

## NATIONAL REPORT – ESTONIA

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN ESTONIA

The following section presents a general overview of the voluntary sector in Estonia. It provides information on the history of volunteering in the country; definitions of volunteering; and the number and profiles of volunteers; the number and types of organisations engaging volunteers; and the main voluntary activities taking place in Estonia.

## 1.1 History and contextual background

Historically, there has been a long tradition of getting together to take part in voluntary activities for the common good (*talgud*), in particular during harvest time and to help disadvantaged members of the community<sup>1</sup>.

In relation to more organised form of volunteering, the development of civic initiatives in Estonia dates back to the 1860s<sup>2</sup>. And a boom in such new initiatives was seen between the First and Second World Wars following a period of independent statehood<sup>3</sup>.

During the communist regime very little volunteering based on voluntary participation took place and between 1940 and 1988 many associations and societies were banned. However, gatherings of friends and family to accomplish a task on an informal basis were still common occurrences; although it must be noted that this form of activity was not classified as volunteering as such.

The situation started to change in 1989 when the ESSR Supreme Soviet approved the Freedom of Association Act which allowed the establishment of organisations that were independent of the state<sup>4</sup> and Estonia regaining independence in 1991 marked a significant milestone for volunteering. Some commentators have even claimed that independence was gained through volunteering, notably by those who chose to fight for independence. Furthermore, a considerable amount of voluntary work was carried out through committees and working groups, which dealt with questions of citizenship and the future of Estonia.

Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were re-established across Estonia (such as the Estonian Students Society, Estonian Women's League) and many new ones were formed too. The rapid growth of NGOs also meant a rapid increase in more formal forms of volunteering. The modernisation of civil society institutions was influenced by the models used in some Western European countries, notably the Nordic countries.

Over the last two decades volunteering has gained significant momentum. The biggest growth in the level of volunteering was seen in the 1990s; the current decade has been more stable, although several large scale campaigns have been launched over the past few years that have given volunteering in Estonia a boost. In 2000 the Tartu Volunteer Centre (known as Volunteer Development Estonia today) was established and several civil initiatives have been implemented during the last few years that promote volunteering. For example, the 'Let's do it' initiative, launched in 2008, attracted almost every 20<sup>th</sup> Estonian to volunteer for a day.

At a strategic level, the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (CSDC) was adopted by Riigikogu in 2002 and it forms the basis of the national strategy for volunteering<sup>5</sup>. The Concept stresses the role of voluntary activity in the development of civil society. It promotes the concept that active participation in voluntary associations is an important form

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, Volunteer Development Estonia, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute

<sup>3</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute

<sup>4</sup> Lagerspetz, M., Rikmann, E. (2008) Civil initiative and voluntary organizing, Mati Heidmets (ed.). Estonian Human Development Report 2007. Tallinn: Eesti Ekspressi Kirjastus

<sup>5</sup> The full text is available at:

[http://www.siseministerium.ee/public/Estonian\\_Civil\\_society\\_Development\\_Concept.doc](http://www.siseministerium.ee/public/Estonian_Civil_society_Development_Concept.doc)

of social engagement that contributes positively to democracy and an individual's personal development. Two strategic documents have been developed to support the implementation of the goals of the Concept: the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010 and the Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010. The Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering is an integrate element of the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support and many activities related to the promotion of volunteering are financed by the Plan.

## 1.2 Definitions

The definition of volunteering commonly used in the field is: *Volunteering is the commitment of time, energy or skills, out of one's free will and without getting paid. Volunteers help others or undertake activities mainly for the public benefit and the benefit of society. Helping one's family members is not considered to be voluntary activity*<sup>6</sup>.

Legal definition for volunteering exists only for volunteers in the probation service. The Probation Supervision Act states that: *A voluntary probation worker is a person who performs probation supervision duties in his or her free time without receiving remuneration*<sup>7</sup>. Volunteers in the probation service must also meet a certain criteria before they can be accepted to carry out voluntary activities in this field. For example:

- Voluntary probation workers are supervised by probation officers.
- Neither judges, nor prosecutors, nor staff employees of the courts, the Prosecutor's Office, the police or penal institutions who are public servants shall be voluntary probation workers.

Some, including Margit Vutt<sup>8</sup>, feel that there is a need for a legal definition of volunteer activities, as well as a legal status for a volunteer. It is argued that although the legal definition per se would have little direct value, it is a basis for including such activities in legislation.

## 1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Results in this section are based on surveys carried out by TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies in 2008 and 2009.

### **Total number of volunteers**

Data from a 2007/2008 survey<sup>9</sup> on volunteer development in Estonia indicated that 27% of the population aged 15-74 had engaged in voluntary activities over the preceding 12 month period. This translates to over 250,000 individuals.

As the term 'voluntary activity' is not common in Estonia, the survey also adopted a different approach to find out whether the interviewee had taken part in volunteering. The interviewees were asked which activities they had taken part in over the last 12 months. As a result it was found out that 47% of the Estonian population had in fact participated in

<sup>6</sup> Eesti Siseministeerium (Estonian Ministry of Interior) (2006) Eesti vabatahtliku tegevuse arengukava aastateks 2007-2010 Available at [http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/UserFiles/arengukava/vta\\_2007\\_2010\\_31\\_jaan\\_2007.pdf](http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/UserFiles/arengukava/vta_2007_2010_31_jaan_2007.pdf) [cited 25/06/2009] translation provided by Tuulike Mänd in ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work.

<sup>7</sup> Kriminaalhooldusseadus (Probation Supervision Act) (Passed 17 December 1997, Entered into force 1 May 1998), consolidated text Riigiteataja (State Gazette) 2002, 82, 478, ch 4, § 17 (1).

<sup>8</sup> Vutt, Margit (2003) *Vabatahtliku tegevuse juriidiline keskkond Eestis - olevik ja tulevik*, paper is part of a project report Läänemere piirkonnas asuvate Euroopa Liidu kandidaatriikide vabatahtlike võrgustik - Balti VolNet

Available at <http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/UserFiles/seadusandluse%20dokid/jurkeskk.pdf> [cited 25/06/2009];

Vutt, Margit (2005) *Vabatahtliku tegevuse õigusliku reguleerimise vajadused ja võimalused*, Advisory opinion. Available at <http://www.siseministeerium.ee/failid/JuriidilineEkspertiis050529.pdf> [cited 25/06/2009].

<sup>9</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) Participation in Volunteering. *Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008*, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia) [cited 25/06/2009].

voluntary activities<sup>10</sup>. However, it is important to note that only 500 respondents were questioned as part of the survey, and a representative sample for Estonia is 1,000 interviewees. Therefore these results must be treated with caution.

Recent pan-European surveys into volunteering display similar results. The Eurobarometer survey into volunteering (European Social Reality, 2006) showed that the percentage of Estonian citizens who declare that they actively participate in or do voluntary work for an organisation is around 28%. This figure is below the EU-25 average of 34% and ranks as the 14<sup>th</sup> highest rate in the EU-25.

The findings of the 1999/2000 European Values Study survey (published in 2001) for 26 Member States, show the percentage of population who volunteer in at least one association (%), except for trade unions and political parties. According to the survey, adults in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and United Kingdom are most actively engaged in volunteering in such associations. Estonia ranks as 19<sup>th</sup> of the 26 countries with a percentage of 17%.

Finally, a nationwide representative survey of young people aged 15-30 years was conducted in July 2009 on behalf of Estonian Youth Institute. A survey question asked whether an interviewee had participated in volunteering during last 12 months. Altogether 21% responded that they had participated in some voluntary activity during previous 12 months. There was no statistically significant difference between boys and girls.

### **Trend**

While statistics from the past two/three years show that the level of volunteering has remained stable, anecdotal evidence from key stakeholders suggests that there has been a modest increase in the number of Estonians involved in volunteering. Reasons for this trend were outlined in the first questions, including better co-ordination, strategic collaboration, action plans, and in particular the new civic initiatives.

### **Gender**

There appears to be little difference between the number of women and men volunteering. Of those interviewed as part of a survey carried out on volunteering by TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies in 2009, 51% were male and the remaining 49% were female<sup>11</sup>.

### **Age groups**

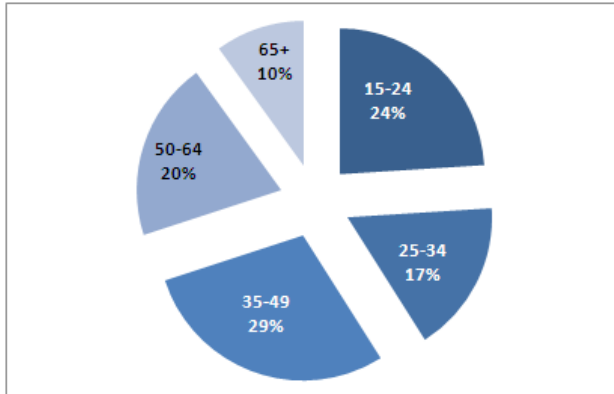
In general, there does not appear to be any significant disparities in the number of volunteers between the different age groups. Preliminary findings from the 2009 TNS Emor and Praxis survey suggest that most volunteers are aged between 35-49 years (29%), closely followed by those aged 15-24 (24%) and 50-64 (20%). The age group '65 years and over' recorded the lowest levels of volunteers (10%). In generic terms, students and pupils record fairly high levels of volunteering activity.

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<sup>10</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) Participation in Volunteering. *Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008*, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia) [cited 25/06/2009].

<sup>11</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2009) Preliminary findings on the survey on volunteering. Volunteer Development Estonia. Survey based on interviews with around 400 volunteers.

**Figure 1: Percentage of volunteers by age group, 2009**



Source: TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2009) Preliminary findings on the survey on volunteering. Volunteer Development Estonia.

### **Geographical spread of volunteering**

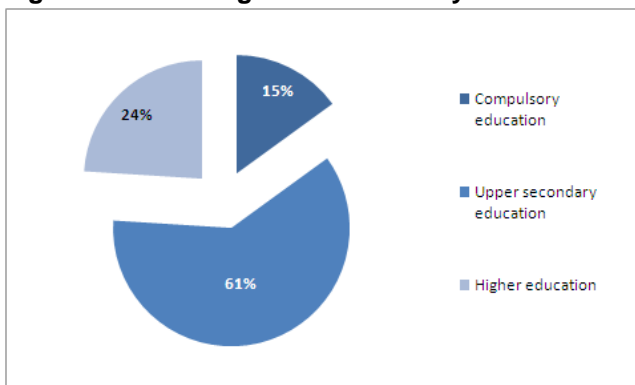
Data has shown that people living in the countryside are more likely to volunteer than people living in larger cities. According the recent study by TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies<sup>12</sup>, 38% of individuals in smaller communities have engaged in voluntary activities during the past year.

With regards to the location of voluntary organisations (specifically non-profit associations), the relative importance of organisations operating in Tallinn and small towns has increased somewhat, while the percentage of those active in the rural areas has decreased<sup>13</sup>. The total number of associations in the rural areas has still increased, but at a slightly slower rate. Half of all the foundations are registered in Tallinn, while the distribution of voluntary associations is a bit more even.

### **Education levels**

Preliminary findings from the 2009 survey on volunteering by TNS Emor and Praxis indicate that 85% of volunteers are relatively highly educated: 61% are educated to upper secondary level and a further 24% have completed higher education. Only 15% of volunteers had only completed compulsory education. Whilst most volunteers reside in the middle of the 'education level spectrum' (upper secondary education), there is clearly a significant disparity between the number of volunteers with higher and lower levels of education.

**Figure 2: Percentage of volunteer by level of education, 2009**



<sup>12</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) Participation in volunteering. *Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008*, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia), [cited 25/10/2009].

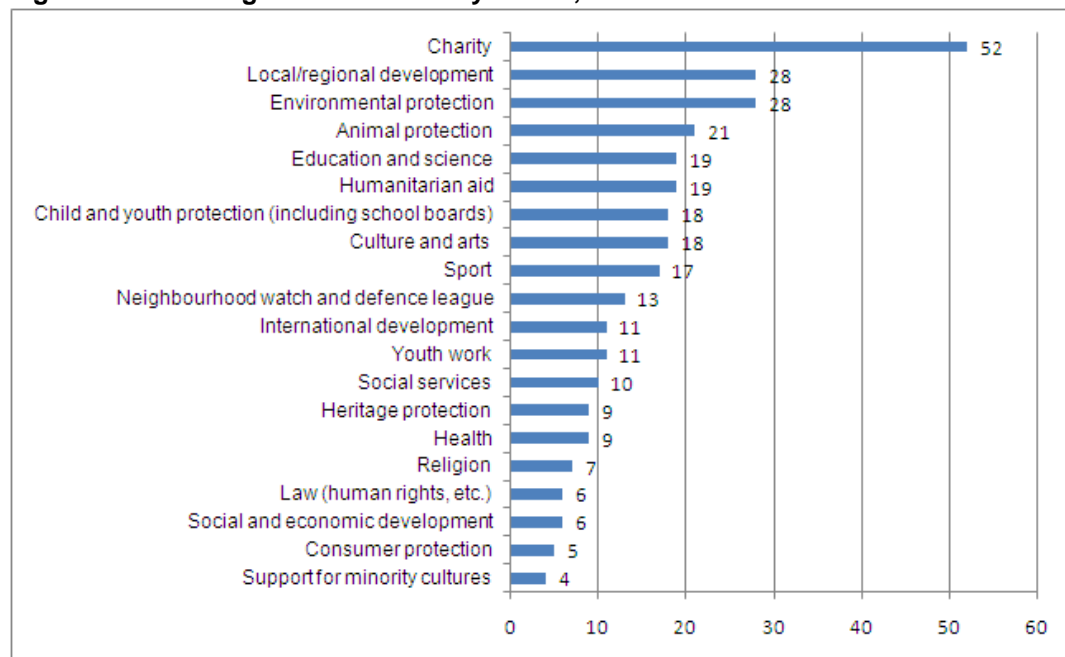
<sup>13</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

Source: TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2009) Preliminary findings on the survey on volunteering. Volunteer Development Estonia.

### Volunteer involvement by sectors

Volunteers in Estonia are active in a wide-range of different sectors and work with a variety of different target groups to address different issues. Data from 2008<sup>14</sup> has shown that the majority of volunteers are engaged in voluntary activities for charities (52%). Other popular sectors are: environmental protection (28%), local/regional development (28%); animal protection (21%); humanitarian aid (19%); education and science (19%); culture and arts (18%); and child and youth protection (including representing child/youth interests and sitting of the board of guardians in schools/kindergartens) (18%); and sport (17%). Sectors with the least number of volunteers are consumer protection (5%) and support for minority cultures (4%).

Figure 3: Percentage of volunteers by sector, 2008



Source: Adapted from TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) Participation in volunteering. Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia).

A number of survey respondents also took part in activities, which, although were not seen as volunteering by the individuals themselves, were classified as voluntary activities by TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies<sup>15</sup>. These activities were most often aimed at non-family members. The most common activities engaged in by individuals were:

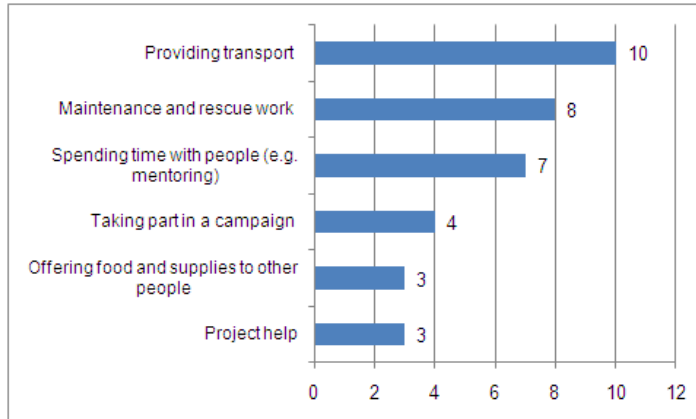
- Providing transport (10%);
- Maintenance and rescue work (8%); and
- Spending time with people (for example through mentoring) (7%).

Whilst these may not be seen as 'volunteering' by those individuals undertaking them, they nevertheless make an important contribution to the well-being of other community members and to society as a whole.

<sup>14</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) Participation in volunteering. Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia), cited 25/06/2009].

<sup>15</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) Participation in volunteering. Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia), [cited 25/06/2009].

**Figure 4: Percentage of volunteers engaged in other forms of voluntary activity, 2008**

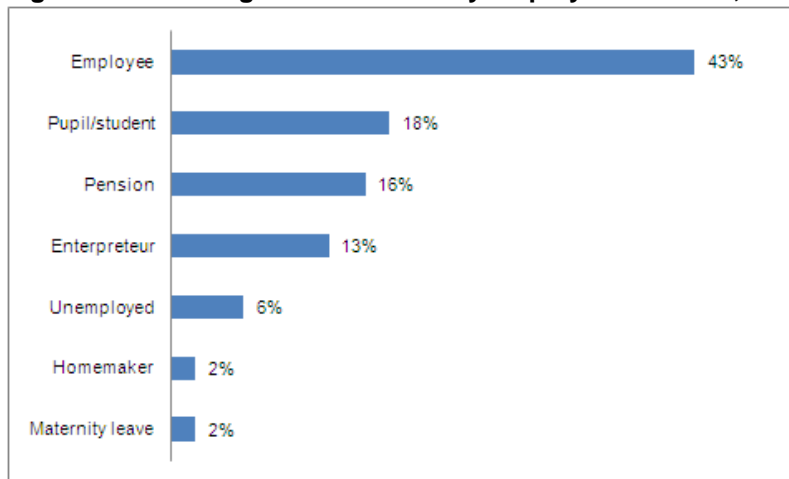


Source: Adapted from TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2008) *Participation in volunteering. Vabatahtlikus tegevuses osalemine Eestis 2008, Survey report, Vabatahtliku tegevuse arenduskeskus (Volunteer Development Estonia).*

#### **Profile of volunteers by employment status**

Preliminary data from the 2009 TNS Emor and Praxis survey<sup>16</sup> highlights that the majority of interviewed volunteers are employed (43%), followed by pupils/students (18%), and then pensioners (16%). Homemakers and women on maternity leave formed the smallest groups of volunteers (both 2%).

**Figure 5: Percentage of volunteers by employment status, 2009**



Source: TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2009) *Preliminary findings on the survey on volunteering. Volunteer Development Estonia.*

From employed volunteers, employees in relatively high positions, such as management and supervisory positions, are more likely to volunteer than their colleagues in lower level positions. This can be down to many reasons possibly because the low-skilled do not feel that they have the right skills for voluntary activities, or have a low self-esteem, or because they do not have the time or financial support to take part.

<sup>16</sup> TNS Emor and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies (2009) *Preliminary findings on the survey on volunteering. Volunteer Development Estonia*



### ***Time dedicated to volunteering***

No information was obtained on this question.

## **1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers**

### ***Definition of voluntary organisations in Estonia***

In Estonia, there is no definition for a voluntary organisation as such. However, legal definitions exist for two different types of non-government organisations, which are the main types of organisations engaging volunteers: associations and foundations.

**Non-profit Associations Act** (*Mittetulundusühingute seadus*) [(Passed 6 June 1996 entered into force 1 October 1996) consolidated text Riigiteataja I 1998, 96, 1515] defines associations in the following manner: “A non-profit association is a voluntary association of persons the objective or main activity of which shall not be the earning of income from economic activity. The income of a non-profit association may be used only to achieve the objectives specified in its articles of association. A non-profit association shall not distribute profits among its members. Exceptions for foundation, activities and dissolution of particular classes of non-profit associations may be provided by law. Transformation of a non-profit association into a legal person of a different class is prohibited.”

**Foundations Act** (*Sihtasutuste seadus*) [(Passed 15 November 1995 entered into force 1 October 1996) (RT1 I 1995, 92, 1604)] defines a foundation in the following manner: “A foundation is a legal person in private law which has no members and which is established to administer and use assets to achieve the objectives specified in its articles of association. The passive legal capacity of a foundation commences as of entry in the non-profit associations and foundations register (register) and terminates as of deletion from the register. Transformation of a foundation into a legal person of a different class is prohibited.”

Other types of non-profit organisations also engage volunteers. These include, for example, **religious organisations**. There were 705 religious organisations in Estonia in 2008<sup>17</sup>.

Around 1,500 foundations and non-profit associations are on a list of non-profit associations and foundations benefiting from income tax incentives<sup>18</sup>. These are known as *non-profit organisations acting in public interest* and they must meet a certain criteria before they are eligible for tax incentives. These include (among others):

- “...objectives of the activities of the association or foundation is the charitable support of science, culture, education, sport, law enforcement, health care, social welfare, nature protection, or cultural autonomy of a national minority, or the support of religious associations or religious societies in the public interest...”
- *The association or foundation does not distribute its assets or income, grant, material assistance or monetarily appraisable benefits to its founders, members, members of the management or controlling body, nor to a spouse, direct blood relative...*
- *The administrative expenses of the association or foundation do not exceed the rate justified by the nature of its activities and the objectives specified in its articles of associations.*
- *The association or foundation does not pay higher remuneration to its employees or members of the management or controlling body that is paid for similar in business.”*

<sup>17</sup> Hallemaa, H. & Servinski, M. (2009) Mittetulundusühendused ja kodanikuühiskond.

<sup>18</sup> Government Act No. 94 of 08.02.2000.... 01.01.2010 “List of non-profit associations and foundations benefiting from income tax incentives”

### **Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector**

Estonia has a very large number of registered, non-profit organisations. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 there were 26,198 associations and 788 foundations in Estonia<sup>19</sup>. According to the Ministry of Interior, the number of associations was 27,790 in January 2009.

The number however includes about 12,000 housing associations, which cannot be classified as organisations engaging volunteers as such as housing associations are a compulsory feature of the Estonia housing market.

Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that there are around 15,000 associations, just under 800 foundations and around 700 religious organisations that engage volunteers. In addition, many networks and groups of individuals have formed informal organisations, which however are not official registered. This means that realistic figures could potentially be even higher, although it is important to bear in mind that the registry of non-profit associations also includes details of associations, which are no longer active (around 6,000).

As mentioned earlier, out of the 15,000 associations around 1,500 are public benefit organisations, which are entitled to special benefits as they carry work for the public good.

With regards to the distribution by sector, most voluntary associations are active in sport and leisure time sectors (see Table 1). Different legal types of voluntary organisations differ with respect to their primary fields of activity. Community development, health care, and social services are more important fields of activity for foundations, while sport, culture, and the representation of social (special interest) groups are typical for non-profit associations<sup>20</sup>.

**Table 1: Distribution of non-profit associations by field of activity, as at 1 January 2002, 2005 and 2008**

	2002	2005	2008
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	127	133	204
Apartment associations, garage associations and other management of real estate	8,527	10,611	11,812
Research and development	17	32	48
Education incl. Training	237	374	515
Health	69	112	133
Social care	250	415	524
Sports clubs and sporting activities	1,897	2,523	3,057
Activities of business, employers and professional organisations	1,171	1,476	1,667
Activities of trade unions	295	360	370
Activities of religious organisations	619	688	683
Protection and custody of civil rights	410	513	566
Associations and funds promoting regional/local community life	292	619	619
Youth and children's associations and associations promoting welfare of the youth and children	314	507	662
Associations of national minorities and	165	238	305

<sup>19</sup> Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

cultural societies			
Associations engaged in leisure time, recreational and cultural or	895	1,417	2,072
Hobby activities, and hobby clubs	243	364	494
Environmental and nature protection associations	268	337	380
Associations of disabled persons and their unions	338	435	630
Activities of other organisations	728	866	1,240
Other	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,862</b>	<b>22,020</b>	<b>26,363</b>

Source: Hallemaa and Servinski based on the data of the Ministry of Justice Centre of Registers and Information Systems (Hallemaa and Servinski 2009).

According to the Estonian Institute (2002) the significant reduction in the role of the State's in social welfare has resulted in the emergence of many self-help and charity organisations<sup>21</sup>. Non-profit organisations addressing different illnesses and disability problems have increased the most. The Institute however highlights weaknesses in the voluntary organisation structure in relation to child protection and environmental protection.

Information on the number of active non-profit associations is expected to improve after 2010 when non-profit associations' annual reports will become public<sup>22</sup>.

### **Trend**

In general, there has been a gradual increase in the number of non-profit organisations since Estonia gained its independence. The number of non-profit associations and foundations increased from 12,423 in 2000 to 26,363 in 2008. This means that the number of associations more than doubled during the eight year period<sup>23</sup>. Around 1,400 - 1,500 new non-governmental organisations are established every year<sup>24</sup>. The increase in the number of new non-profit organisations was biggest in 2001 when the Roundtable of Estonian Non-Profit Organisations was established, the first conference was held and the draft of the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept was submitted to Riigikogu<sup>25</sup>.

The biggest increases between 2002 and 2008 can be seen in: apartment associations, garage associations and other real estate management associations; sports clubs and sporting activities; and associations engaged in leisure time, recreational and cultural activities. The relative importance of religious associations and special interest organisations has become somewhat reduced while the importance of community development and leisure time activities has increased<sup>26</sup>.

According to Hallemaa and Servinski (2009) the number of non-profit organisations and foundations grew most rapidly between 2002 and 2008 in the groups which are important from the perspective of local and regional development, like associations/funds promoting

<sup>21</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute.

<sup>22</sup> Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations, NENO

<sup>23</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

<sup>24</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

<sup>25</sup> Hallemaa, H. & Servinski, M. (2009) Mittetulundusühendused ja kodanikuühiskond.

<sup>26</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

regional/local community life, research and development, and associations engaged in education. These facts point to the responsibility of Estonian non-profit organisations in the development of the society as a whole.<sup>27</sup>

### **Types of organisations engaging volunteers**

Voluntary organisations are the most likely to engage volunteers or to be solely run by volunteers. However, there is currently no standard way of finding out which organisations engage volunteers and which do not. As a result, data about non-profit organisations can only be used to provide an indicative trend.

According to the Ministry of Interior, just over a third (35%) of Estonian non-governmental organisations have paid staff. According to the Ministry and NENO, organisations with paid staff and with good networking capabilities are most successful in attracting volunteers<sup>28</sup>. Other features of organisations that successfully engage volunteers in their activities include membership(s) to umbrella organisations, awareness of the Estonian non-profit sector and collaboration with other voluntary organisations.

The portal for information on volunteering in Estonia states that the sectors engaging the most volunteers are religious, educational, cultural organisations and those dealing with arts<sup>29</sup>.

The Network on Estonian Non-profit Associations has carried out studies on the level of employment and volunteering in Estonian voluntary organisations and has found that<sup>30</sup>:

- Foundations tend to employ more paid labour than non-profit associations, and therefore the work of associations tends to be more based on voluntary labour.
- Employees are more usual in older voluntary organisations, i.e. those that have existed for more than 10 years.
- Organisations with large memberships hire employees more than on average.
- Employees are more common in associations and foundations of which fields of activity are religion (88% hire employees), agriculture (63%), professional unions (58%), health care (50%), or education and science (49%).
- Employees are less common than average in organisations of which main objectives are community development (10%), heritage conservation (17%), preserving traditions (18%), fishing and hunting (19%), or sports (19%). These organisations tend to be more reliant on voluntary labour.

In terms of geographical distribution of non-profit associations, the largest numbers of organisations can be found in Tallinn, followed by Tartu. Of all organisations 64% are based in cities. Seventy-five per cent of non-profit organisations deal with local issues and 20% with national concerns<sup>31</sup>. Four per cent of organisations are active at international level.

It has been estimated that over 95% of volunteers carry out voluntary activities in the third sector, around 3% in the public sector and the remaining volunteers volunteer their time in the private sphere.

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<sup>27</sup> Hallemaa, H. & Servinski, M. (2009) Mittetulundusühendused ja kodanikuühiskond.

<sup>28</sup> Information from the Estonian Ministry of Interior, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Information from Internet: <http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/et/Vabatahtlik-tegevus/Vabatahtliku-tegevuse-olukord-Eestis/Arengukava> [cited 25/06/2009].

<sup>30</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

<sup>31</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute.

## 1.5 Main voluntary activities

Some of the typical activities for volunteers include helping with the running of a voluntary organisation, helping voluntary organisations to run their activities for the beneficiaries and community activities. New activities include, for example, website design and development and a growing interest in event management.

Within informal volunteering sphere, some of the most common voluntary activities are:

- Providing transport;
- maintenance and rescue work; and
- Spending time with people (for example through mentoring).

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The following section details the current institutional framework of the voluntary sector in Estonia. It presents an overview of the main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering in Estonia; national policies on volunteering; and volunteering programmes in place at transnational, national and regional and local level.

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

#### *Main public body responsible for volunteering*

The Local Government and Regional Administration Department within the Ministry of Interior is responsible for analysing, planning and coordinating active community development and co-operation between the state and NGOs. The Department is in a leading position at the moment as it is in charge, for example, of the national strategic plan that affects the development of volunteering. The Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010 is led and implemented by the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry has also funded the activities of the Volunteer Development Estonia for the past three years<sup>32</sup>

However, many other ministries are involved in this policy agenda too, including:

- Ministry of Justice (volunteering in probation services);
- Ministry of Environment (volunteering in the environmental field);
- Ministry of Culture (volunteering and sport);
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (volunteering abroad);
- Ministry of the Interior (volunteering in rescue work, churches and congregations);
- Ministry of Education and Research (volunteering among young people, especially school pupils and students); and
- Ministry of Social Affairs (volunteering in social sphere and voluntary mentoring programmes).

#### *Other public bodies involved in volunteering*

The Joint Committee of Government and NGOs was formed in 2003 and reformed in 2007 to include higher state representatives. The Committee is in charge of the implementation of the Civil Society Development Concept. The Committee includes:

- 11 state representatives (incl. Chancellors of five ministries: Finance, Economic Affairs and Communications, Social Affairs, Culture, Education and Research

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<sup>32</sup> The Ministry of the Interior has two Ministers: the Minister of the Interior and the Minister for Regional Affairs.

and the vice-chancellor of population and regional affairs in the Ministry of Interior);

- Representatives of state founded foundations Enterprise Estonia and Integration Foundation; and
- 11 representatives from state-wide civic associations<sup>33</sup>.

Earlier in 2009 the government set up a new, national level working group on volunteering, consisting of policy and decision makers in different public bodies and individuals in charge of volunteering in Estonia. At the moment this working group carries out its activities on an informal basis (the foundation not set in law) but it is the first working group of this kind in Estonia and therefore represents an important development in the country.

A majority of voluntary organisations also collaborate with local governments (54% of non-profit associations and 56% foundations).

### ***Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information***

In 2000, **Volunteer Development Estonia** was established. Today, the organisation is funded by the Ministry of Interior and the role of the organisation includes implementation of the Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010. Other tasks of the organisations include:

- Promotion of volunteering;
- Provision of training;
- Carrying out research on volunteering;
- Dissemination of information about volunteering; and
- Enhancement of volunteering landscape in the country<sup>34</sup>.

**Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations**, NENO, is the largest Estonian organisation uniting public benefit non-profit organisations. It was established in 1991 and at the moment it unites 99 large and medium-sized active and operational public benefit non-profit organisations. NENO's mission is *"to give voice to and advocate on behalf of Estonian public benefit organisations and its work is dedicated to the development and promotion of civic action and civil society in Estonia"*.

**National Foundation of Civil Society** was established in 2008 and it is financed from the state budget with EEK 18 million annually. The Foundation focuses on capacity building of NGOs and development of a supportive environment for civic action.

International Youth Association **EstYES** is non-profit, non-political, non-governmental organisation. It was established in 1991 with the purpose to promote youth and cultural exchanges. It is a pioneering organisation in the field of youth voluntary service in Estonia. EstYES works mainly with the young people aged 16 – 30 organising voluntary work camps (see Section 2.2 for further information).

It is also worth mentioning that eight/nine volunteer centres were active at the start of the decade. They were funded by EU funds but could not continue their activities after the programmes finished as they were not able to secure national funds.

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<sup>33</sup> Joint Committee of Government and NGOs (*Ühiskomisjon*) (2007) Kodanikualgatuse toetamise arengukava 2007-2010. Rakendusplaani täitmise aruanne (<http://www.siseministeerium.ee/30297>)

<sup>34</sup> [www.vabatahtlikud.ee/vta](http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/vta)

### ***Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks***

EstYES is a member of the International Cultural Youth Exchange and Volunteer Development Estonia is a member of the European Volunteer Centre, CEV.

## **2.2 Policies**

### ***National strategy/framework for volunteering***

There are two key national documents in Estonia that relate to civic initiatives and volunteering in Estonia:

- The Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (CSDC) forms the basis of the national strategy for the civil society development and its purpose is to 'prove' that there is mutual understanding between government and non-profit organisations about co-operation between the two parties<sup>35</sup>. The plan stresses the role of voluntary activity in the development of civil society. It promotes the concept that active participation in voluntary associations is an important form of social engagement that contributes positively to democracy and an individual's personal development. The concept specifies the roles and principles by which public authorities and civic initiatives should develop and implement public policies. The Civil Society Development Concept was approved by the Parliament in December 2002. It was formed in close co-operation with non-governmental organisations.

In relation to volunteering, the Concept outlines, among others, that its goal is to *"support the idea of voluntary action being one of the essential features in acting as a citizen... Citizen action, self-initiative, and voluntary participation in public life are an integral part of the democratic society. Public authorities support it by creating a favourable legislative environment, informing the public about their work, involving citizens and their associations in the planning and implementation of relevant decision"*.

- The Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010 aims to create favourable conditions for civic engagement in Estonia in line with the proposals outlined in the CSDC (further information can be found below).

The Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010 forms the national strategy for volunteering in Estonia and it is a part of the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010. It offers a long-term vision for the development of volunteering in Estonia (up to 2015) and defines short term actions and goals (further information can be found below).

### ***National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering***

The **Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010** relates directly to volunteering in Estonia and specifies key national targets. In particular it highlights four key objectives<sup>36</sup>.

Firstly, make sure that the general public recognises the importance and value of volunteering. This will include:

- the development of methods to measure the benefits of volunteering (including its economic value);
- the organisation of an annual day of volunteering;

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<sup>35</sup> Ülle Lepp - Member of the Representative Council of the Roundtable of Estonian Non-profit Organizations

<sup>36</sup> Further information about the Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010 can be found at <http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/et/Vabatahtlik-tegevus/Vabatahtliku-tegevuse-olukord-Eestis/Arengukava>

- promoting awareness of volunteering as an important resources and ensure that it is taken into account in development/strategic plans;
- the formulation and dissemination the principles of a Code of Conduct for voluntary activities; and
- the regular collection and analysis of data.

Secondly, raise awareness of voluntary activities through:

- annual awareness campaigns;
- dissemination of regular updates to actors across different sectors to notify them about voluntary activities and trends in volunteering;
- dissemination of good practice across all actors and sectors; and
- publish information material for potential participants and educational institutions.

Thirdly, create support structures and a favourable legal environment to foster the development of voluntary activities by:

- enhancing legislation related to volunteering;
- launching programmes that support the inclusion of disadvantaged members of society in voluntary activities;
- providing training for voluntary supervisors and the employees of organisations that are interested in engaging volunteers;
- improving the exchange of information;
- further developing guidelines, models and recommendations for the inclusion of volunteers;
- ensure better cooperation between private and non-profit associations in the field of volunteer activities;
- providing advice and guidance to help organisations to engage volunteers; and
- supporting voluntary activities at regional level.

Finally, improve networking in the field of voluntary activities through:

- regularly organised forums to discuss matters relating to volunteering;
- nation-wide networking between partners in the field of voluntary activities;
- seminars for non-profit organisations and local government to advance volunteering in the region;
- integrating volunteering in the educational programme by means of projects involving non-profit associations and schools; and
- international cooperation.

A number of positive results have been identified in 2007, 2008 and 2009, which can be seen in the table below.

**Table 2: Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering (2007-2010)**

Activity	Implementation Time
<b>RECOGNITION</b>	
Celebrating International Volunteers Day with National Volunteer Awarding Event. The patron of this event is the President of the Republic of Estonia.	Dec 2007, Dec 2008, Dec 2009
Outlining the Code for Volunteering and Volunteer Involvement and its dissemination	2008, 2009



Research on volunteering in Estonia	2007-2009
“Volunteer Pass“ – designing tools for describing skills and experiences gained through volunteering	2008
<b>PROMOTION</b>	
Gathering volunteering case studies (stories from volunteers and organisations, local governments and enterprises)	2007, 2009
Putting together information material for the press	2007
Information and promotion campaign	2007-2008, 2009
<b>FACILITATION/SUPPORT</b>	
Volunteer management trainings	2007, 2008
Development and maintenance of the internet portal “Volunteer Gate“	2007, 2008, 2009
<b>NETWORKING</b>	
Organising Third Volunteering Forum in Estonia (a conference)	2007-2008
Stakeholder networking on the national level (roundtables)	2008, 2009
CEV (European Volunteer Center <a href="http://www.cev.be">www.cev.be</a> ) membership and participation in CEV General Assemblies twice a year	2007, 2008

Source: Implementation of the Estonian National Development Plan for Volunteering 2007-2010

The **Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010**<sup>37</sup> is mostly related to voluntary organisations. Both Estonian national ministries and county governments are involved in supporting the Development Plan. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for strategic planning, implementation and coordination between different partners in supporting the development of Estonian civil society. In addition, the State Chancellery, the national ministries and the Bureau of the Minister of Population Affairs are involved in the preparation, further development and implementation of the Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support. Joint Committee of the Government and NGOs also monitors the implementation of the Plan.

The Development Plan acts as a government reference document and does not impose direct obligations on local governments, businesses or the non-profit sector. It seeks to create favourable conditions to ensure the efficient operation of the public sector, as well as the civil society as a whole. All activities are financed through the state budget.

The Plan sets out five key goals for 2010 to encourage civic engagement and outlines the measures to be used to achieve them.

**Table 3: Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010**

Aim	Measure	Outputs
<b>Goal 1 - Ensure that the public sector is an administratively efficient partner to citizens' associations and individual activists that are developing Estonian society</b>		
Increase the competence of the structural units and officials responsible for the development of civil society	Ministries appoint the structural units and/or officials responsible for communication with the citizens' associations to ensure clear responsibility for communication; The State Chancellery organises training courses on civil society for the responsible officials; The Ministry of the Interior manages the organisation of joint seminars for the officials and representatives of the citizens' associations to improve cooperation.	The ministries have appointed the people in positions of responsibility and have made their details public; Five training days have been organised annually for 50 officials; A joint seminar involving 40 participants has been organised each year during the period 2007-2010.

<sup>37</sup> Information has been taken from: Estonian Ministry of the Interior: Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010.

Increase public sector awareness of civic initiatives	The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for drafting a 'Civic Initiative Reference Manual for Public Servants'; The State Chancellery organises training on civil society issues for officials involved in the field.	The reference manual has been published and disseminated; Two training days have been organised each year during the period 2007-2010 for a total of 20 officials.
<b>Goal 2 – Ensure that the funding and support available to citizens' associations is organised around a systematic framework that is based on knowledge and experiences.</b>		
Harmonisation of the principles and models of funding of citizens' associations	Extensive discussions between Ministries to harmonise the principles and models, based on the results of the project for funding the citizens' associations.	Uniform understanding of the principles of funding the citizens' associations from the state budget.
Development of the county support system for civic initiatives	The Ministry of the Interior provides support for and encourages the development of support services for the citizens' associations through Enterprise Estonia by means of the county development centres; Support for the training of non-profit associations and institutional capacity building training is delivered in the counties	County development centres are active in every county; Annual training courses have been organised that correspond to the needs of the associations in each county.
Further development of national funding programmes	Implementation and development of the local initiative programme by the Ministry of the Interior to strengthen the local community and the competitiveness of the region; The Ministry of Education and Research supports youth associations to ensure their sustainability; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides continuous funding to citizens' associations engaged in development cooperation to increase their role in the field.	Project competitions have been organised; Support has been allocated to associations.
<b>Goal 3 – Ensure that the public sector consistently and efficiently involves citizen's associations in decision-making processes.</b>		
Implementation of good practice in public institutions	Creation of guidance materials on involvement by the State Chancellery for officials; Seminars on good practice in supporting and encouraging involvement to reinforce its uptake amongst practitioners and stakeholders.	Guidance materials have been prepared and distributed to target groups; An annual seminar for 20 officials has been organised during the period 2007-2010.
Developing the national web portal	A national web portal has been developed by the State Chancellery to increase the transparency of the decisions of government institutions.	A national web portal that is regularly updated.
<b>Goal 4 – Ensure that the general public, the business sector and the non-profit sectors are well informed and are prepared to cooperate to strengthen civil society.</b>		
Improvement of the register of non-profit organisations	The Ministry of Justice has improved the register of non-profit organisations so as to provide accurate and useful data; The Classification of Economic Activities (CEA) has been improved to enable the proper identification of the work of the associations.	Legislation has been amended; CEA has been improved – there is now an overview of the active citizens' associations and Estonian data is now comparable with international statistics.
Implementation and support of the cooperation structures of public, business and non-profit sectors	The Ministry of the Interior has supported national cooperation bodies and the representative	The government now has professional partners among the citizens' organisations;

	organisations of the citizens' associations; Regional cooperation bodies have been developed in order to implement the CSDC.	Regional cooperation has been improved.
Continuous monitoring and analysis of the development of civil society	Civil society surveys are organised by the Ministry of the Interior to analyse the development of the Estonian civil society and to better direct developments on the basis of the information obtained.	A minimum of one extensive civil society survey has been carried out in each year during the period 2007-2010. This has allowed for an overview of the development of the Estonian civil society.
<b>Goal 5 – Ensure that people who are active in supporting society receive the appropriate support and have the appropriate skills and experience to contribute positively to society.</b>		
Better treatment of the values and functions of the civil society in general education	The Ministry of Education and Research has developed the theme of civic education in the National Curriculum for Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools.	The national curriculum has been upgraded and schools now provide pupils with modern civic education.
Creation of non-formal education opportunities to improve the skills of active participation	The Ministry of Education and Research has developed the theme of civic education in the framework curriculum for pre-school education.	The curriculum has been upgraded and nursery schools now provide children with appropriate civic education.
Promotion of voluntary activities	The Ministry of the Interior supports volunteer activities and annual recognition of the volunteers at the national level.	A national event for the recognition of volunteers has been organised.
Diversification and support of opportunities to participate for young people	In order to involve young people in the decision-making processes, the Ministry of Education and Research has developed participation bodies for young people and has established consultation schemes with youth at national and local levels.	Youth councils are active across all Estonian counties. Consultation schemes have been established and advertised publically. Young people have been involved in the decision-making processes.
Increase awareness of civic initiatives	The Ministry of the Interior organises public awareness campaigns on civic initiatives to raise public awareness; The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications coordinates the work of the ministries in making their web pages more user-friendly; The Ministry of Foreign Affairs finances the activities to promote information campaigns and global education in order to raise public awareness of development cooperation and participation opportunities.	Information campaigns Publicity campaigns User-friendly ministry websites.

Source: Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010.

### **International policies**

The United Nations Year on Volunteering had an impact on the volunteering landscape in Estonia. For example, it had an impact on the goals set in the National Development Plan for Volunteering (2007-2010). International studies have also impacted volunteering in Estonia; they have been reviewed and the situation of Estonian in relation to volunteering other countries has been taken into consideration in the preparation of plans and activities on volunteering.

## 2.3 Programmes

### ***Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level***

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in the number of civic initiatives taking place in Estonia, which have promoted volunteering as a way of bringing people together to address specific problems. Key initiatives have been discussed below.

#### *Let's do it! (Teeme ära 2008)*<sup>38</sup>

In October 2007, a group of concerned Estonian citizens came together to discuss the need to do something about the 10,000 tons of illegal waste, which had been dumped around Estonia. The initiative was originally conceived by Toomas Trapido (member of the Estonian parliament and the executive director of the Estonian Fund for Nature, a non-profit organisation for preserving the nature) and Rainer Nõlvak (a member of the board of the Estonian Fund for Nature). Initially planned as a three to four year 'clean-up' project, it was decided that a mass one-day event bringing together thousands of volunteers could make a significant difference; it would draw attention to the problem of littering and illegal waste dumping and actively promote public involvement and volunteering as part of the solution. As a result, a working group was set up to organise, promote and implement a nation-wide initiative to get people to volunteer and clean up forests, road sides, and other areas affected by rubbish dumping.

In order to prepare for the event, a number of smaller working groups were created to deal with different elements: mapping the location of waste; IT support; software development; transport and logistics; finance; environmental awareness; youth involvement; media relations; and registration. Over 650 volunteers contributed to the organisations of the event. A special software was developed as part of the initiative to geo-map the location of over 10,000 dumping sites across Estonia. The organisation and implementation of 'Let's do it' was divided into six distinct phases: mapping of waste site (September 2007 to April 2008); contacting municipalities to organise cooperation (October 2007 to May 2008); establishing networks of volunteers by sector (January 2008 to March 2008); the cleanup day (3 May 2008); and a celebratory party in Tallinn, Tartu and Narva (4 May 2008).

The initiative was supported by a number of partner organisations such as private enterprises, non-profit organisations, law enforcement agencies, transport companies and local and national media. Funding was provided by the Ministry for the Environment (EEK 2 million), the State Forest Management Centre (EEK 3 million) and the Environmental Investment Centre (under the Ministry of Finance, EEK 2.5 million).

Politicians, celebrities and other public figures supported the project both by promoting it to the public and by participating as volunteers themselves. The initiative took place on the 3 May 2008 and over 50,000 people volunteered. On the day, leaders from municipalities helped to oversee volunteers and key activities. Hundreds of organisations were also involved and together volunteers were able to clean up over 10,000 tons of waste in just five hours. The day attracted wide-spread media coverage and the initiative is seen as a key milestone in the Estonian's volunteering agenda.

#### *Let's do it! My Estonia 2009 (Teeme ära! Minu Eesti mõttetalgud 2009)*<sup>39</sup>

Another 'Let's do it' initiative was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009. Minu Eesti (My Estonia) brought together people from across Estonia to form working groups which brought together volunteers and experts to discuss and tackle specific issues and challenges facing interested participants and stakeholders.

<sup>38</sup> Information based on details from interviews and Internet: <http://www.teeme2008.ee/>

<sup>39</sup> Further information can be found: [www.minueesti.ee](http://www.minueesti.ee)

The initiative was led by a group of 17 key members, who in turn organised the work of a further 11 working parties. Over 100 different partners were involved, including 60 enterprises, 30 media enterprises and 10 government agencies (including six ministries). Other supporters also helped to promote the initiative and the Estonian President was the 'Let's do it' patron. Funding was provided by the National Foundation of Civil Society (Kodanikuühiskonna Sihtkapital (KÜSK), EEK 1.7 million), Eesti Telekom (EEK 800,000), the European Commission's fundamental rights and citizenship programme (EEK 700,000), Swedbank (EEK 60,000), and Estonian Development Fund (Eesti Arengufond, EEK 15,000).

In total, 409 think-tanks were organised to tackle important issues for Estonia, as well as a further 89 working groups, which focused on specific issues. Themes chosen included: good governance; cultural heritage; environmental concerns; active ageing; careers and jobs; and local issues. Estonians living abroad were also able to participate and form their own working groups abroad. Around 11,000 people participated in the initiative – the lower turnout in comparison with the previous year was in part due to the event taking place on the national holiday (1 May).

The initiative acted as a brainstorming session, which aimed to help people realise that a united effort can make a big difference and that every person has a role to play in making things happen. The Minu Eesti web-portal<sup>40</sup> has made available the results of the brainstorming sessions to the general public. There are currently 4,777 ideas and commitments registered on the web-site. A search facility enables users to locate ideas of particular interest to them and some also offer the possibility of joining as a volunteer or advisor.

#### *Bank of Happiness (Õnnepank)<sup>41</sup>*

The virtual Bank of Happiness is a new project to boost 'informal volunteering' in Estonia. Fundamentally the Bank of Happiness is an internet portal that allows people to trade in good deeds in order to promote happiness and caring. People can register online and list what they can do for others (for example, hair dressing, painting, DIY, cooking, etc) and what they would like done for themselves (window cleaning, car repairs, etc). The bank allows people to network with one another and trade favours without exchanging money – in line with the concept 'one good turn deserves another'. Users are marked with 'stars' to show that they have done something for someone else and therefore have improved someone's happiness. Users also have the opportunity to print off 'happiness banknotes', which can be traded with other users. In 2008, the project received funding from the National Foundation of Civil Society (EEK 430,265).

#### *Annual Forest Planting Day<sup>42</sup>*

On the 16 May 2009 1,200 volunteers took part in the annual forest planting day organised by the State forest management centre to plant new trees.

#### *Volunteer 'work camps'*

Such camps provide voluntary labour market familiarisation opportunities for thousands of Estonian young people.

<sup>40</sup> Information from Internet: <http://www.minueesti.ee/minueesti/ideabank>

<sup>41</sup> Information from Internet: <http://www.kysk.ee/?s=210>

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.weng.rmk.ee/index\\_eng.php3](http://www.weng.rmk.ee/index_eng.php3) [cited 06/10/2009].

### ***Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level***

Some volunteering initiatives are run locally. For example, several volunteering events have taken place in the city of Tartu. Local authorities have also volunteering schemes in place to encourage people to act as mentors for people from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>43</sup>.

### ***Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level***

Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of development co-operation and promotes volunteering, for example, in former Soviet states such as Georgia and Africa.

Youth NGO, EstYES, organises voluntary work camps in Estonia, encouraging both Estonian but mainly foreign volunteers to take part in community development projects in Estonia. The organisation organises around 50 voluntary work-camp projects every year and they last 2-3 weeks.

## **3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

The following section outlines the regulatory framework in place for the voluntary sector in Estonia. A number of different elements within the regulatory section are examined, covering: the general legal framework; the legal framework in place for individual volunteers, organisations engaging volunteers and profit-making organisations; and the relevant insurance and protection of volunteers.

### **3.1 General legal framework**

#### ***Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering***

There is no specific legal framework in place in Estonia for volunteering but a range of laws affect volunteering. These include:

- Non-profit Associations Act (*Mittetulundusühingute seadus*) (Passed 6 June 1996 entered into force 1 October 1996) consolidated text Riigiteataja I 1998, 96, 1515.
- Foundations Act (*Sihtasutuste seadus*) (Passed 15 November 1995 entered into force 1 October 1996) (RT1 I 1995, 92, 1604)
- Income Tax Act (Passed 15 December 1999 entered into force 1 January 2000) (RT2 I 1999, 101, 903; consolidated text RT I 2004, 59, 414)
- Value Added Tax Act (*Käibemaksuseadus*) (Passed 10 December 2003 entered into force 1 May 2004) (RT2 I 2003, 82, 554)
- Law of Obligations Act (*Võlaõigusseadus*) (Passed 26 September 2001 entered into force 1 July 2002) consolidated text Riigiteataja I 2004, 37, 255.
- Youth Work Act (*Noorsootöö seadus*) (Passed 22 February 1999 entered into force 1 April 1999) consolidated text Riigiteataja I 2004, 27, 179.
- Probation Supervision Act (*Kriminaalhooldusseadus*) (Passed 17 December 1997 entered into force 1 May 1998) consolidated text Riigiteataja (State Gazette) I 2002, 82, 478.
- Rescue Act (*Päästeseadus*) (Passed 23.03.94 entered into force 24.04.94) consolidated text Riigiteataja (State Gazette) I 1998, 39, 598.
- Victim Support Act (Passed 17 December 2003, entered into force 1 February 2004) Consolidated text Riigiteataja (State Gazette) 2007, 13, 69 ch 4 § 6 (1-6)

#### ***Self-regulation in relation to volunteering***

There are two important codes of conducts in Estonia that apply to volunteering.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.sm.ee/tegevus/sotsiaaltoetamine/kov-teenused/tugiisik.html>

Firstly, the code of ethics for Estonian non-profit organisations was adopted in 2002 by the Roundtable of Estonian non-profit organisations<sup>44</sup>. The code covers eight principles, including: democratic governance, civic courage and care, sustainability and prudence in using funds and resources, responsibility and accountability, openness and transparency, independence and avoiding conflicts of interest, honouring commitments and recognition of authorship of ideas, and finally tolerance for the diversity of ways of thought, organisations.

Secondly, the code of conduct for volunteers was adopted by the Joint Committee of the Government and NGOs in May 2009<sup>45</sup>. The aim of the document is to provide a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and organisations engaging volunteers. The document discusses both informal and non-formal volunteering and makes a difference between one-off and long-term volunteering arrangements. The Code was prepared by the Volunteer Development Estonia in collaboration with a range of partners.

### **3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers**

Volunteers in Estonia do not have a specific legal status. Their status is related to their position in the labour market (e.g. employed, student, etc.).

Some volunteers have a contract with the organisation that they are carry out volunteer work for (contracts mandatory in some fields, such as rescue services). There is no information on how many volunteers have such a contract but it is believed that the number is low, albeit growing. They are found to be more important for non-profit organisations than volunteers. Such contracts tend to include information on the tasks of the volunteer, training provisions, insurance, responsibilities, etc.

#### ***Provisions for specific categories***

In principle, all individuals are allowed to volunteer. This is supported by the Code of Conduct for volunteering, which states that volunteering should enhance the equality of opportunity. However, certain restrictions are applicable to:

- Individuals who want to volunteer in the probation service (e.g. volunteers cannot have a criminal record, cannot be employed within the justice system, have to be over 18 years of age, etc.);
- Unemployed individuals (has to be ready to take up employment if paid work is offered, and attend labour market training); and
- Individuals who want to volunteer within the victim support system.

#### ***Support schemes and incentives***

There are no financial support schemes and incentives to engage individuals in voluntary work. However, private entities such as companies who make a donation to one of the 1,500 public benefit associations are entitled to a tax deduction.

#### ***Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers<sup>46</sup>***

There are no legal provisions concerning reimbursement of expenses to volunteers in relation to the activities performed by them. Estonian legal framework makes it possible for organisations to cover expenses of the volunteer, including travel costs and training, only in case those costs are clearly related to the main activities of the organisation (it means that the costs must be made in the name of the organisations). If the costs are not considered

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<sup>44</sup> Code of ethics (available at the website of Network of Estonian Nonprofit Organizations <http://www.ngo.ee/7458>)

<sup>45</sup> Code of conduct available at the volunteer portal (<http://www.vabatahtlikud.ee/et/Vabatahtlik-tegevus/Vabatahtliku-tegevuse-olukord-Eestis/Vabatahtliku-tegevuse-hea-tava>)

<sup>46</sup> This section quoted directly from Vutt, M. (2005) Country Report on the legal status of volunteers in Estonia. AVSO and CEV. Pages 4-5).

as costs related to the activities of the organisation, these costs are subject to taxation as fringe benefits. So in general the volunteer is responsible for covering all his/her expenses (food, lodging or transport). If the organisation wishes to cover the volunteer's costs, it has to be done through a labour contract or some civil contract.

In practice sometimes there are written agreements concluded between the organisation and the volunteer, but in some cases there is no written contract at all and in this case it is often difficult to prove what kind of relationship there was between the individual and the organisation. In Estonian legislation and court practice there is a presumption that if a person works for someone it is considered a labour relationship unless the opposite is proved. However as soon as there is a contract and some kind of payment made by an organisation to a private person, the organisation is liable to pay taxes to the state.

As already mentioned, Estonian tax legislation does not foresee any provisions related to volunteers either. Every situation is solved on a case-by-case basis. Any payment (either monetary or non-monetary) is considered to be an object of taxation by Estonian tax laws.

#### ***Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers***

Rewards are to be declared and considered as fully taxable income<sup>47</sup>. However, nominal payments and rewards for volunteers are not a common practice in Estonia; volunteering is something that is done without getting paid<sup>48</sup>.

### **3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers**

Organisations engaging volunteering do not need to notify public authorities about volunteers.

Non-profit organisations are not exempted from VAT, but the goods and services, purchased or imported by the organisations through non-refundable foreign aid are tax-exempt (as stated in the amendment to the VAT act of 22 February 1995)<sup>49</sup>.

The Estonian not-for profit associations and foundations do not have automatic tax exemption<sup>50</sup>. The Income Tax Act of 1 January 1994 states that non-refundable funds, received from foreign donors, in addition to membership and entrance fees for non-profit organisation are tax-exempt and enables them to apply for tax exemption on donations and income from economic activities. The exact requirements for applying for tax-exempt status and deadlines are indicated in the Government Order (of 11 June 1996). In order to qualify, an organisation's activities must be connected with support to charity, science, culture, education, sports, health care, social welfare, environment protection, or religious congregations in the public interest. The respective list of organisations is determined by local divisions of the Tax Department on a case-by-case basis each year. The final decision is made by the Government<sup>51</sup>. As mentioned earlier, there are around 1,500 public benefit organisations on this list<sup>52</sup>.

As for donations, juridical persons qualify for tax-exemption of their income if the donation is made to a "listed" organisation. Individuals have to pay taxes on funds they donate to the non-profit sector. The stipends and grants are tax-exempt for beneficiaries only if the grant

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<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Interior, 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Volunteer Development Estonia, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute

<sup>50</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute

<sup>51</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of Interior, 2009.



or organisation is on the "list" and the provision of grants is an activity envisaged in the organisation's statutes<sup>53</sup>.

### 3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

There are no special taxes or other financial privileges for companies to encourage their employees to participate in volunteering. However, some of the larger companies in Estonia have their own programmes to encourage volunteering. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, companies that make a donation to one of the 1,500 public benefit organisations are eligible for a tax-exemption.

### 3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

There is no legal provision concerning volunteer insurance and fundamentally an individual is responsible for ensuring he/she is insured<sup>54</sup>. The protection of volunteers against risks of accident, illness and third party liability related to their volunteer activity fully depends on the organisation<sup>55</sup>. If the organisation does not offer insurance, the volunteer should provide it for his or her personal and others security. Since voluntary organisations do not provide persons with health insurance people that have insurance are more prone to volunteer.

Volunteers active in rescue services share the responsibility with the organisation otherwise it is the responsibility of the individual.

The groups that have insurance by some means are also insured during volunteering. These groups are: pupils, students, pensioners, employed people, married people (if their spouse is insured) and the unemployed.

## 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

### 4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

#### *National budget allocated to volunteering*

National funding for non-profit organisations founded by citizens<sup>56</sup> has increased greatly over the past decade. From just EEK 113 million in 2001 to EEK 266 million in 2003 and EEK 693 million (EUR 44.3 million) in 2007<sup>57</sup>.

#### *Sources of funding for voluntary organisations*

Estonian voluntary organisations are funded from a variety of sources, including membership fees, public sector appropriations, grants, project grants (financed by local and international foundations), payments for products and services, and donations from private persons and businesses. Indirect assistance is received in the form of tax allowances, in-kind contributions and voluntary work.

According to a study carried out by the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations (see Table 4 below), membership and joining fees are the most important source of funding for Estonian voluntary organisations, followed by support from local authorities<sup>58</sup> which are particularly important for voluntary organisations in rural areas and community organisations. Financial situation is better for foundations than associations.

<sup>53</sup> Kask, H (2002) Non-Governmental Organisations in Estonia. Estonian Institute

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Interior, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> Vutt, M. (2005) Country Report on the legal status of volunteers in Estonia. AVSO and CEV. Page-5.

<sup>56</sup> In Estonia legal entities have also possibilities to set up a NGO

<sup>57</sup> Ministry of Interior, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Tallinn University, Estonian institute of Humanities (2005) The Institutionalization of Civic Initiative in Estonia: The Organizational Structure and Resources; Summary of Research.

**Table 4: Financing sources of non-profit associations and foundations**

Source	%
Membership and joining fees	64
Support from local government	51
Income from business activities	37
Support from the state	35
Support from state funds and organisations	27
Support from Estonian businesses	24
Support from private persons living in Estonia	15
Support from local funds	12
Income from assets, inc. the rental of rooms	10
Support from foreign organisations	10
Other income	9
Support from EU programs	8
Support from private persons living abroad	7
Income from lotteries, charity events or collections	7
Support from foreign governments	5
Support from private funds	3

Source: Based on a survey of 606 respondents from non-profit associations and organisations

There is a general feeling that there has been a reduction in the local authority financing in the last two years due to the financial crisis having had a very negative impact on local authority finances.

Furthermore, there is a feeling among some stakeholders that public (national and local authority) funding arrangements should be made more transparent. At the moment there is a lack of clarity for NGOs about different funding streams and about their application processes and systems.

However, no tensions were identified between the rules on state aid and the allocation of grants, subsidies and other donations to volunteering.

#### **Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)<sup>59</sup>**

According to a recent survey among local authorities found that 60% of local authorities are using the services of non-governmental organisation to deliver services. There has been an increase in the use of NGOs in the delivery of public services.

Most of the service delivery contracts are signed with social services (44%), followed by sport (15%) and culture (10%).

Volunteers are involved in offering all public services contracted to non-governmental organisations, partly due to the lack of financial resources in local authorities, especially in small towns and rural municipalities<sup>60</sup>. Volunteers make it possible to offer more public services than the local authorities are able to fund. For social services, mostly volunteers

<sup>59</sup> Based on information from the Ministry of Interior, 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Interior, 2009.

with special education are recruited and trained to meet the requirements for offering psychological treatment and other professional services<sup>61</sup>.

The impact of the current rules in relation to SSGI on volunteering is not really an issue in Estonia as non-profit organisations are taxed like private entities (see the section of regulatory framework for further information).

## 4.2 Economic value of volunteering

### *Income generated through volunteering*

No information was obtained on this question.

### *Economic value of volunteering*

There are no official studies on the value of volunteering work as a share of GDP but Volunteer Development Estonia has calculated by using the John Hopkins theory that the economic value of voluntary work in Estonia would be around EEK 2.7 billion (around EUR 172.5 million based on an exchange rate in October 2009)<sup>62</sup>.

A study carried out on behalf of Estonian Statistical Office<sup>63</sup> concluded that the value of work carried out by volunteers had increased from EUR 58.5 million in 2003 to EUR 191.5 million in 2008 (see Table 5 below).

It is estimated that about 28,000 people or 4-5% of the Estonian workforce is employed in the non-profit sector<sup>64</sup>. Others have estimated that Estonian non-governmental organisations employ as many as around 40,000 workers. The average salary in the NGO sector is about half of the average salary in Estonia.

### *Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP*

**Table 5: Economic value of the non-profit sector**

Economic value of non-profit sector	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
NGO share in GDP by expenditure	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3
NGO expenditure + volunteer contribution, share of GDP	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.2
NGO share in GDP (million EUR) by expenditure	120.7	128.4	137.7	158.0	181.7	201.4
Volunteers' value of work (million EUR) <sup>65</sup>	58.5	70.7	91.4	117.6	154.3	191.5

Source: Estonian Statistical Office, author's calculations<sup>66</sup>

### *Issues of service substitution and job substitution*

The issue of service substitution is not a significant public policy issue in Estonia. In relation to a risk that volunteers are 'employed without pay' to replace employment (job substitution), it is recognised that volunteers are involved in offering public services contracted to non-governmental organisations, partly due to the lack of financial resources in local authorities, especially in small towns and rural municipalities.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Volunteer Development Estonia, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Ender, J., (2009) Volunteering Across Europe. Estonia country report, PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>64</sup> Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations, NENO, 2009

<sup>65</sup> The best possible calculation of the value of voluntary work based on average volunteer hours per organisation 2004-2006 and average pay per hour in the labour market for each respective year.

<sup>66</sup> Ender, J., (2009) Volunteering Across Europe. Estonia country report, PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

## 5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

This section examines the social and cultural dimension of volunteering, in particular how voluntary activities can benefit volunteers, beneficiaries of voluntary services, as well as the wider community. It also looks at the factors, which motivate individuals to volunteer.

### 5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

According to the key stakeholders, volunteering benefits all those involved, from the volunteers themselves and the beneficiaries of voluntary activities to the wider community. Volunteering is also recognised in national policies for social cohesion, social inclusion, environmental protection, active ageing and humanitarian aid<sup>67</sup>.

#### *Volunteers*

Many volunteers gain a sense of achievement by engaging in voluntary activities. Many gain satisfaction from knowing that they have helped someone. Especially younger volunteers can gain experiences through volunteering that can help them with their career.

#### *Direct beneficiaries of voluntary activities*

Beneficiaries can benefit from the voluntary help of highly motivated and dedicated individuals who have chosen to help out of their own free-will and not because they are paid to provide a service.

#### *Community*

Sometimes it is volunteers who enable for example youth and sport activities and clubs to take place, which they would otherwise be unable to afford financially.

In some cases local volunteers can form solid local networks through their activities, which can help the community as a whole.

### 5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the factors, which motivate individuals to volunteer, vary from person to person. However, many volunteers are motivated by the fact that they want to help those who are in a less fortunate position. Furthermore, some younger people in particular see volunteering as an opportunity to get good experience that can help them later in life.

Volunteering campaigns, programmes and awards (discussed in Section 2.3) have also helped to encourage individuals to volunteer by raising awareness and disseminating information about volunteering opportunities.

According to a study carried out by Ender in 2009<sup>68</sup>, the main motivating factors for individuals to volunteer include:

- 1) Feeling of being useful (for 66% of volunteers);
- 2) Spend time usefully (64%);
- 3) Help other people (63%);
- 4) Opportunity to socialise with other people (62%);
- 5) Feel satisfaction and happiness from activities (61%);
- 6) Have a good time with other people (60%);
- 7) Acquire new knowledge, skills and experiences (52%);

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<sup>67</sup> Ministry of Interior, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Ender, J., (2009) Volunteering Across Europe. Estonia country report, PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

- 8) Get new contacts (51%);
- 9) Improve ability to find pleasant work (44%); and
- 10) Contribute to the development of the society (41%).

## 6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This section looks at how volunteering in Estonia has been integrated into education and training, both in terms of the recognition of volunteer's skills and competences and the education and training opportunities available to them.

### 6.1 Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system

Although by European comparison the Estonian validation systems are not well developed, in the national policy agenda one can notice remarkable trends and discussions between universities, other educational institutions, the Ministry of Education, NGOs, social partners and employers in conferences and forums as well as in specific workgroups about the need to identify, assess and validate the competences and knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning, including volunteering. More and more practical examples of education institutions recognising voluntary experience can also be found. Furthermore, validation informal and non-formal learning and volunteering are linked, for example, to the new Lifelong Learning Strategy, the National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 and the Professions Act 2001.

The Universities Act and Applied Higher Education Institutions Act now allows for accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) in HE curricula.<sup>69</sup> Universities and higher education institutions are developing their internal regulations for implementing APEL, collecting useful information and trying to implement respective best practice. There are also practical examples of courses where skills gained through work, paid or unpaid work, can be recognised through credit points (exemptions.)

Improvements in vocational education are based on preparing curricula and training programmes according to the nationally developed occupational standards. A growing tendency to recognise prior learning can also be identified in the VET field. For example, a Youth Worker title can be obtained largely through work experience (paid or unpaid).

Projects such as Transfine and Refine led to a clear understanding that there is a need to assess formal, non-formal and informal learning as a whole set of competencies of a person who is looking for validation<sup>70</sup>.

Estonian schools are obliged to have a dedicated person in charge of organising non-formal activities outside school for students. These individuals have the possibility to improve volunteering opportunities of young people.

A Volunteer Pass is also being developed by Volunteering Development Estonia. It is used for recording experiences obtained through participation in volunteering.

### 6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

Volunteer Development Estonia, in Tartu, has organised some training for volunteer leaders. Training opportunities are also offered by many voluntary organisations, such as the scouts' movement, and EU funds have also been used to provide training.

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<sup>69</sup> Validation informal and non-formal learning, DG EAC, 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

## 7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

EU policies have had a positive impact on volunteering in Estonia. For example, the design of development plans for the Civic Initiative and the National Plan for Volunteering were influenced by a range of EU policies, including those concerning active citizenship, local governments and youth. Estonian voluntary organisations have also become partners in EU funded projects and programmes.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) has had a positive impact on volunteering among young people; its popularity is increasing year by year<sup>71</sup>.

## 8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Research has highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities, which impact directly on the success of the voluntary sector in Estonia.

### 8.1 Challenges for volunteering

The following challenges were highlighted by interviewees and/or relevant studies into volunteering in Estonia:

- The absence of clear legal framework is an issue, according to some stakeholders, especially for larger voluntary organisation and in relation to reimbursements and volunteer insurances.
- There is a need for more transparent and efficient funding systems for voluntary organisations.
- State funding for the third sector has increased significantly but tends to be project-based, rather than mainstream funding. This creates uncertainty for some organisations about the future of their activities. Currently, the implementation of the National Conception for Systemising NGO Funding from state and local government budget to NGOs is being designed. The aim is to make funding for NGOs more sustainable.
- While local authority funding for voluntary organisations has also increased in the last decade, this trend has changed over the past year as local authority budgets have been negatively impacted by the financial crisis. Trying to sustain the same amount of activities puts more pressure on volunteers.
- There are great differences in the number and structure of voluntary organisations between Estonian regions<sup>72</sup>. These differences are directly influenced by the availability of financial resources for voluntary organisations. A strong correlation exists between personal income tax per capita received into local government budget and the number of non-profit organisations<sup>73</sup>.
- Many volunteers have indicated that they would like to see a specific person designated in their organisation who is responsible for organising and coordinating their voluntary roles and activities.
- It is difficult to find volunteers who are willing to commit to a long-term voluntary position of responsibility/leadership, for example, sitting on the board of a voluntary organisation.

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<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Education, 2009.

<sup>72</sup> Hallemaa, H. & Servinski, M. (2009) Mittetulundusühendused ja kodanikuühiskond.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

- Collaboration between ministries in relation to civil society and volunteering has significantly improved with the development of the Civil Society Concept but more collaborative efforts are required in order to develop a joined-up framework for volunteering.
- There is a need to raise the status of volunteering among decision and policy makers; volunteering should become a greater priority.
- There is a room for a greater degree of co-operation between non-profit associations and foundations and the private sector.
- International studies have shown that in comparison to many other Central and Eastern European countries the third sector infrastructure is fairly well developed in Estonia.
- There is a concern that project funding from the Structural Funds will replace donations made previously by foreign donors. Furthermore, application processes for Structural Funds are more complicated than application procedures related to many foreign donors. The management of Structural Funds also require skills that not all voluntary organisations have.
- There is a need to build the capacity of voluntary organisations to deal with today's challenges in relation to funding, legal issues, volunteer management, etc. There is also a need to ensure more training for volunteer management.

## 8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

Volunteering in Estonia is following a process of development and has seen many changes over the two last decades. The main opportunities include:

- The image of the voluntary sector is good; for example, media reports on voluntary organisations tend to be positive and tend to show the impact of the voluntary sector in a positive light.
- The new and developing policy framework concerning civil society as a whole and volunteering specifically is bringing the topic from the margins to a much more central place in the policy agenda, although it is recognised that more work in this field is necessary. Co-operation between key stakeholders has also increased.
- Non-governmental organisations in Estonia have become more focused, active and professional in lobbying and advocacy. The role of the civil society in policy making is being increasingly acknowledged.
- There is a positive development in the number of active volunteers, and volunteers have a good attitude.
- Some stakeholders feel that in generic terms the regulatory framework for NGOs is good, although some shortcomings still remain.
- A number of successful volunteering campaigns have been run in the last couple of years and they have helped to build a momentum and raise awareness about volunteering.
- It is seen as a definite positive development that the ministry of interior has been financing the activities of the Volunteer Development Estonia for the last three years (although it is still necessary to find a mainstream funding stream rather than having to rely on project based funding, in order to ensure sustainable funding for the centre).
- There is a feeling that the Government recognises the value of work carried out by volunteers in Estonia. Every year an award ceremony is held where some of

the most dedicated volunteers are invited to and they are thanked for their voluntary contributions by the president.

- The Estonian Civil Society Development Concept has had a positive impact on the role of civil society in Estonia.

A range of developments have also taken place to address some of the key challenges. These include the new Joint Committee of the Government and NGOs, the new working group on volunteering, state funding for the Volunteer Development Estonia and the establishment of the National Foundation for Civil Society.



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