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**OSTBELGIEN LEBEN 2025**  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR THE  
GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – VOLUME**

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DG

## ACRONYMS USED IN THIS TEXT

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REK	German acronym for Regional Development Concept of the German-speaking Community
REK I	German acronym for phase 1 of the Regional Development Concept (2009-2014)
REK II	German acronym for phase 2 of the Regional Development Concept (2014-2019)

## PHOTO CREDITS

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## “OSTBELGIEN LEBEN 2025“

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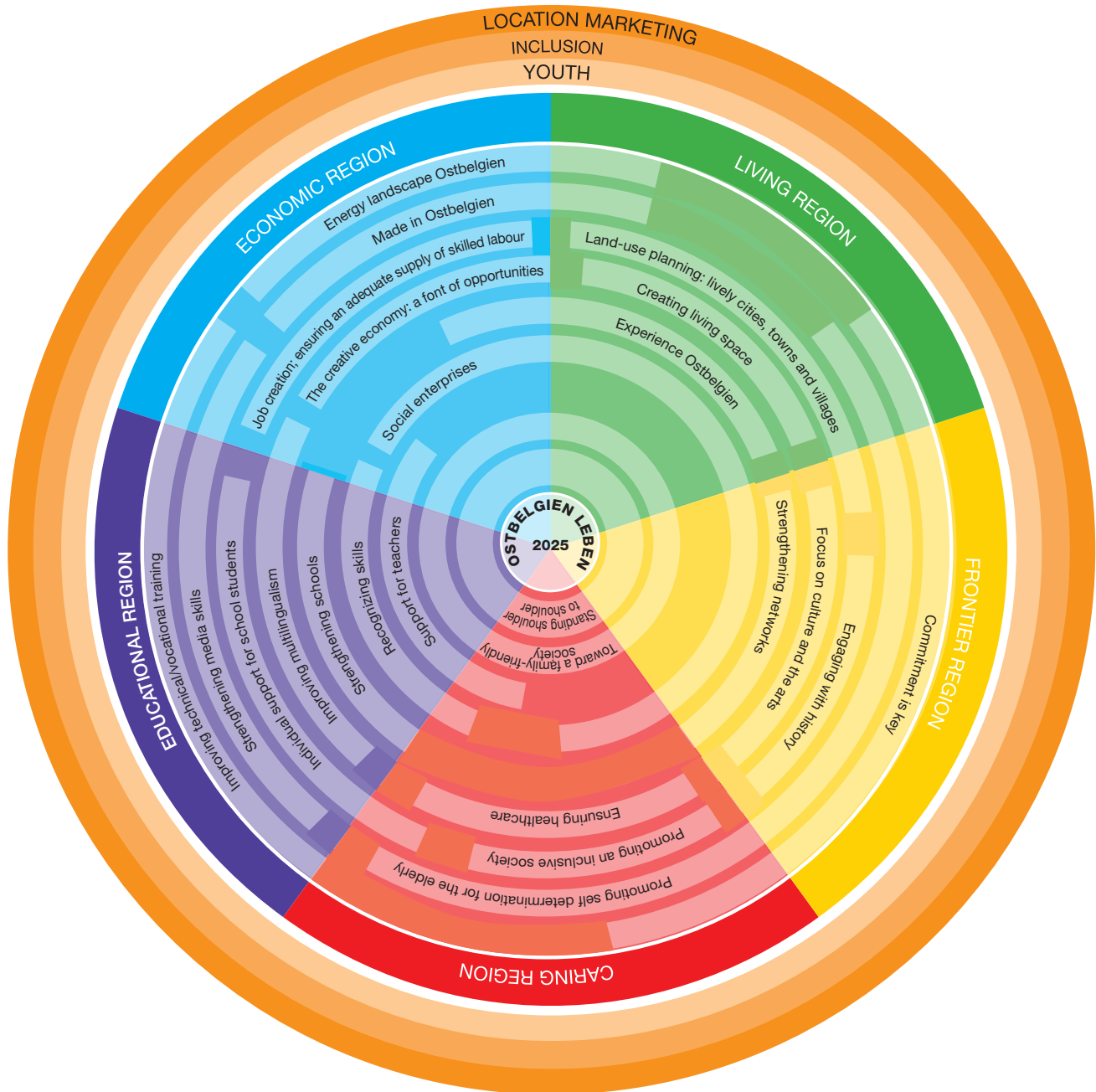
What do we want our lives to be like in the German-speaking Community in 2025? What are our long term goals? What do we need to do in order to realize this vision? These are the issues that the REK set out to address. In 2008 and 2009, a long-term strategy was elaborated, transcending the kind of policy planning that is determined by legislative periods. The government of the German-speaking Community initially commissioned a comprehensive study of the current state of things, examining the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges for various topic areas. This study formed the basis for citizens' forums where initial strategic approaches were elaborated, the results of which were published as Volumes I and II of the REK (2009). They describe the core values and the goals of the German-speaking Community.

Volume III of the REK (2011) describes, via 16 future-oriented main projects and 48 sub-projects, the measures that were developed in connection with REK I and that were implemented between 2009 and 2014.

Volume 4 of the REK (2015) discusses three horizontal projects and 24 future-oriented projects that are slated for realization in connection with REK II between 2014 and 2019.

This paper provides a concise overview of the approaches (described in Volume 4) to the three horizontal projects and 24 future-oriented projects.

# REK II AT A GLANCE



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# HORIZONTAL PROJECTS

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## MISSION STATEMENT

*We would like to see actors from all walks of life participate in the Inclusion, Youth and Ostbelgien Location Marketing projects. We would like to see the horizontal projects become a cornerstone of all measures that are slated for implementation in connection with REK II, such that these projects are integrated into all spheres of responsibility of the German-speaking Community.*

## THE “INCLUSION” HORIZONTAL PROJECT

Persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to fully participate in all activities in our society. To this end, we are striving for an inclusive society, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The “DG Inklusiv 2025” action plan sets out concrete measures and approaches for implementation of the UNCRPD. We would like persons with disabilities to be involved in implementation of this action plan and all other REK Inclusion projects. The REK will promote integration of inclusion-related issues into all spheres of responsibility of the German-speaking Community, so that engaging with these issues will incrementally lead to an inclusive society.



## THE “YOUTH” HORIZONTAL PROJECT

In the wake of the far reaching reform of youth work in connection with REK I, we would like to see youth related issues included more broadly in REK II. Youth is an interdisciplinary task that affects all spheres of responsibility. Using the youth strategy plan as a basis, we would like to partner with teenagers and young adults in order to elaborate solutions in the following domains: emotions and self-image; political education; addiction; diversity and integration. We would like to see the introduction of a certificate for youth workers that would allow for the recruitment of people to work on this varied and exciting area. Another focus is funding of cultural education (“Culture catches on”). We would also like to create the structures that are necessary in order for young people living in difficult conditions to be offered accommodations at affordable prices.



## THE “OSTBELGIEN LOCATION MARKETING” HORIZONTAL PROJECT

The lack of a comprehensive marketing strategy for Ostbelgien as a location constitutes a major competitive disadvantage for the German-speaking Community. We would like to merge the various initiatives, with a view to not only promoting regional self awareness, but also positioning our region as a strong location for all business sectors. To this end, we have registered “Ostbelgien” as a trademark for purposes of creating a consistent name for our products and services. This trademark has already been used successfully for tourism and local products. We would now like to work up this initiative to include other sectors, the goal being to persuade both people and businesses that Ostbelgien is an attractive location.



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# FRONTIER REGION

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## CREATING BRIDGES FOR CULTURE, IDENTITY AND LOCATION

*We would like to use the unique cultural-identity situation of the German-speaking Community to expand the scope of the bridge-building that we realize for the Walloon and Flemish regions, as well as for The Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg. Citizens willing to volunteer their time play a pivotal role when it comes to networking and openness.*

### COMMITMENT IS KEY

The German-speaking Community is notable for its lively association activities and a readiness on the part of its members to undertake volunteer work. However, gaining new volunteers for association work is indispensable. We would like to continue improving the framework conditions for volunteerism, in a manner that places the emphasis on qualifications, recognition and awareness-raising for volunteer work, along with giving advice, providing information, and placement of volunteers.



### ENGAGING WITH HISTORY

We firmly believe that engaging with our own history can make a key contribution to moving forward with the development of our own identity and to political education. Researching, representing, and interpreting history for citizens of the German-speaking Community and neighbouring regions should unfold via the “Zentrum für Regionalgeschichte” (Centre for Regional History) in collaboration with regional-history stakeholders. This work should meet high academic standards and should as much as possible reflect the input of the general public.



### FOCUS ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS

In the wake of the REK I reforms and the related refinancing, for REK II the emphasis should be on cultural activities. We would like to see children and teenagers discover the arts at an early age. In the interest of improving the conditions for art education in the German-speaking Community, the various stakeholders should enter into a face-to-face dialogue. Because the arts thrive on an audience, artists and works of art should become more mobile. Moreover, in light of the growing demand for creative leisure-time activities, we would like to play an active role in this domain as well.



### STRENGTHENING NETWORKS

A small region like the German-speaking Community in many ways depends on close cooperation with its partners. Moreover, the Community often acts as a bridge between the various linguistic and cultural regions. Hence cultivating contacts and good national and international networking are vital. We have established a number of networks that are managed and coordinated by a not-for-profit association known as “DG-Netzwerke”. We would also like to promote networking via regular network meetings and the creation of a digital exchange platform.





# ECONOMIC REGION

## INNOVATION, COOPERATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

*By 2025, we would like to see the German-speaking Community strengthen its capacities as a small-craft industries and service region in a manner involving the fostering and active support of the region's many SMEs via robust networks. These efforts should centre around issues such as sustainability, regional economies, open-mindedness, and creativity.*

### JOB CREATION; ENSURING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF SKILLED LABOUR

We would like to tap into the potential of our labour market and do an even better job of harmonizing supply and demand. In connection with the Sixth major reform of state, we will be provided with essential tools that will give us greater room for manoeuvre when it comes to shaping labour market policies. In this process, we would like to avoid pitfalls such as a revolving-door effect in dealing with the unemployed. Instead, employment subsidies should become simpler, more transparent and more efficient.



### ENERGY LANDSCAPE OSTBELGIEN

We would like to tap into the vast potential that exists in the spheres of energy efficiency and renewables. To this end we have already elaborated energy guidelines that lay out specific fields of action. In implementing the future-oriented project "Energy Landscape Ostbelgien," we would like to focus on energy efficiency, sustainable construction, renewables, and mobility.



### THE CREATIVE ECONOMY: A FONT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The culture industry and creative economy have long remained in the shadow of classic homogeneous economic sectors. However, in recent years it is becoming increasingly clear, that the creative economy has the potential to become a driver for developing locations, and of economic development and innovation. We would like to make this sector more visible and to promote culture-industry and creative-economy activities through measures such as networking among the various industries, and the creation of structures that provide advice and support.



### MADE IN OSTBELGIEN

Many high-quality regional products are available in Ostbelgien. Via the "Made in Ostbelgien" label, we would like to create a standardized designation for these products that will promote familiarity with and marketing of these products. Apart from the economic benefits of such a brand, it will also strengthen regional identity and improve the international positioning of Ostbelgien as a business location. Apart from tourism and food products, we would like to fold other sectors into this brand as well.



### SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The social economy has become a significant force not only in Europe and Belgium, but also in Ostbelgien. We firmly believe that the social economy is beneficial to society and would like to use social enterprises to create traineeships and jobs (particularly for job seekers lacking ready access to the labour market), mainly via suitable product and service portfolios. Our main goal in this regard is to increase recognition of this sector.



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# EDUCATIONAL REGION

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## OUR CAPITAL FOR THE FUTURE

*We would like to build out the strategic objectives of this domain – namely educational equity, high educational and job-training quality, and comprehensive opportunities for participation for all young people.*

### RECOGNIZING SKILLS

Today's society is evolving at an ever more rapid pace. Demographic change, longer working lives, and a shortage of skilled labour are making life-long learning an increasingly significant factor. We would like to make it possible for individuals who have acquired professional skills outside school to become more visible and to be recognized. This in turn will reduce the time it takes for such individuals to earn a diploma and professional qualifications, and will make it easier for them to find a job.



### SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

For many years now, schools have been confronted with a lack of qualified and competent teachers. Studies have shown that in a successful educational system, the top students opt for a teaching career. To this end, and using a multi-dimensional strategy in which a teaching career is regarded as a continuum, we would like to increase the attractiveness of a teaching career and in so doing primarily address the issue of teacher training and recruiting. We would also like to elaborate a personnel-development strategy that combines a supportive professional orientation phase with the first steps in a teaching career.



### STRENGTHENING MEDIA SKILLS

Media skills are becoming increasingly important in the information and knowledge society of the 21st century. School students should not only learn to operate computers and other electronic devices, but should also acquire (a) the ability to call into question media and media content; and (b) a broad range of specific research skills. But apart from school students and teachers, we would also like to reach other social groups, with a view to identifying areas where the relevant offerings are lacking, and filling these gaps where necessary.





### IMPROVING MULTILINGUALISM

Promoting multilingualism is one of the main educational goals of the German-speaking Community. We would like to rise to this challenge and continue furthering the quality-optimization process that was set in motion by REK I. The goal here is to enable all citizens to learn one or more foreign languages, so that they can successfully pursue their educational and professional careers. The successful launch and planned expansion of the pilot project “bilingual kindergartens” show, in this regard, that we are always open to new knowledge and developments and pursue innovative paths – but at the same time also wish to pursue existing concepts such as reference frameworks.



### INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

When it comes to education, we regard both quality optimization and equal opportunities as a key and permanent educational policy task. We would like each and every school student to receive individual and differentiated support. To this end, the innate learning abilities of each student need to be identified more accurately and efficiently. Another key task in this regard is continued implementation and optimization of the educational policy master plan (“Bildungspolitisches Gesamtkonzept”).



### STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS

Today's society is facing major challenges. In their capacity as a mirror of that society, schools need to adaptively respond to these challenges, by accomplishing the following: (a) continued implementation of skills-oriented instruction in the schools of the German-speaking Community; and (b) providing students with more robust support in choosing a career. Other focuses of this future-oriented project include fostering creativity, creating a positive self image and increasing the sense of well being among all school stakeholders.



### IMPROVING TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Technical/vocational training relates not only to SME traineeships, but also to the related departments in secondary schools. Such training plays a central role in the German-speaking Community, in that as an economic region Ostbelgien benefits from the training of skilled workers. We would like to promote the development of such skilled workers, and make technical vocational training more appealing. To do this, we need a coherent concept for the entire schooling cycle that will encourage and enable pupils to opt for such training.



# CARING REGION

## ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR SOCIAL SERVICES

*In the run-up to 2025, we would like to build out community-based medical care and efficient care structures in the German-speaking Community and ensure the quality of these elements. To this end, disadvantaged citizens – whether in health, social or economic terms – and the strategic goal of increased caring and solidarity in the population will be given particular attention.*

## ENSURING HEALTHCARE

The healthcare sector is undergoing constant change. We would like to respond to these evolutions, and where possible anticipate them. To this end, we would like to do the following: (a) strengthen existing structures, by strengthening our hospitals, upgrading the nursing profession, and address the shortage of general practitioners; (b) elaborate a basic healthcare plan that will meet the future needs of the populace and that will encompass all medical services in the German-speaking Community.



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## STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

Integration is an endeavour that involves multiple domains. Particularly in light of the current refugee crisis, we need to find horizontal solutions for all spheres of responsibility. The measures we are endeavouring to implement include the following, among others: elaboration of an integration pathway; establishment of a reference centre for migrants; establishment of a legal framework for integration.



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## PROMOTING SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE ELDERLY

Demographic change is a reality that has consequences for the elderly. The general senior-citizens strategy ("Seniorenpolitisches Gesamtkonzept") of the German-speaking Community should fold in existing initiatives and make recommendations for future projects. Inasmuch as most elderly persons wish to live out their declining years in their own home, our focus is on close-to-home senior-citizens policies. At the same time, we would like to initiate innovative and alternative living arrangements without losing sight of classic structures for the elderly and nursing care.



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## PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Inclusion involves full and effective participation of disabled persons in their society. We would like to promote inclusion by accomplishing the following: raising the awareness of other service providers, staff and managers; spotlighting examples of good practice; and strengthening the abilities and capacities of disabled persons. We would like to enable the hearing impaired to have better access to society. And finally, we would like to set new standards and emphases when it comes to information and communication for the disabled.



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## TOWARD A FAMILY-FRIENDLY SOCIETY

As advocates of the networking of family-specific services, structures and responsibilities, we are striving for the expansion and optimization of needs-oriented, family-friendly daycare, and the optimization of family and child-rearing counselling. A further goal is the reshaping of a child-benefit model that is tailored to the needs of families in the German-speaking Community. Some of our family-policy measures implement the recommendations of the overall family-policy concept ("Familienpolitisches Gesamtkonzept").



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## LIVING REGION

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### QUALITY OF LIFE IS PART OF OUR NATURE

*We would like to see the German-speaking Community move still further toward becoming a region with an outstanding quality of life, with a wide diversity of culture, landscape, flora and fauna, and with continuing harmony and development of rural areas, villages and towns – for the benefit of all who live here and all who would like to visit us: turning tourists into friends.*

### EXPERIENCE OSTBELGIEN

Tourism plays a pivotal part in developing Ostbelgien as a business location. The stage has already been set for this development by the REK I reform of the Tourist Office for the Eastern Cantons into the East Belgium Tourism Agency, and elaboration of guidelines and a brand name (“Ostbelgien”). In the interest of promoting sustainable tourism, we would like to focus on three specific areas of activity: cycling, hiking, and enjoyment. Apart from efforts aimed at quality optimization in this domain, including initiatives such as the advanced training program East Belgium Service Quality (“ServiceQualität Ostbelgien”), we primarily want to invest in our tourism infrastructure.



### LAND-USE PLANNING: LIVELY CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES

We want to have the power to make our own decisions as to when and where construction will take place in the German-speaking Community. To this end, we are making efforts to have land-use planning authority transferred from the Walloon region to the German-speaking Community. Although a transfer of this nature is not currently one of the issues under discussion in connection with the Sixth major reform of state, such a discussion should be restarted in the near future. This aside, a number of working groups have already pinpointed possible initial options for action. In the context of REK II, we would like to analyse the new Walloon legislation and raise awareness of this issue via recognition of the Business Development Agency (WFG) as a “centre of architectural heritage.”



### CREATING LIVING SPACE

We would like to equip ourselves with the tools we will need to meet the demographic challenges of the future – namely high real-estate prices, old-age poverty, and social housing. To this end, for a number of years now we have been pursuing the goal of having responsibility for housing transferred from the Walloon region to the German-speaking Community. A list of key points and unresolved issues in this regard was drawn up based on the final report of the relevant working group. The Walloon government’s Declaration of Policy Principles states that it is open to discussing such transfers of powers. We would like to use these discussions to draft a transfer-of-powers decree.



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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Complete information is available from the four volumes of the REK. French and German versions of all four volumes are available for download at dglive ([www.dglive.be/rek](http://www.dglive.be/rek)). This executive summary of Volume 4 is available in German, French, Dutch and English. A German “easy-to-read”-version is also available. With the exception of the French translation of Volume 4, hard-copy versions of all REK publications are available in Eupen (Ministry and Government of the German-speaking Community), Sankt Vith (“Dienstleistungszentrum”) and from the delegations of the German-speaking Community in Berlin and Brussels.

For current information concerning REK, visit dglive ([www.dglive.be/rek](http://www.dglive.be/rek)), or consult the German-speaking Community newsletter, that time and again addresses REK-related topics. You are also invited to participate in the various REK-related citizens’ events. These events are announced in the media.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact Alexander Krings, ministerial coordinator of the Regional Development Concept (phone: +32 (0)87 596 436; e-mail: [alexander.krings@dgov.be](mailto:alexander.krings@dgov.be)).

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### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT FOR THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

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