

# Belgium 2040 - Volt Belgium Electoral Program for the Federal Elections

## Context and Background

After a grassroots idea gathering phase in autumn 2022 where both Volt-members as well external citizens could submit any idea to become an electoral priority in the 2024 election, we organised a democratic preferendum in December 2022 to choose our top 10 electoral priorities.

After the preferendum, a team of more than 30 Volt-members, internal and external experts and citizens co-drafted the specific texts for the main priorities and sub-priorities chosen in our preferendum. Those specific texts were then discussed at events and at our general assembly back in April 2023 in Namur where we formally voted on the final texts. Therefore, the texts presented here are already officially adopted as our 2024 electoral program. In the upcoming months there will still be an amendment phase for minor corrections, without changing the main priorities chosen in the democratic preferendum.

The infographic displays the top 10 electoral priorities for the 2024 federal and regional elections, organized into two columns. Each priority is represented by a numbered icon and a brief description. The Volt logo is in the top right corner, and the slogan 'FUTURE MADE IN EUROPE' is at the bottom left.

Priority	Description
01	Belgian infrastructure and connectivity with an emphasis on investments in green infrastructure*
02	Mobility and Public Transport
03	Tax Justice
04	Energy Transition
05	A common European Defense (FEDERAL) The future of Education (REGIONAL)
06	Climate Change Mitigation
07	Equal Opportunities
08	Electoral Reform (FEDERAL) Housing and city planning (REGIONAL)
09	More competences to the EU
10	Citizen Participation

29/06/2023 Contact: [policy@voltbelgium.org](mailto:policy@voltbelgium.org)

## **Electoral Priority 1: investments in green and resilient infrastructure**

If Belgium and Europe want to be both economically and ecologically prosperous 15 years from now, we have to accelerate and increase investments in sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

**Climate Legislation is Infrastructure Legislation:** We **build down climate emissions via positive infrastructure investments** to make Europe climate neutral by 2040. The **transport sector** is the only sector in Europe where [emissions increased instead of decreasing in the last decades](#). Sustainable infrastructure such as Rail Infrastructure can address **climate, jobs and equity** at the same time and allows for climate neutrality and **economic growth** to co-exist. Infrastructure, such as rail, **connects people**. Further, we expand investments in national and cross-border **electricity grids** (elaborated on in Electoral Priority 4: Energy Transition).

When we decide to make an investment in infrastructure, we have to make the investments that not just help our generation, but the next generation and two and three generations from now. We have to be **stewards of the economy, the environment and our health**. We have to make sure the air we breathe is clean, that the water we drink is clean and that the future of our children is more sustainable, more prosperous and more inclusive than the reality of today.

**Belgium and Europe need the best and most sustainable infrastructure in the world to become an economic powerhouse:** For this we must significantly accelerate its investments in infrastructure, especially sustainable infrastructure. Belgium must modernise and revolutionise its **transportation, energy, and communication networks** to remain competitive.

**Infrastructure Connects People :** Infrastructure promotes social inclusion and equity. From railways to communication networks to energy grids, infrastructure enables the movement of goods, services, and information that drives economic growth and development. By providing fast and reliable connectivity, both offline and online, we can connect people and communities across borders, promote the exchange of ideas and knowledge, and support new technologies that can improve people's lives.

This infrastructure plan is focused on the federal level. Some detailed infrastructure plans are covered in other Electoral Priorities: **Electricity Grids** in Priority 4 'Energy Transition', Tax incentives to boost circular economy related infrastructure in priority 3 '**Circular Economy**' and

**water infrastructure** plus **bicycle infrastructure** are dealt with in the regional infrastructure proposals.

### **Main Proposal 1: Increase rail infrastructure investments in Belgium**

❖❖ *This was the most popular proposal in our referendum out of a list of more than 100 potential priorities with 88% of Volt-members and citizens participating in the referendum chosen to 'certainly' include this in our election program.*

To guarantee a future that is both ecologically and economically robust, we propose to invest € 1 billion/year annually (€ 15 billion over the period 2025-2040) in railway infrastructure in addition to the current budget and current projects. This is divided into 5 sub-projects (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) of € ca. 3 billion euros each.

(1) First of all, we need to solve the **bottleneck of the delays in Brussels affecting the entire Belgian rail network**. The Brussel-South - Brussels-Central - Brussels-North connection is saturated, and even very small incidents can cause a snowball effect of delays on the entire Belgian railway network lasting for hours or even the entire day. All Belgians, whether you live in Brussels, Flanders or Wallonia, would considerably benefit from a structural and long-term solution for this bottleneck. We need a structural solution that not only benefits our generation but the generations to come. Beside evaluating the necessary short-term solutions to improve the situation (timetables, expansion of smaller stations in Brussels such as Brussels-West, ...), we urge for a structural solution to solve the problem for the generations to come.

[A study by the VUB mobility group evaluated 8 different solutions](#) to address the bottleneck in Brussels. The solutions were assessed based on criteria such as mobility supply, technical feasibility, implementation time, financial feasibility, comfort, reliability, and robustness. The South-East tunnel from Brussel South to Brussel-Schuman emerged as the best performing solution. Besides performing best on scientific criteria, important stakeholders, including the NMBS, Infrabel, and Regional Public Transport Operators, rated the South-East tunnel as the highest performing solution. **Volt supports solutions that prioritise robustness, performance, passenger comfort, and have the ability to generate a modal shift.** Certainly for travel over distances too long for walking and cycling, the number of railway passengers has to increase sharply in order to realise the modal shift to less car-use and a higher percentage of healthy and sustainable transport. This is crucial for a prosperous future, **not only for our generation but also for future generations.** Solving this bottleneck is expected to cost around [2 billion euros and take around 10 years to complete](#). Many [mobility experts agree that this is necessary due to the current saturation of the](#)

[network on the north-south axis](#), and the Brussel-South-Schuman tunnel has also been [highlighted as a viable option](#). We also are **open to consider other viable alternatives** including a flyover train viaduct to increase railway capacity on the saturated axes in Brussel, as long as it can be demonstrated this will be sufficient to solve the problem not only for the next few decades but for the next generations to come.

There are several **economic benefits associated with this infrastructure project**. Firstly, it will create a significant number of jobs, including opportunities for blue-collar workers in construction. Secondly, the improved infrastructure availability will attract new business and investment opportunities in the Brussels area. Thirdly, the increased rail passenger capacity will reduce congestion and benefit motorists. Fourthly, traffic-related air pollution will decrease due to less car use, resulting in fewer cases of asthma, cancer, and heart attacks. This is a considerable cost reduction for social security and taxpayers, as hospital treatments, sick leave, and medication are largely covered by social security funded by taxpayers. Less traffic-related air pollution will considerably decrease those costs.



**Figure:** The proposed new tunnel from Bruxelles-Midi to Bruxelles-Schuman (figure from the VUB study).

(2) Second, **upgrade the existing rail network by increasing the operational speed.** To gain speed and reduce travel time without having to build new high-speed rail infrastructure, we propose to upgrade the existing normal tracks on certain fast intercity lines without frequent stops (where technically feasible and realistic) to a speed of 160-200 km/h.

(3) Third, **we upgrade the existing rail network by increasing the number of tracks on strategic locations where technically feasible.** This implies conversion from single track to double track and double track to triple track or quadruple track to allow a Dutch-like system, where Intercity trains become real intercity trains and sprinter trains serve the smaller stops in between, both in a high frequency and unhindered by each other. In addition, it facilitates the unhindered co-existence of passenger rail and transportation of goods via rail. Existing projects like Gent-Brugge (*3<sup>de</sup> en 4<sup>de</sup> spoor*) are under construction. In addition, we propose to build double tracks Hamont-Mol, explore adding a 3<sup>rd</sup> track on e.g.the line Leuven-Mechelen-Ghent. This allows the combination of trains for transport of goods, high-frequency fast IC-passenger trains and high-frequency slower stop-trains on those routes. [Specific proposals for Wallonia can be found in this annex.](#)

Fast IC-Trains by 2035 after executing proposal (2) + (3)	Current Duration	Duration 2035
Leuven-Mechelen Non-stop	0h25	<0h15
Leuven-Ghent Stops: Mechelen, Dendermonde	1h00	<0h45

(4) We propose to **connect urban and rural communities and improve railway infrastructure in rural areas** and explore amongst others the resurrection of the Hasselt-Maastricht railway after the Flemish government cancelled the tram, explore to reuse (after an upgrade) several older railways no longer in use.

(5) **Improve the operational management of public transportation systems.** This is especially the case for late evening and night trains, higher frequencies on the weekend and more international (night) trains. This is very important to have a robust mobility system serving the people, and has ecological, economical and public health effects as well. Electoral Priority 2 'Mobility and Public Transport' elaborates more on those proposals.

Further, we want to explore new high-speed rail infrastructure projects by launching **feasibility and cost-benefit studies** of potential routes , such as Antwerp - Gent - Kortrijk - Lille via E34 ; Brussel-Luxembourg or Luik-Luxembourg.

[Some specific more elaborated proposals for Wallonia can be found here.](#)

**Funding:** [With only 0,18% of our GDP dedicated towards rail infrastructure, we are behind compared to most other EU countries, and far from the top of the EU list with countries like France \(0.46%\) and Austria \(0.53%\).](#) Currently, the salary car fiscal incentive/subsidy system costs € 4 billion per year. We want to reform this system and dedicate **€ 1 billion** from this budget towards rail investments, including infrastructure and operational management. (The other € 3 billion is dedicated to increasing the net wage for former salary-car owners (*see Electoral Priority 3: Fiscal Justice*). In conclusion, for the period 2025-2040 we propose to increase the railway investments by **€ 1 billion annually, amounting to € 15 billion in total between 2025 and 2040**. This corresponds to increasing rail infrastructure investments from 0.18-0.19% of our GDP to 0.33-0.34% of our GDP.

### **Main Proposal 2: 100% 4-G coverage and 75% 5-G coverage in Belgium by 2030**

No matter whether you are in the centre of Brussels or in the middle of the Ardennes, you should have access to reliable high speed internet. In the future, the [Internet of Things](#) will be connected to everything from autonomous electric cars, ambulances to wind farms, and Belgium needs to be ready to stay competitive. We have to accelerate the roll-out of 5G and fibre infrastructure by reducing the administrative burden for telecom operators, and incentivizing operators to invest both in rural and urban areas, following the example of our neighbouring countries. [This website provides an overview of current 4G and 5G coverage in Belgium for the different operators.](#)

5G has also many crucial advantages for essential services, such as the healthcare sector. 5G technology provides key advantages for healthcare and emergency services, including faster communication between professionals and responders, improving emergency response times. It enables real-time telemedicine, allowing remote patient diagnosis and treatment, as well as precision remote surgeries. Real-time data transmission from ambulances to hospitals helps prepare doctors for incoming patients. Wearable healthcare devices allow patients to monitor their health and alert healthcare providers of any concerns.

Instead of requesting hundreds of building permits from local, provincial and regional administrations separately, we want to create a one-stop-shop for telecom operators to centralise

the administrative processes related to high-speed internet infrastructure. This will reduce the cost of infrastructure deployment and make connecting less populated areas a viable business case for operators.

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**Funding:** For the remaining areas, we will coordinate the use of EU and private funding so that the cost for the taxpayer will be as low as possible.

This infrastructure plan is focused on the federal level. Some detailed infrastructure plans are covered in other Electoral Priorities: **Electricity Grids** in Priority 4 'Energy Transition', Tax incentives to boost circular economy related infrastructure in priority 3 '**Circular Economy**' and **water infrastructure** plus **bicycle infrastructure** are dealt with in the regional infrastructure proposals.

## **Electoral Priority 2: Mobility and Public Transport**

Traffic congestion in Belgium results in millions of euros lost each year and causes harm to over 50,000 individuals annually due to traffic incidents. The excessive use of cars not only places a strain on the healthcare system but also has a negative impact on air quality, urban space, and the environment. The Belgian state must reevaluate its mobility plan and, beside a shift towards electric modes of transportation, realise a modal shift towards non-car



modes of transportation (public transport and active travel) to improve the overall health and well-being of its citizens. By investing in affordable public transport, a better operational management of existing train and public transport systems (eg. more trains in the weekend and at night), an increased investment in existing and new rail infrastructure, bike-sharing systems, safe cycling infrastructure, and electric charging options, we can enhance the livability of cities and suburbs, reduce costs, and drive economic growth. While better public transport alone is not enough to achieve these goals, it is a crucial component that must be supported.

**We focus on improving the operational management of the existing railway network (and provide a budget for this) and making train transportation more affordable.**

**Main Proposal 1: Improve the operational management of Train Services Trains should run later in the evening, with the latest train between cities with >50k inhabitants and <1h30 from each other departing after midnight and hourly trains between all Belgian cities >100k inhabitants <1h30 from each other all night long. This means for example at least 1 train/hour during night between Belgian Cities with a population of more than 100k inhabitants like Brussels and Antwerp (via Mechelen), Brussels and Ghent, Brussels and Liège (via Leuven), Brussels and Charleroi, ...**

**Volt** **STELT VOOR**  

 Heel de nacht door treinen om het uur laten rijden binnen België tussen grote steden met meer dan 100 000 inwoners

 Meer frequente en latere dienstregeling van treinen. Laatste trein tussen steden op <1u30 van elkaar met >= 50 000 inwoners na middernacht, inclusief grensstations.

**Laat met de trein thuis geraken is niet evident, volgende routes hebben hun laatste trein om:**

Aken - Brussel: 20u21	Hasselt - Turnhout: 21u36	Maastricht - Luik: 21u48
Charleroi - Brussel: 22u23	Antwerpen - Leuven: 22u58	Sint-Niklaas - Gent: 23u02

Having access to reliable, comfortable and convenient transportation is crucial for the growth and prosperity of any city. In Europe, best practices have shown that trains running throughout the night can greatly enhance the quality of life for citizens and support the economy. In the Netherlands, for example, trains run frequently between major cities even during late hours and at night (like Amsterdam and Utrecht), providing citizens with a safe, sustainable and efficient mode of transportation, while in Austria, the OBB has 25 nightjets operating throughout Europe. Belgium so far has only 1 nightjet to Vienna, which is operated by the OBB.

In Belgium, the impact of having trains running between major cities throughout the night, at a minimum frequency of 1 train per hour will not only benefit the urban areas, but also the suburbs and surrounding regions. It will provide millions of citizens with a safe and reliable mode of transportation, allowing them to go to work for people with night shifts, visit friends, attend events and educational activities, cultural activities, concerts, go to parties, and so much more, even after midnight.

Moreover, having trains running during late hours will support the growth of the Belgian economy by providing businesses with the ability to operate 24/7, and tourists with the convenience to travel and explore the country at any time.

Many possibilities would open up for all of us. No more missed opportunities to spend time with friends and family, to attend events and educational activities, or simply to enjoy a night out. With 24/7 train service, we would have the freedom to travel and explore our beautiful country without the restrictions of limited public transportation hours.

## **Main Proposal 2: European Sleeper Trains should be accelerated and introduced.**

**For now, we thank the sleeper train to Vienna to the OBB, the Austrian railway company. Belgium should not passively wait until operators from other countries want to introduce night trains that also cover Belgium. Instead, Belgium, with Brussels as European Capital, should actively work towards the implementation of many more European Sleeper Trains, which can be run by either the NMBS or private operators. By 2028, daily night trains from Brussels to at least 10 other European Capital cities (or other large European cities) should exist. We also want to discuss with Eurostar and TGV (SNCF) the possibility of high-speed trains at night.**

Another crucial step towards becoming a leading European country with a modern and efficient transportation system, are European Sleeper trains which are a way to connect European Citizens and foster sustainable European Travel, making European rail travel more competitive with cars and planes. An unbeatable advantage of sleeper trains is that travellers save precious time. Not only do travellers avoid losing time in traffic jams, which are very common on highways during rush hours and holiday seasons, but they are even able to travel while sleeping. This is equally attractive to tourists and businessmen.

Let us strive towards a future where we can confidently say that in Belgium, we have access to a world-class transportation system, connected to the other European regions, and one that supports the growth and well-being of our cities and citizens, and enriches our daily lives in Belgium and beyond.

## Volt wants nighttrains from Brussels to 10 EU cities by 2028

Looking to European Best Practices, ÖBB (Austria) has nightjets to 25 destinations.

Belgium should not passively await more nighttrains but actively invest in it.

**Volt** 



**Main Proposal 3: We introduce a simplified ticketing system with day passes for € 5, monthly passes for € 25 and annual passes for € 250 to use the Belgian rail network. To travel in first class, prices are doubled (€ 10 / € 50/ € 500).** This makes the tariffs more competitive with fuel prices of cars, and could attract more passengers. To avoid overcrowding, we also clearly don't opt for an entirely free public transportation system. Recent (2022) examples in Germany and Spain showed that measures to combat inflation through tariff reductions in the public transport, were effective in both attracting more passengers, reducing car traffic and reducing carbon emissions. Data-driven optimizations of passenger flows remain possible. For example, a 20% reduction can be issued for daytickets, monthly passes and yearly passes that will never be used during rush hours.

Further, we also propose negotiations with the regional transport companies (MIVB, De Lijn and TEC) to establish a single-public-transportation ticket in Belgium. This could be for example the standard rail fees increased by 40% to also have access to the MIVB, TEC and De Lijn networks.

**Other proposals:** Furthermore, we want reliable and frequent train connections 7 days a week, including weekends and public holidays, an accelerated purchase and introduction of modern comfortable trains with higher capacity (e.g. **M7 double deckers** with electric charging at each seat, WIFI, accessibility, ... ). This can, especially during rush hours, **increase capacity without saturating the network** more during these hours. **We don't want city**

**trains (S-Trains) on long-distance trajectories** as they are not suitable for this (e.g. no tables, so you cannot work or play games during your trip). **Cross-border public transport** should also be improved with at least a 30 minute frequency between Liège and Maastricht, Aachen and Liège, Ghent and Rijsel/Lille, Brussel and Luxembourg, Pelt-Hamont and Weert-Eindhoven (new introduction), Antwerpen-Eindhoven via Breda without changeover (new introduction), ... We also support the improvements of the 'Spoorplan 2040' such as trains every 15 minutes between big cities, and 30 minutes elsewhere including in rural areas, but to be realistic this may require **infrastructure upgrades**. We also want increased attention for **disabled passengers** and their accessibility to public transport, so they don't need to book assistance 24h in advance.

**Funding:**

- For the improvement of the operational management we provide € 200 million/year additional budget, in addition to the budget necessary for the 'beheersovereenkomst' agreed by the railway operators and the government, specifically to make faster improvements on our two main proposals. This is originating from the reform of fiscal incentives of salary cars as explained in priority 1 and priority 3.
- For the reduced ticket prices, those are to a large extent compensated by an increase in passengers. Currently, the revenue from rail tickets is around €750 million euros. If 3 million people buy the annual ticket, the new system will already equal the revenue from the current ticket sales.

Current revenue from train tickets :  
**€ 750 million / year**

If 3 million people buy annual pass of € 250,  
 annual revenue is equalled

- Cost savings due to less administration
- Increased operational costs due to increase in passengers

## **Main Proposal 4: Improved Sense of Safety for Travelers, Encouraging More People to Choose Public Transport Over Cars**

Violence in public transport not only poses a direct danger to travelers, bus drivers, and train conductors but also the increased perception of the likelihood of such violence negatively impacts the entire sector. Incidents of violence against employees deter potential drivers and conductors from pursuing these roles. They are not the only ones deterred; passengers who feel unsafe due to recent assaults, physical attacks, and armed robberies often opt for cars, perceiving it as a lower risk for such crimes, even though cars statistically still pose a higher risk considering the chances of collisions and crashes with serious and sometimes fatal consequences.

Specifically, more resources should be allocated to the safety of passengers and staff in public transport. Improved safety measures, including emergency buttons and communication systems with microphones in train carriages for direct communication with staff and emergency services, and the development of a mobile app with safety features, contribute to rapid response in case of incidents. Additionally, enhanced lighting and the design of stations and vehicles promote greater visibility and safety. Extensive training for train staff in handling emergencies and aggression, along with salary increases for certified employees, strengthen the safety culture. Extra security personnel on trains and at least one staff member present in every carriage improve protection. Participatory safety assessments are used to further monitor safety needs. Technology is deployed to monitor crowd levels and control, with the aim of maximizing comfort for all travelers.

## **Main Proposal 5: Improved Sense of Safety for Travelers, Encouraging More People to Choose Public Transport Over Cars**

People dependent on public transport should not be left behind in disaster scenarios. When there is an increased risk of certain disasters or in the event of a disaster, measures that can be immediately implemented must be developed. This also includes strategic reserves. For public transport, this means having evacuation buses and train carriages or wagons at strategic locations throughout the country to efficiently accommodate and safely transport a sudden influx of people fleeing a disaster area.

Crises of a different nature must also have pre-developed solutions. For instance, when a significant increase in violence against women or other population groups is observed, the government and parliament must be able to implement a ready-made measure to create literal safe spaces in trains or other forms of public transport

## Electoral Priority 3: Tax Justice

Volt believes that a fair and sustainable tax system is crucial for addressing citizens' concerns, reducing inequality, and promoting economic stability. By balancing taxes, combating fraud, treating single individuals equally, and aligning corporate taxes with societal, environmental, and governance contributions, Belgium can create a more prosperous and just society.

### Main proposal 1: Tax Shift: A Fair and Sustainable Tax System for Belgium

To create a citizen-centric economy and society, we propose a **tax shift from labour taxes to taxes on pollution, health-damaging activities, and extreme wealth**. This will enable citizens to have more freedom to spend their money on what they prefer, while being incentivized to make choices that are not harmful to our planet or fellow citizens' health.

This main proposals consists out of several sub proposals:

#### **(1) Balancing taxes on labour income and capital gains:**

- **Reduces taxes on labour income.** Increase the tax-free minimum income from €9,050 to at least €12,000 annually, corresponding to a tax-free monthly income of €1,000 starting on January 1, 2025.
- Increase the tax-free sum further to €15,000 from 2027 onwards after more income is generated from an increased battle against fiscal and social fraud.

- In the long term, we aim to go further and implement a system of personal taxation that combines all sources of income and does not discriminate between labour and capital, and progressively taxes them as one, but this will not be an objective in the 2024-2029 legislative period.

### **(2) Increased Fighting against fraud and tax evasion:**

- Address fiscal and social fraud in Belgium. Every year, the government loses billions of euros in revenue due to fraudulent activity. For fiscal fraud alone, this is estimated to cost [more than 30 billion euro annually](#).
- Retrieve at least €5 billion annually in revenue from 2027 through an intensified battle against fiscal fraud.
- Allocate 60% of the recovered funds to make the tax system fairer, such as reducing taxes on labour, and 40% for long-term investments, including infrastructure.

### **(3) Fairer tax system for single people:**

- [Single people in Belgium are currently unfairly treated with the highest taxes in the world](#)
- Apply the same tax rates and benefits to each individual, regardless of marital status, abolishing the marriage quotient.
- Harmonise the tax-free income increase for children at around €2,500 per child or slightly higher, ensuring a budget-neutral operation.

### **(4) Align corporate taxes with actual societal and environmental contribution: 14**

- Implement a corporate tax system that rewards corporations based on their contributions to employment, education, new technologies, environmental



protection, and profit margins.

- Introduce sliding scales ranging from 15% to 35%, taking into account Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria for the tax reform. • Companies embracing sustainable practices and meeting ESG criteria will receive tax benefits.
- New companies making a profit for the first time receive a low corporate income tax rate of 15% for two years.
- Polluting companies that ignore the ecological transition and cause harm to the environment or human health may face a tax rate close to the upper bound of 35%



**Main Proposal 2: Reduce avoidable deaths from behavioural & environmental factors through taxation (VAT and salary car reform)**

We introduce 2 additional VAT levels, a VAT level of 0% for healthy products where society benefits from if used in abundance. And on the other hand, a VAT level of 25% for products that can be very damaging for either our human health, the environment or the planet.

**The 0% VAT rate** will apply to fruits, vegetables, bicycle purchases, bicycle maintenance, public transport tickets and fitness subscriptions.

**The 25% VAT rate** will apply to car purchases, wood stoves, tobacco, fluids containing an alcohol percentage of 20% or more, fast food/junk food and red meat.

In order to technically enable the introduction of those revised VAT rates, **the VAT rates of 6 and 12% will be merged into a VAT rate of 9%** in order to not have too many VAT rates.

**The system of salary cars will be reformed.** Currently, the fiscal incentives/subsidies for these cars cost the Belgian government € 4 - 4.5 billion (excluding external and societal costs, est. € 1 - 2 billion). This consists out of 3 pillars:

- (1) Financial benefit for the company because salary cars are tax deductible in contrast to paying real wages, unfortunately nudging companies to pay employees in cars.
- (2) Social Security Contributions
- (3) Untaxed net wage for the employee

€ 1 billion annually from reducing (1) will be used for **infrastructure investments** such as rail. The remaining from (1) and (2+3) we reform into a **mobility budget**. The mobility budget is up to €4,000 per year and covers various transportation options such as bike purchases, electric car purchases, public transportation tickets. Employees do not pay taxes on the mobility budget, and it is only 10% tax-deductible for companies. The budget allows for flexibility and includes non-work-related purchases, such as buying an Interrail pass or a TGV ticket for personal travel. However, to ensure the budget promotes sustainable transport, at least 40% of the budget must be spent on bikes, e-steps, electric car-sharing systems (e.g. cambio), or public transport. Employers have the freedom to choose which employees may benefit from the mobility budget, which could be the existing salary car owners.

A recent **trial of a four-day work week** in Ireland has shown promising results, with all participating companies opting to continue with the reduced work schedule. The pilot project involved 12 Irish companies and lasted for six months, with employees maintaining their regular pay despite the shorter work week.

Similar to a pilot project conducted in the UK, the trial in Ireland was inspired by **European best practices** in the field of work-life balance. The Irish findings have demonstrated that this innovative approach can have a positive impact on both employees and businesses.

The results of the trial were impressive. A vast majority of the companies that reported data on revenue saw growth in revenue, and managers gave positive ratings for productivity and overall experience. 100% of employees involved in the study preferred the four-day work week, and reported improvements in their wellbeing, including decreased stress, burnout, fatigue, and work-family conflict, as well as increased sleep time.

The trial also highlighted improvements in environmental metrics, such as reduced waste. Moreover, the four-day work week showed particular benefits for women, with reports of greater life satisfaction, recovery gains, and job security.

Overall, the trial has demonstrated that a four-day work week is a viable option for businesses, and can have a significant impact on employee well-being and productivity. It is an innovative approach that could be beneficial for companies looking to improve work-life balance, and follow European best practices in this field. Similar to Ireland and the UK, we would rather start with **large-scale trials** than a complete rollout initially.

## Electoral Priority 4 - Energy Transition

It is universally accepted that transitioning away from fossil fuels is vital for the future of humanity and indeed the world as we know it. Volt proposes a pragmatic approach based on a combination of nuclear energy and renewable energies, with the latter taking a growing portion of our energy production over the years.

This will achieve the following three objectives:

1) **Protection of the environment** - The climate is rapidly changing and requires a transition to sources of clean energy that do not produce greenhouse gas, directly or indirectly, especially if Belgium is going to play an active role in reaching the Paris Agreement targets.

2) **Affordability for everyone** - Everyone should be able to have access to affordable energy to cater for their basic needs. This means developing means for governments, in particular the Belgian government, to control prices. We believe that this will be possible by regulating consumption, developing storage and efficient usage mechanisms.

3) **Security of energy supplies** - Belgium needs to ensure as much energetic security as possible. A balance between foreign policy, EU policies and national policies has to be found. As a pan-european party Volt can contribute to find the right balance. At the same time it needs to contribute to a more favourable EU energy sharing policy.

Mechanisms to reduce fluctuations in the production and the consumption of energy should be developed. This will require the private and public sectors to adapt. The Belgian government needs to step in and ensure this transition is done swiftly yet smoothly.

**Main proposal 1: Keep as many existing nuclear reactors open as long as possible, as long as it is technologically feasible and safe.**

Volt Belgium firmly believes that Nuclear Energy answers 5 of the main components of the Global Balance Challenge of Volt Europa.

1. It is a safe, reliable, stable and readily available source of energy. 2. It guarantees the energy independence of Belgium and the EU, from any external, geopolitical or meteorological, influence. The fuel can easily be accumulated and stored into strategic reserves for decades. For example, the French nuclear industry has enough uranium reserves for 30 years of continuous operation of all its nuclear power plants, with 3 to 5 years of operations directly on its soil, on top of the fuel already in operating reactors. Belgium should have something similar. Volt BE believes that we need to guarantee strategic uranium stocks for the foreseeable future.

3. Long Term Operations (LTO) of nuclear power plants are resource-efficient. Many of the current plants can easily operate for another 20 to 40 years, meaning that less waste would be generated, less raw materials would be required (steel, concrete, etc.), and thus this would have the smallest footprint compared to any other source of energy, in particular renewables. Furthermore, in order to reduce the amount of natural resources needed, the reprocessing of spent fuel, to close the fuel cycle and reduce the need for natural uranium, is needed. This means repealing the moratorium on fuel reprocessing and the fabrication of MOX fuel.

4. It also ensures an affordable and stable cost-structure for electricity generation, certainly for already operational power plants, as the economics of those are known, with very little uncertainties

5. It does not produce any CO<sub>2</sub>, nor any other harmful emission that many alternative disposable energy sources produce (as those are mainly fossil fuels). CO<sub>2</sub> is only emitted by the construction of new plants (mostly from the chemical reactions to make concrete) as well as in the mining operations of uranium.

### **Main proposal 2: More solar & wind energy, especially where space-efficient**

Belgium should support the deployment of infrastructure necessary for the production of low CO<sub>2</sub> renewable energy, in collaboration with other EU countries. It should actively contribute to the establishment of an EU-based supply-chain of equipment necessary for the production of renewable energies in Europe. The current dependency on manufacturers located outside the EU makes Belgium and other EU countries vulnerable to geopolitical tensions. In addition, we can bring the manufacturing of the new green infrastructure into the EU. This would allow Belgium and the EU to apply higher standards, thus significantly lowering the carbon footprint of the renewable energy supply chain. And this would create jobs in Europe.

Belgium should further contribute to the European energy supply through the accelerated development of wind farms, both in-land and off-shore. Hydraulic energy (Hydro-power) should be further developed, and solar panels should be used for private dwellings as well as industrial complexes. Belgian industries and households should also adapt so that the energy consumption is concentrated when there is an excess of production.

### **Main Proposal 3: A better integrated energy grid for Belgium within the EU and internationally**

Volt believes that it is essential to further integrate the Belgian grid with the European electricity grid, in order to ensure a stable supply of energy thanks to various sources. A

pan-European approach is indeed essential as it is in many other domains. In order to guarantee the provision of energy a given supplier should not cover more than 10% of the total demand.

Investments should be directed towards the rapid development of sources of renewable energy and storage technology (such as hydrogen) in Europe. If it involves poorer nations, the energy supply should be linked to their economic development, to avoid any new risk of exploitation. This could apply for instance to solar farms in Africa.

#### **Main Proposal 4: Repeal the law that forbids future nuclear energy**

Volt Belgium would repeal the law of the 31st of January 2003 (and not amend it). Volt would make a new legislative proposal to have a clear framework for the Nuclear Power industry. This new law could be entitled "Nuclear Energy for a Sustainable Future". 1. Allow the operation of existing nuclear power plants for as long as it is technically feasible, whilst always adhering to the highest levels of nuclear safety; 2. Create a legislative environment, where it would be interesting for private operators to build and operate potential new nuclear power plants;

3. Develop and promote the recycling of spent nuclear fuel, in order to reduce the amount of radioactive waste as well as to reduce the amount of fresh (natural) uranium needed for energy generation;

4. Nuclear energy generation should contribute more to the Belgian federal budget in order

to promote R&D on new energy projects. The special nuclear tax levied since 2013 should be reinforced and used for research and development in new energy projects. 5. Commit on a long term strategy for long-lived radioactive waste at a European level. This will ensure to have the best sites for deep geological repository, but also to have a

strategy for the reuse and recycling of what is now considered waste, but could be used as fuel in the future.

Volt believes that economic and societal development will only be possible if stable energy supply and consumption are achieved in a sustainable manner. This is why Volt wants to maintain the production of nuclear energy in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also intends to massively invest in renewable energy and storage technologies. This is only achievable through integration of supply and demand at a European level. Volt believes that Belgium can play an important role thanks to its central location. Future generations across Europe are counting on us to lay the foundation for a better and more sustainable future.



## **Electoral Priority 5: Common European Defence**

### **The world we live in and the need for defence**

Especially since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war it must have become clear that there exist inherently evil forces in this world that threaten the security of our country, our continent, our democracy and our society in general. Whether we like it or not, Belgium still needs an adequate form of defence to protect our security and democracy. Belgium,

although a fully independent nation, is too small to fully ensure its own defence without regard for all our partners in Europe and the world. Belgium's defence only makes sense in a common European defence, which still needs to be organised, in a way that we should determine ourselves.

### **Democratic decision making**

The decisions made regarding defence issues should be the sole responsibility of our own democratic institutions: the Belgian federal parliament, the democratically elected parliaments of our closest allies, and most importantly the European Parliament.

### **Main Proposal 1: Fully integrated European Defence Force**

Volt is in favour of a fully integrated European Defence Force, although it currently doesn't exist yet. The creation of such a European Defence Force will be a long and painstakingly slow process with several dozens of sovereign partners involved.

Volt therefore proposes the creation of a Core European Defence Force, integrating the individual armed forces of the Benelux, France and Germany. Thus serving as an example for others then to join. This process will then be similar to how finally the EU was created from out of the core countries of the EEC.

As a matter of fact, this integration process has already started and is in some aspects **23**

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already far evolved. Volt notes that states have a monopoly on the use of force and that the EU is an association of sovereign states, not a state. After the European elections in 2024, Volt proposes that the European Parliament should adopt a constituent role, draft and vote on a European federal constitution.

### **Main Proposal 2: Common security culture**

A common European Defence does not make sense without a common European security culture. The main elements of such a European security culture will be:

- Europe will take responsibility for its own defence and will no longer have to rely on US

defence resources.

- All European countries should increase their defence spending to at least 2% of their gross domestic product. For Belgium, the STAR Plan approved in 2022 only aims to reach 1.55% by 2030. Belgium will devise a new investment plan to reach the 2% objective, together with all the other more binding commitments it has accepted in the EU.

- A European Defence Force should be “military fully capable” and be equipped with adequate weapon systems that should be locally produced in Europe, so that no one will be able to blackmail us in times of crisis. Belgium will contribute to this effort by:

- o Recruiting sufficient human resources to be able to meet its international commitments in terms of personnel and participate effectively in the European Defence Force,

- o Ensuring that its investments in defence equipment contribute to the industrial strategic autonomy of the EU and bring fair societal return to Europe’s and Belgium’s technological and industrial base.

- Developing, building, purchasing and maintaining weapon systems will be as much as possible standardised and performed jointly amongst EU Member States in order to profit from economies of scale and ensure interoperability.

**We maintain Close interaction with other security actors:** Accepting responsibility for our own defence doesn’t mean there is no longer a place for close interaction with our partners in NATO, the UN and the OSCE. These relations should be cherished and constantly improved. The European Defence Force isn’t an alternative to NATO, the European Defence Force is intended to be a proud and reliable part of NATO. The relations with Russia will need to be re-evaluated, but such a re-evaluation makes only sense after the current war has ended.

Volt is very saddened to see that war is back in Europe, of all possibilities. This also means that all interest for an adequate European Defence is back and that we should accept the consequences of that increased interest:

- Shift of political priorities, defence has become a priority again. • Accepting the additional financial burden of defence.
- Refocus of our economy on the possibility of an armed conflict. **25**

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## **Electoral Priority 6: Climate Change Mitigation**

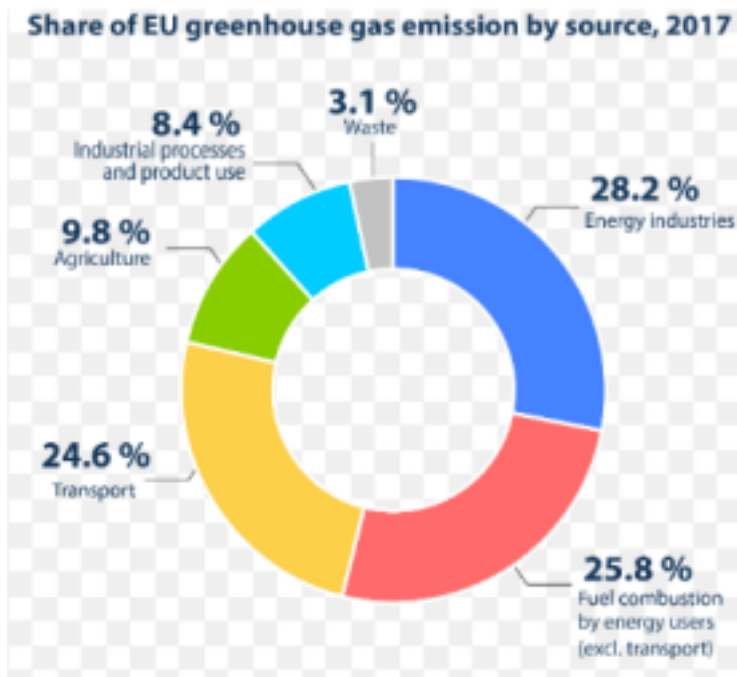
Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing our modern civilization. Europe is no exception. The European Union has already committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Reaching those targets on time will require massive efforts from all, individuals, communities, businesses and governments. Volt Europa has set the goal of becoming climate neutral by 2040 and by such will have to sustain key strategic policies, some of them unpopular, costly and/or even at times controversial, over long periods of time, if we wish to reach those targets.

This exercise is all the more delicate for two other major reasons. First, there is no guarantee

that making a country ecologically sustainable and free from fossil fuel dependence will allow people to keep a dignified and good quality of life.

It is believed that economic and ecological prosperity can go hand in hand. For instance, investing in sustainable infrastructure, such as railways, can cut carbon emissions while at the same time boost economic growth. But failing to find the right balance between achieving net zero carbon emissions and making sure people continue having dignified and proper quality of life is potentially a cause for rising populism.

Second, keeping global temperature rise under 2°C is a global effort. As of today, is it highly



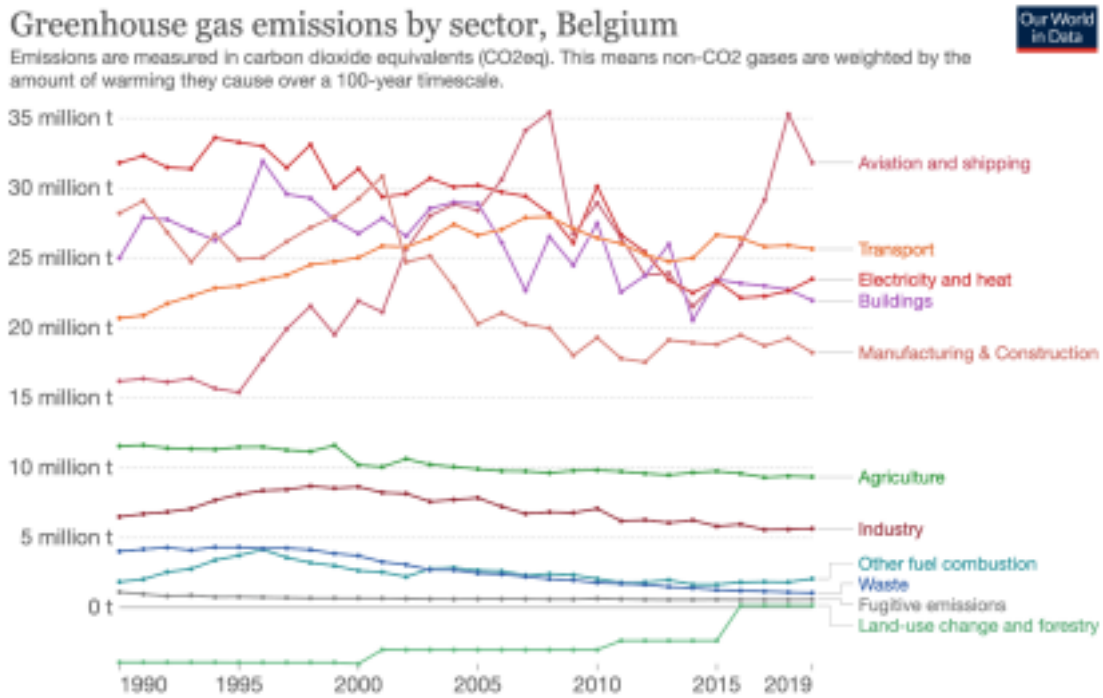
unlikely that China, India and many other developing countries will engage as seriously as Europe to reach these targets. Therefore, while Europe does its best to prepare for a fossil fuel free world, it is imperative for Belgium to prepare for the most problematic consequences of climate change. On the other hand, we also highly focus on climate change policies that are also beneficial for the Belgian population from other perspectives than the climate perspective such as Public Health and Economy.

### **Main Proposal 1: Reaching the Paris Agreement Targets in a Smart and Responsible way**

Overall, addressing climate change requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, involving not just Europe but the entire global community. In Europe, the most important contributors to carbon emissions are the transportation sector (around 25% of which 72% from cars), energy sector ( $\geq 25\%$ ), fuel combustion excl. Transport ( $\geq 25\%$ ) and agriculture (10%). In most sectors, there is a decrease in emissions during the last decades (however insufficient) - except for the transportation sector where the emissions still increase. At the

same time, forests serve as a carbon sink. Europe in general, and Belgium in particular, can play a leading role in tackling this challenge by prioritising the following strategic points:

- Investments in Green Infrastructure (Electoral Priority #1)
- Sustainable Mobility (Electoral Priority #2)
- A tax structure to support the development of the Circular Economy and greener consumption patterns (Electoral Priority #3)
- A smart Energy Transition (Electoral Priority #4)
- Creating Carbon Sinks by Supporting Biodiversity (Electoral Priority #6 Regional Elections)
  - International Cooperation (including strong EU policies and targets)



Source: Our World in Data based on Climate Analysis Indicators Tool (CAIT).  
OurWorldInData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions - CC BY

## Electoral Priority 7: Equal Opportunities

### Main Proposal 1 Systemic Inclusion - an essential ingredient for a healthy Belgian democracy

Our European Union is founded upon the values of Respect for human dignity, Freedom, Democracy, Equality, Rule of law, and Respect for human rights, including those of minorities. To realise a society built on these values, Volt is committed to advance policies that lead to Belgium being a systematically inclusive society that offers equal opportunities

for all. Systemic inclusion is of high importance as such a society would be beneficial to all Belgians.

The importance lies in different dimensions. First off there is the ethical dimension, where we refer to Art. 23 of The Belgian Constitution<sup>1</sup>, stating that everyone has the right to lead a life in keeping with human dignity, as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights<sup>2</sup>, whose purpose is to promote human rights within the EU territory. A life of dignity is one which is fully lived, and where society enables individuals to reach their full potential without any undue barriers.

For the social dimension we identify many consequences for not including a part of the society: individuals who are excluded from society face increased threat to their personal security, they are often forced into a life of crime or live in neighbourhoods with higher crime rates, disadvantaged communities, which often face challenges such as brain drain, emigration, social conflict, expansion of slums, instability, urban violence, divided societies, and violent conflict, etc.<sup>3</sup>

A final dimension, which we identified as equally important, is the economical one. Promotion of social equality is sometimes perceived as very costly and not worth the benefits.<sup>4</sup> Yet the IMF has identified that the opportunity cost to the French economy alone is equal to 1,5% of the nation's GDP over 20 years.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, many countries that achieve relatively equal societies demonstrate stronger economic competitiveness.<sup>6</sup> Social

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf\\_sections/publications/constitution/GrondwetUK.pdf](https://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/publications/constitution/GrondwetUK.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government\\_in\\_ireland/european\\_government/eu\\_law/charter\\_of\\_fundamental\\_rights.html](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/european_government/eu_law/charter_of_fundamental_rights.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/compilation-brochure.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/compilation-brochure.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [The Economic Cost of Racism – IMF F&D](#)

<sup>6</sup> Therborn, G. (2007) Presentation. Expert Group Meeting on Creating and Inclusive Society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social Integration. Paris, France, 10 - 13 September 2007

inclusion can also be seen as an opportunity cost as a diverse workforce is more creative, innovative and understands the needs of the market better.<sup>7</sup>

## **Main Proposal 2 Tackling inequities in all spheres of life and policies**

To build a systemically inclusive society, we must understand how systemic exclusion occurs in the first place. Exclusion is the product of a variety of contributing factors, from inherited obstacles such as the living conditions of the family and surroundings we are born in, to access to education and support whilst in education, and upon completion of one's education, access to the labour market and a workplace, where we can bring our full self, and be supported to achieve. It can be affected by external factors such as where we live, who we encounter, the services we must interact with, and the biases of those who provide these services, and these factors accumulate over time.

Exclusion and discrimination are experienced differently and individuals may face discrimination on not just one, but multiple aspects of themselves. Building a systemically inclusive society therefore requires applying both a multi-dimensional as well as an intersectional lens that accounts for the existence of contributing factors that lead to exclusion, but also to the diversity of lived experiences that may mean that for some individuals some factors are more affecting than others. Public policies aiming to build a systemically inclusive society will only succeed with the appreciation of this reality and the implementation of solutions that are multi-layered.

Volt Belgium champions tackling social inequity via an intersectional approach. We are convinced that intersectionality is an essential lens that must be applied in all policies aiming to ensure no one is left behind. Volt Belgium supports an effective mainstreaming of systemic inclusion, seeking for the development and adoption of comprehensive National and Regional Action Plans for Systemic Inclusion, developed in partnership with the concerned communities. These Action Plans should have measurable outcomes and targets, data should be collected to monitor effective progress by public and private actors, and measures of redress and accountability are necessary to ensure appropriate financial means are made available to carry these plans out.

The National and Regional Action Plans for Systemic Inclusion should involve all relevant ministries address the key determinants of socio-economic inequalities, including ensuring equitable access to:

- Housing and a healthy living environment,
- Good and services,
- Education,
- Labour market and an inclusive workplace
- Leisure, cultural, and sporting services
- Transportation & mobility services
- Public and social services

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/compilation-brochure.pdf>

- Social and financial capital
- Effective protection against discrimination and enforcement of rights -  
Political representation and participation

As part of implementing the action plan, an observatory for equality data collection, covering both public and private actors' equality data collection, should be established to collect comprehensive data on the prevalence of exclusion and to track progress against the indicators for success stemming from the action plans.

Volt champions the strengthening of equality and civil society bodies, that serve as intermediaries between public authorities, affected communities and individuals, by ensuring both sufficient funding for these bodies to carry out their work, but also by adopting legislative reforms that facilitate the ability of these actors to act on behalf of victims of discrimination in front of the courts.



As demonstrated by the Ukraine War, the adoption of a humane migration policy and facilitated access to the labour market can be highly effective and reduce burden on social services. Our economy benefits when we facilitate excluded individuals accessing the labour market legally. Volt champions the creation of a humane migration policy that enables new entrants to contribute fully to the economy and consequently the financing of the expanded goods and services base required by increasing the capacity of public services to process, and determine eligibility of candidate refugees, repatriate those who have no legal standing, whilst creating corridors for regularisation of individuals who have integrated into society.

### **Main Proposal 3 No one left behind**

Volt is committed to championing policies in government that ensure that no one is left behind. Far too long, the economic cost of exclusion has been ignored or underestimated. At a time when Belgium faces numerous crises and challenges, many of the solutions that must be deployed require all Belgians to reach their full potential. As a country committed to the EU values, we will ensure that comprehensive federal, regional and provincial plans exist to tackle discriminations where they happen, but also take into account the historic, structural, and systemic causes of these discriminations. To tackle them, we champion a mainstream approach, underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base stemming from both public and private sources, and measurable targets that ensure real progress is taking place to reduce the number of people facing exclusion and discrimination. This is essential not just for victims, but also for society as a whole which ultimately suffers from the costs of exclusion.

## **Electoral Priority 8: Electoral Reform**

Volt wants to push for electoral reforms, to strengthen democracy within the current framework. We want to have fair politics, in which the people can trust again. At the moment, the big established parties have too much power, sometimes referred to as

'particracy', and it's very difficult for new parties to kick off.

### **Main Proposal 1: National constituency**

Federal elections must take place in a national constituency, and by extension at each level the constituency should correspond to the geographical jurisdiction of the elected body. Currently, constituencies coincide with provinces, with a certain number of seats allocated for each province in the Chamber of Representatives. The electoral threshold is different in each province, depending on the number of seats available. Elected MPs represent only their own constituency and not the whole country.

Volt demands a national constituency, where all seats in the Chamber of Representatives are allocated to the same electoral list across Belgium. That way, every vote in the country has equal weight in parliament, and politicians represent the entire population. This will also ensure that politicians from one language group are more likely to find their way to the media of the other language group.

Volt Belgium is one party. So this would help us get more votes because they would all be counted together. This also shows that we think across the language border and look first at what we can do better together.

Volt Europa has transnational lists for EU elections in its programme, so it is only logical that we also work this out at the Belgian level. And as long as there are no transnational lists for EU elections, we also want a national constituency for European elections.

### **Main Proposal 2: Change the party financing**

We want to grant fewer subsidies to political parties. In addition, smaller parties should also be entitled to subsidies.

Currently, the big political parties receive far too much state funding (they themselves admit as much), while parties without elected members do not get a single euro. Reducing subsidies for large parties will ensure budget savings. We want to support smaller parties without elected representatives too, to help them grow, and give them a better chance of

getting elected. Here, we can look at neighbouring countries, for example, where parties without elected members receive subsidies based on the number of votes, there are also other systems such as match funding or subsidy budgets. In this way, Volt Belgium could claim state funding. It also shows that we want to make Belgium more democratic, by giving subsidies to new and smaller parties with fresh ideas that do not find their way into the country's older parties.

A reduction in subsidies must also go hand in hand with rules and an audit of their spending, as is done at European level by the European Court of Auditors. Belgian parties should no longer be allowed to behave like glorified real estate companies by parking their millions in real estate as is often the case today.

### **Main Proposal 3: Lower electoral threshold**

Volt advocates lowering the current electoral threshold to a maximum of 1%. Currently, the electoral threshold for all elections in Belgium is officially 5%. The purpose of the electoral threshold was to combat fragmentation in the Belgian political landscape and prevent the rise of extreme parties. Today, however, we see that the electoral threshold has not achieved its goals, the landscape is fragmented and a large part of it is occupied by extreme parties on both sides of the spectrum. The current electoral threshold only serves to make it harder for smaller parties to get elected, thus preventing a renewal of the political class. Further, the 250000-plus voters of these smaller parties are also not represented at all in parliament/council.

We want to lower the official electoral threshold to give smaller parties a fairer chance of getting elected and increase representativeness. This could end the current particracy and give the people a chance to bring about a renewal of the political class.

As a new party, the electoral threshold also makes it harder for Volt Belgium to get elected. This point also makes it clear that Volt wants to revitalise our democracy by also giving other small parties a chance to represent Belgian citizens.

Volt wants to strengthen democracy with fair elections and decision-making, as well as more economical party funding.

### **Main Proposal 4: Lower voting age to 16 years for all elections**

Young people will face the full impact of climate change, depleting resources and demographic change for decades to come. It is therefore important to give young people a (stronger) voice in our intergenerational struggle to find solutions to today's and tomorrow's challenges. Therefore, Volt proposes to lower the voting age to 16 years for all elections including municipal, regional, national and European with a voting **right** for all citizens 16 years and over for those elections.

## **Electoral Priority 9: More competences to EU**

Volt believes that a lot of issues are the same all over Europe (or even beyond) and need a European response. Therefore it would make sense to move competences from a national and regional, or even a local, level to the EU.

### **1. Health care**

The Corona pandemic has shown that the divided national or regional representatives were not able to answer a global pandemic. Each country or region had their own measures, with each a different impact on the people living there. Borders were closed, families torn apart, and the impact on the health care system was different everywhere. Each country was

fighting for their own delivery of masks or other medical material, competing with other member states, instead of collaborating to get more done. The latter was shown with the vaccines, here the EU stepped in and negotiated with the pharmaceutical companies as a big economical and political power, with positive results.

### **2. Energy**

The war in Ukraine, with the resulting reduction of Russian energy import, again created a competition between member states. Member states would go and negotiate with other fossil fuel exporting countries on their own, while the energy network is interconnected. CO2 emissions from a country's coal plant doesn't stop at the border, especially if this plant is built at the border. Not every country has access to a sea, limiting the options for wind energy.

### **3. Climate**

Climate change doesn't stop at the border. It impacts the whole continent with floods in the

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Belgian-German border region, forest fires over the whole south, melting glaciers in the Alps.

**4. Asylum and migration**

Volt wants a human refugee policy and a smart labour migration policy for the EU. Collaboration and solidarity are a prerequisite to prevent future migration crises in Europe. We will show our European values by receiving refugees and asylum seekers in a human way and provide them a future. No adult nor child can be stuck in dangerous and inhumane places like camps on Moria or Lesbos. Volt also wants to give labour migrants a better future by providing them with clarity about the possibilities. That way we will improve the situation of the labour migrants, ourselves and their countries of origin.

**5. Agriculture**

Currently, farmers in different countries have different rules to follow, but their products can be exported all over the EU without issues. This creates a situation of unfair competition.

## Electoral Priority 10: Citizen Participation

More and more citizens are turning away from society and policy. The number of people with an anti-government attitude is increasing. Citizens feel badly represented by their elected representatives and find this problem important, as studies show. Moreover, an important source of frustration is that citizens have no impact on policy between two elections. This dissatisfaction is as great at the regional as at the federal level.

Research shows that this makes people long for a strong leader.<sup>8</sup>In response, Volt wants to strengthen democracy with stronger citizenship. For a revival of democracy with strong elements of citizenship and citizen participation, we want to introduce the following proposals at the levels of the regional government:

### Main proposal 1: plebiscite (referenda)

We want to **implement the decree on plebiscite in the constitution** and want to **implement 'citizen reports'** based on the US Oregon Model.

The current constitution provides for non-binding referendums at regional level. However, there is no implementing decree in Flanders yet, unlike the Brussels Region.

Volt wants citizens to be well and objectively informed before a plebiscite. Volt wants to provide all voters with a citizens' report before every plebiscite.

The 'citizen report' is based on the Oregon model that has been applied in the US since 2010 ([CIR - Citizens Initiative Review](#)).

It starts from a panel of 18-24 drawn citizens who are as representative as possible of the population. The panel studies all **pros and cons of the proposals** during five days, with the help of experts and agree mutually on facts and numbers.

This report is then presented to the public through the press. Voters also receive this report **along with their ballot paper** for a plebiscite.

### **Main Proposal 2: Petition Right**

Volt advocates extending the right to petition, which already exists federally, to the Flemish and Walloon Region, as already exists in the Brussels Region. In this way, petitioners have the right to speak in parliament.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rtbf.be/article/noir-jaune-blues-un-leader-fort-cest-une-societe-faible-11141484>

### **Main Proposal 3: Improve the Municipal decree**

(1) First of all, **One clear and detailed participation regulation** is necessary. Currently, each municipality draws up its own participation regulations. As a result, the conditions in one municipality may differ or be stricter than in another municipality. Volt proposes to provide all participation instruments unambiguously and in detail in the municipal decree.

Secondly (2), **Citizen councils should be drawn in the participation regulations**<sup>9</sup>: The municipal decree describes a number of participation instruments, such as plebiscites. However, the instrument 'civic councils drawn by lot' is missing. Volt also wants this instrument to be included in the municipal decree.

Further (3), **More transparency in decision-making should be the case**: There are many councils who want their administrative documents to be viewed as little as possible, both by municipal councillors and citizens. Volt is in favour of adopting the Walloon decree in the Flemish and Brussels regions.<sup>10</sup> The more extensive transparency obligations in the Walloon transparency decree<sup>11</sup> must therefore also be included in the Flemish decree on local

government<sup>12</sup> be included.

The text obliges municipalities and provinces to publish the draft deliberations and summary notes on the agenda items of the public meeting of their council no later than five clear days before that of the municipal council.<sup>13</sup>

The only personal data communicated are the names of the representatives, elected persons and candidates for these positions. The personal data of other natural persons involved are anonymised. The municipality can make documents public via this free tool: [deliberations.be](https://deliberations.be)

We notice that transparency is sometimes limited by, for example, making texts available online in the form of photos, so that they are not used by search robots.indexed. Volt wants to prohibit such forms of regulatory obstruction.

<sup>9</sup> <https://lokaalbestuur.vlaanderen.be/werking-bestuur/burgerparticipatie>

<sup>10</sup> <https://transparencia.be/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://wallex.wallonie.be/sites/wallex/contents/acts/69/69946/1.html> - art 3

<sup>12</sup> <https://lokaalbestuur.vlaanderen.be/werking-bestuur/bekendmakingsplicht>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.stradalex.com/fr/sl\\_news/document/sl\\_news\\_article20220719-6-fr](https://www.stradalex.com/fr/sl_news/document/sl_news_article20220719-6-fr)