions of civic rights.

## 6.9 Concluding Reflection

In conclusion, Luxembourg’s *bénévolat* system embodies progressive aspirations constrained by structural limitations. The state’s policies encourage engagement, promote inclusion, and celebrate civic virtue, yet they stop short of guaranteeing participation as a right.

The HRBA analysis shows that participation and non-discrimination are both affirmed in principle but only partially realised in practice. The result is a form of *bounded inclusion* — dynamic, voluntary, and well-intentioned, but uneven in access and recognition.

As Bénévolat 4 observed, “people are not connected... they have to work, they have a family to support.” This insight captures the essence of the challenge: civic participation cannot rely solely on goodwill; it requires structural support that allows all individuals — regardless of status, language, or resources — to contribute meaningfully.

By embedding HRBA principles into its civic policies, Luxembourg could transform volunteering from moral practice into a rights-based institution—strengthening *vivre ensemble* and reaffirming that participation and equality are inseparable pillars of democratic life.

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## 8 Annexes

### 8.1 Annexe 1

#### 8.1.1 Participant Consent Form

##### **Participant Consent Form [please only ensure appropriate/relevant options]**

Participants to the research are asked to confirm their participation as follows:

I (*please tick as appropriate*)

- Agree to participate in an interview in connection with research being conducted by [STUDENT/RESEARCHER NAME: Nader AL-Sakkaf] in connection with work for his [MA thesis] **as explained in the Participation Information Sheet.**
- Understand that the interview will be audiotaped/videotaped and they may be identified by name.
- Understand that the interview will take up to [40 – 60 minutes]
- AM free to withdraw from this study:
  - a. At any time until 31<sup>th</sup> December 2025, such date as this will no longer be possible, which I have been told.
  - b. Without giving a reason for withdrawing
  - c. If intending to become a student at the University of London, the interview will not affect my future at the University.
- Understand that in the event of withdrawing from the interview, any tape made of the interview will be either given to me or destroyed, and no transcript will be made of the interview.
- Understand that, upon completion of the interview, the tape and information content of the interview may be used as follows (please your preferred option(s) by ticking the box(es)):
  - Material may be quoted in the research papers and MA thesis of [STUDENT Nader Al-Sakkaf/RESEARCHER], and attributed to me.
  - Material from this interview may be quoted in the research papers and [MA thesis STUDENT Nader Al-Sakkaf], but I wish to remain anonymous.
  - My comments are confidential, for the information of [STUDENT Nader Al-Sakkaf/RESEARCHER] in the writing of his MA thesis only and may not be quoted.
  - I would like to receive a printed copy of the interview transcripts
- May request that portions of the interview be edited out of the final copy of the transcript.
- Understand that at the conclusion of this particular study the tape and transcript of the interview will be kept in a secure external drive and that the completed [MA thesis/RESEARCH] will be kept for public use by the University of London

Signed (participant)	Consent Date
Name in block letters	
Signed (parent / guardian / other) (if under 18)	Consent Date
Name in block letters	
Address or Contact Details:	

*All signed consent forms will be stored securely by the researcher.*

**PRIVACY NOTICE**

*The University's researchers collect data as part of a formal academic research project. This is governed by the University's academic policies and procedures and our Research Ethics committee. The Research Participant Consent Form above should explain to you fully what will happen to your data. Please contact your researcher if you are unsure about anything.*

*There are broadly two types of data that will collect during the project:*

- *data collected in interviews or surveys and used in the research*
- *contact details and relevant forms used to manage the research project*

*Our legal basis for processing your data is necessary for a task carried out in the public interest, in this case the academic research carried out by the University. Where we collect special category data, such as that related to your ethnicity, health, sexual life, political allegiance or religious belief then our legal basis is where this is necessary for research purposes.*

*After the research project has been completed the data may be retained and re-used. In some cases it will be added to a data repository for use by other researchers. We, and other academic bodies, are required by law to put in place adequate safeguards to protect your data and your identity (e.g. by anonymising the data or replacing names with other identifiers).*

*Unless otherwise stated, the University of London is the data controller for the data collected in research projects. We are subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and UK Data Protection Act 2018. You can find out more about data protection at the University, including the contact details the University's data protection officer on the University's website (simply put 'data protection' into the search box or go to the following link: <https://london.ac.uk/about-us/how-university-run/policies/data-protection>).*

For any contact at Institutional level, please address your correspondence to

**Research Services, University of London**

E: [Research.ethics@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Research.ethics@sas.ac.uk)

Tel: 0207 862 8825 | Fax: 0207 862 8657

## 8.2 Annexe 2

### 8.2.1 Interview Questions for Researchers

- **Section 1: Clarifying Rights-Based Frameworks**

1. How would you define a “rights-based policy” for *bénévolat* in the Luxembourgish context?
2. In your research or experience, have Luxembourg’s civil society policies considered participation, non-discrimination, and accountability—the typical pillars of the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)?
3. To what extent does the current policy landscape address the rights of *bénévoles* as active citizens rather than as service contributors?

- **Section 2: Assessing What Exists**

4. Do you see any existing aspects of Luxembourg’s legal or policy frameworks that partially reflect a rights-based approach, even if informally?
5. How would you evaluate the extent to which the current regulatory environment supports or hinders meaningful participation for *bénévoles*?
6. How is participation supported in the efforts of *bénévoles*?
7. How could a different regulatory framework enhance their efforts?

- **Section 3: Sustainability, Recognition & Impact**

8. How do you see the sustainability of *bénévolat* being affected by current policies or lack thereof?
9. From your studies, how has public recognition of *bénévolat* evolved over the last decade, especially compared to *volontariat*?
10. In terms of civic impact, what indicators would you recommend measuring to assess *bénévolat*’s contribution to community resilience and democratic life?

- **Section 4: Comparative and Structural Dimensions**

11. You’ve done comparative work—what are some lessons Luxembourg could draw from Belgium or France, particularly in terms of volunteer policy frameworks?
12. What similarities or differences do you observe between Luxembourg and neighbouring countries regarding how *bénévolat* is conceptualised and supported?

- ***Section 5: On Participation and Identity***

13. Do you find that certain demographics (e.g., migrants, youth, low-income groups) are structurally excluded or less supported in Luxembourg's *bénévolat* landscape?

14. What strategies have you seen that effectively promote inclusion and recognition of diverse *bénévoles*, particularly those from underrepresented groups?

- ***Focus Follow-up***

15. From your view, what kind of questions should I ask *bénévoles* to meaningfully understand how they perceive participation rights and recognition?

## 8.2.2 Interview Questions for *Bénévoles*

### **Theme 1: Participation – Access, Motivation, and Obstacles**

1. How did you become involved in *bénévolat* in Luxembourg?
2. Do you feel that your participation in *bénévolat* is valued and supported in society? Why or why not?
3. What motivated you to start in *bénévolat*? What challenges have you faced? And what would help you improve your experience or stay involved longer?
4. Do you feel that all individuals and groups have equal opportunities to engage in *bénévolat* in Luxembourg?
5. What motivates you to continue volunteering, and what might make it harder or less appealing for you to stay involved?
6. Have you stopped volunteering? If yes, could you share what led you to stop?

### **Theme 2: Recognition – Institutional and Social Acknowledgment**

7. Have you ever received any formal recognition (e.g., certification, public acknowledgement, reimbursement) for your service as a *bénévole*?
8. Do you believe *bénévoles* in Luxembourg are adequately recognised by public institutions, employers, or society in general?
9. Would recognition (e.g., legal status, rights, benefits) change your willingness or ability to continue volunteering? Why or why not?

### **Theme 3: Rights and Policy Awareness**

10. Do you feel there are any legal protections or mechanisms that support you as a *bénévole*? If so, which ones help the most?
11. Do you feel that your rights as a *bénévole* are protected or supported through any kind of framework (legal, organisational, or social)?
12. If there were more legal protections or support for *bénévoles*, what would you expect them to include?

### **Theme 4: Civic Impact and Sustainability**

13. How do you think your volunteering contributes to your local community or society at large?
14. Do you think *bénévolat* in Luxembourg is sustainable for people like you in the long term? Why or why not?

### **Theme 5: Reflection and Reform**

15. If you could change one thing about how *bénévolat* is organised or recognised in Luxembourg, what would it be?
16. What would an ideal support system or policy for *bénévoles* look like in your opinion?

### **Closing Note:**

“Is there anything else you’d like to share about your experiences as a *bénévole* that we haven’t covered?”