

NATIONAL REPORT – FINLAND

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN FINLAND

The first section presents a general overview of the voluntary sector in Finland. This section provides information on:

- The history and traditions of volunteering in the country;
- Definitions of volunteering;
- The number and profiles of volunteers;
- The number and types of organisations engaging volunteers¹; and
- The main voluntary activities taking place in Finland.

1.1 History and contextual background²

Volunteering and voluntary engagement in community activities have existed for centuries. But organised forms of volunteering and civic activities began in the mid and late 1800s in Finland and have been closely connected with the history of the Finnish nation and society. The first 'organised' forms of voluntary engagement in the country were seen in the 1840s, with women from higher classes in society grouping together to help those less fortunate than themselves and redistribute social rights and responsibilities.

The 1860s and 1870s saw the strong development of a Finnish national identity following the accession of Alexander II (1855-1881) to the Russian throne and start of a more politically liberal period. Educational and enriching national and social activities linked to civic organisations, political parties and trade unions were also established during this period. One of the first major popular movements to arise in Finland was the gymnastics and sport movement; indeed, the first Finnish athletic club was founded in 1856. The labour sport movement aimed to provide young people with the skills and mentality needed to 'build a better world'. During the 1880s, civic activities among rural young adults began to develop along with workers' educational activities and the trade union movement. By the turn of the century youth societies had the largest membership of civic organisations in Finland; although they were overtaken in the early twentieth century by a surge in the memberships of cooperatives and workers' associations. The 1880s also saw the rise of the women's movement, which advocated for the improvement of the conditions of women in the home, education and the administrative system. In addition, religious organisations and home district associations (to support local neighbourhoods and communities) developed into active civic organisations. In many ways the strong development of volunteering and civic activities during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s was a response by the Finnish population to the need to improve society and to establish a strong sense of national identity and sentiment.

Over the early 1900s the development of a Finnish civil society slowed down significantly as a result of internal and external pressures: the Great Strike in 1905, the revolution in Russia, the Finnish civil war, and the First and Second World Wars. In the aftermath of the wars against the Soviet Union during the late 1930s and early 1940s, attention turned to rebuilding Finland and civic organisations again began to play an important role in providing

¹ Note: the term voluntary organisation is used in this report as a term to cover non-governmental and non-profit organisations engaging volunteers.

² The information outlined in this section has been gathered from: Harju, A (2006) *Finnish Civil Society*. KVS Foundation. Hilger; and P. (2008) *A case of human service dominance: volunteer centres in Finland*. Paper prepared for the 'Volunteering Infrastructure and Civil Society' Conference, Aalsmeer, the Netherlands, 24-25 April 2008.

people activities to take part in during their free-time and to forget about the difficulties suffered over the past few decades.

In the 1960s a state based social security system was established and the Finnish state took over responsibility for some activities, which had previously been organised by organisations in the informal sector (i.e. voluntary organisations). It was thought that voluntary activities were of a transitory nature and would progressively disappear as the state guaranteed better and more equitable services³. This thinking on the part of the establishment continued into the early 1990s with the major expansion of public services and voluntary activities were primarily used to fill gaps in public service provision rather than acting as an independent sector.

However despite this, it is important to note that during the 1970s there was still a strong tendency towards social organisational work and many political parties, trade unions and youth organisations were increasingly active. Moreover, the role of civic organisations began to take over from popular movements and there was a strong development of organisational structures and support mechanisms to support them. Indeed, volunteering did not disappear and the number of voluntary association continued to grow.

A significant change in attitude came with the economic crisis that took place in the early / mid 1990s. The public services were reorganised and a rise in neo-liberalist policies that competed with traditional welfare values. A significant increase in voluntary organisations was seen in social and health service fields as budget cuts led to increased responsibilities for municipalities⁴. Voluntary activities once again became a core element of Finnish society and attention was being paid to the role of voluntary organisations in creating employment. In 1998 a labour market subsidy programme was created with the purpose of having voluntary sector organisations to fund long term unemployed. Today, people still believe strongly in the welfare state⁵ but the voluntary sector has found an important place in the society.

Voluntary work in the country has been characterised by a focus on membership. In fact, around 75%-80% of the Finnish population are members of voluntary organisation(s) in their lifetime, and many individuals hold memberships to several different organisations over the course of their lifetime. Helander and Laaksonen (1999) have estimated that an average Finn is a member of three different organisations. This means that a significant part of voluntary work has been performed within the framework of an organisation. Having said that "*talkoot*" (working together for a common goal for a specific time period) together with other informal forms of volunteering such as neighbourly help has been and continues to be widespread.

Although the number of voluntary organisations remains high, membership based volunteering is in decline. Voluntary members of local voluntary organisations are getting older and therefore there is a concern about the future of voluntary organisation. There are no signs of lower level of involvement in volunteering or less interest but Finnish people, young people in particular, now prefer to determine the level of their involvement. They speak more openly about what they want to achieve with their voluntary engagement and volunteers also switch more easily from one voluntary organisation to another. There is also more interested in project based volunteering.

³ Jaakkola, 1991 in Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit.

⁴ Ruohonen, 2003 in Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit.

⁵ Kosiaho, 2001 in Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit.

1.2 Definitions

There is no legal definition of volunteering and a range of different definitions are being used. Leading third sector researchers Nyland and Yeung define volunteering as *"unpaid activity from free will for the benefit of others, which is often takes place in an organised setting"*⁶. Volunteering agency KansalaisAreena has defined volunteering as *"all activity carried out for the public good, which is based on civic movement and voluntary action and is not paid for"*. The key words uniting most definitions are: unpaid activity, for the benefit of others and action taken from free will.

Sometimes organised volunteering is differentiated from informal activities like neighbourly help⁷. It is in fact increasingly common to describe volunteering as an activity that encompasses both organised and non-organised spheres of civic activity.

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Total number of volunteers

There is no official data available on the exact number of volunteers in Finland. A survey in 2002⁸ indicated that 37% of the Finnish population aged between 15 – 74 years were involved in volunteering over 12 months preceding the survey. This equates to around 1.3 million people. However, as the study was based on a small survey of 354 individuals, this data can only be used as an indication of volunteering in Finland and is not a representative figure.

Nevertheless, the results were confirmed by another national survey carried out in 2004. Furthermore, in a very similar manner, the European Values Survey reported that in 1999/2000 36% of individuals carried out voluntary work in at least one association (excluding trade unions and political parties)⁹. According to the survey, Finland has the sixth highest rate of volunteering in Europe, following Sweden (54%), the Netherlands (49%), Slovakia (47%), United Kingdom (43%) and Greece.

According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2006 on European Social Reality¹⁰, half (50%) of the Finnish population actively participate in voluntary work. This figure is well above the EU-25 average of 34% and represents the fifth highest level of participation out of all EU-27 Member States.

Research by carried out in 2002¹¹ indicated that around two thirds (62%) of volunteers were involved in an organised form of volunteering, such as carrying out voluntary work for a voluntary association or organisation. The rest carried out voluntary activities in an informal sphere.

Trend

Interviewees have noted that levels of volunteering have remained relatively stable with some modest increases over the recent years. However, the growth in the number of new voluntary organisations has led to a feeling of competition for volunteers among the

⁶ Palkaton, vapaasta tahdosta kumpuava yleishyödyllinen toiminta, joka useimmiten on organisoitunut jonkin tahon avustuksella."

⁷ Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts. Urban Research Unit.

⁸ Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

⁹ European Values Study, 1999/2000, as reported by Bogdan & Mălina Voicu in 2003.

¹⁰ European Commission (2007) Eurobarometer Report: European Social Reality. Fieldwork November – December 2006. Special Eurobarometer 273 / Wave 66.3 – TNS Opinion & Social.

¹¹ Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

voluntary organisations. This has led to some stakeholders believing that the number of volunteers has actually decreased, whereas in fact there has been relatively little change.

Gender

There are no significant differences in the levels of volunteering between men and women in Finland¹². However, the 1999/2000 Time Use Survey suggested that slightly more men had participated in volunteering during four weeks preceding the survey, but that there was no significant difference between the genders¹³.

It is worth mentioning however, that clear gender differences do exist in certain sectors. For example, women are more active in social and health sectors and men dominate in the sport sector (19% of all Finnish adult men volunteer in sport compared to 13% of women).

Women generally spend more time volunteering than men; 19.5 hours a month among women and 16 hours among men.

Age groups

Interviewees have not identified a clear age dimension to volunteering; generally both younger people and older people participate have roughly similar participation rates in volunteering. However, data from the 1999/2000 Time Use Survey¹⁴ has suggested that adults are the most active group, especially in sectors that rely heavily on volunteers such as the sport sector.

There is also evidence to suggest that older people are increasingly participating in voluntary activities, as they are more active and enjoy better health than previous generations.

Changes have been detected in the type of voluntary activity carried out by young people. There are signs to suggest that many young people are less interested in carrying out voluntary activities that concern their immediate surroundings. Instead many are interested in global issues such as environmental protection and volunteering in third world countries. Furthermore, their engagement is not necessarily linked to a membership of an association but more and more are carrying out such activities in a non-formal basis without being members of the organisations that they are volunteering for.

Geographical spread of volunteering

There are some regional differences in the level of volunteering although they are not particularly strong and some studies show contradictory trends. According to the 2002 survey on volunteering, led by Anne Birgitta Yeung, the highest levels of volunteering have been recorded in west Finland and the lowest in the south of the country¹⁵. The highest number of hours dedicated to volunteering can be seen in the west with 25 hours per month and the lowest in the north with 11 hours per month¹⁶.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See: Iisakka, L. (2006) Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review. Statistics Finland.

¹⁴ Iisakka, L. (2006) Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review. Statistics Finland.

¹⁵ Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

¹⁶ Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

The lower levels of volunteering are seen in Finland's biggest cities than in more sparsely populated areas, implying that volunteering is more common in towns, villages and rural areas than in urban areas¹⁷.

However, studies from 2008 imply that participation rates of southern Finnish people in many civic activities are actually much higher than previously thought. While they are not as active in terms of organised form of volunteering as people in other parts of the country, surveys have found that they are actually the most 'helpful' individuals being very active at helping out their friends and neighbours on an informal basis and undertaking civic activities such as donating blood¹⁸.

Education levels

The 1999/2000 Time Use Survey¹⁹ highlights a clear correlation between the level of volunteering seen amongst the population and volunteers' levels of education; put simply, the higher educated people are the more likely they are to participate in voluntary activities. Indeed, the highest rates of volunteering recorded among people with tertiary level education and the lowest among people whose highest level of education is primary education.

However, other surveys have reported that volunteers whose highest level of education is primary education spend more time carrying out voluntary activities than volunteers with higher levels of education²⁰.

Volunteer involvement by sectors²¹

Volunteers in Finland are active in a wide variety sectors ranging from sport to animal welfare to environmental conservation and voluntary activities relating to the armed forces (see Figure 1). The most popular sector is sport (30%), closely followed by social and health (25%), children and young people (22%), religious activities (16%) and community activities (10%).

¹⁷ See: Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY; Iisakka, L. (2006) *Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review*. Statistics Finland.

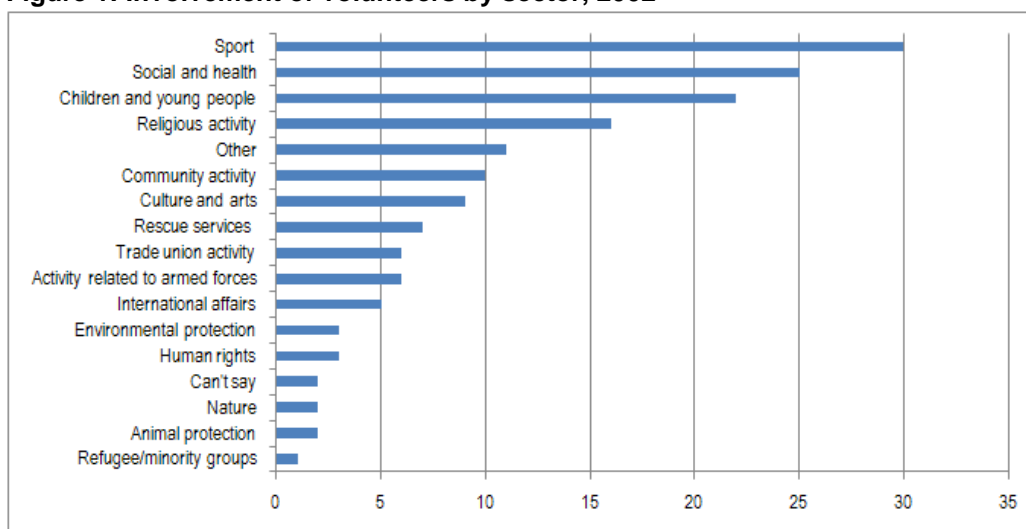
¹⁸ Pessi, A. B. (2008) *Suomalaiset auttajina ja luottamus avun lähteisiin*. RAY:n juhluvuoden kansalaisyhteiskyselyjen tulokset. Avustustoiminnan Raportteja 19. RAY.

¹⁹ Iisakka, L. (2006) *Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review*. Statistics Finland.

²⁰ Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

²¹ Information from Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

Figure 1: Involvement of volunteers by sector, 2002



Source: Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

There appears to be gender differences in the sectors²². Men tend to volunteer in the sport sector, in local and community activities, rescue services and voluntary activities linked to the armed forces. Women in contrast tend to volunteer in the social and health sectors, as well as with children and young people.

In addition, age differences also exist²³. Young people are more likely to take part in voluntary activities related to animals, nature, environmental protection and human rights, as well as those with children and other young people. Older people are more active in the social and health sectors, religious activities and local and community activities.

Profile of volunteers by employment status

Employed people are the most active in volunteering, followed by students, pensioners, individuals who are responsible for their own household (i.e. homemakers) and finally, unemployed individuals²⁴.

Time dedicated to volunteering²⁵

On average individuals dedicate 18 hours a month to voluntary activities, which equates to around four hours a week. Time dedicated to volunteering activities is affected by an individual's age, gender and employment status (see Table 1):

- Young people (aged between 15-24 years) and older people dedicate more time to volunteering than other age groups; an average of 20 hours a month.
- Women spend on average four hours more a month on volunteering than men; 20 hours a month among women and 16 hours a month among men.
- Individuals who have only completed primary education spend the most time on voluntary activities (22 hours a month), followed by individuals with tertiary level education (17 hours), upper secondary education (16 hours) and those with vocational education (14 hours).

²² Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Iisakka, L. (2006) *Social Capital in Finland – Statistical Review*. Statistics Finland.

²⁵ Information from: Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

Table 1: Time dedicated to volunteering by age group, 2002

Age group	Time spent volunteering per month
Older people (50-74 years)	22 hours
Young people (15-24 years)	20 hours
Adults (35-49 years)	15 hours
Young adults (25-34 years)	10 hours

Source: Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

The following section provides further information on the number and types of organisations engaging volunteers in Finland.

Definition of voluntary organisations in Finland

There is no one uniform definition of voluntary organisations, in part because there are so many different types of voluntary organisations active in the country.

The most common form of voluntary organisation is an association (*yhdistys/järjestö*) and the regulations outlined in the Association Act define how they can be formed (*yhdistyslaki 894/2002 [26.5.1989/503]*).

Other forms of voluntary / civil society organisations in Finland include religious organisations, political parties, trade unions, co-operatives, foundations and informal, spontaneous alliances between citizens (see further information in the table below).

Table 2: Types of civil society organisations in Finland

Types of organisations	
Associations (<i>yhdistykset</i>)	Association is a local registered or unregistered society, consisting of individual members. Sometimes, the term is used synonymously with organisation.
Organisations (<i>järjestöt</i>)	A national ensemble made up of local associations, district organisations and a federation.
Federation	An entity formed of associations and operates at a national level
Religious organisations	Activities of many churches are organised in association (excluding the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church)
Trade unions	Trade unions are sometimes included, sometimes not included, in categories of voluntary organisations. In Finland, their organisational structure is similar to that of other Finnish voluntary organisations (<i>associations/yhdistykset</i>), and they have large local networks, they carry out local level activity, have significant memberships and involve voluntary work.
Political parties	In a similar manner to trade unions, political parties are not always included in categories of voluntary organisations but their operations are regulated by the Associations Act and they

	involve volunteers.
Co-operatives (<i>osuuskunnat</i>)	Small-scale co-operatives, which are not primarily profit-driven entities, are included as voluntary organisation. The number of co-operatives grew by 86% between 1994 and 2003.
Foundations (<i>säätiöt</i>)	There were 2,700 foundations in Finland in 2007. There are two different types of foundations in Finland; grant (<i>apuraha</i>) and operational foundations (<i>toiminnallisia/laitos</i>).
Spontaneous alliances between citizens	This can include for example, popular movements, and unregistered groups, clubs and societies and other spontaneous alliances between people

Source: Harju, A (2006) *Finnish Civil Society*. KVS Foundation.

It must however be highlighted that there is a debate with regards to organisational types that can be categorised as voluntary organisations. This is also linked to the ever greater role of voluntary organisations involved in the delivery of public services and therefore some parties demand for a greater clarification of third sector organisations based on voluntary activity and third sector organisations involved in service delivery.

Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector

There are no exact figures available on the number of voluntary organisations, but, information is available on the number of main type of voluntary organisation – associations (*yhdistykset*).

Given the relatively small size of Finland, there is a high density of voluntary organisations within the country. In total there are 127,000 registered associations, although only around 67,000 of those were active in 2007²⁶. In addition, there are around 30,000 unregistered voluntary associations, citizen groups and networks²⁷.

The majority of voluntary organisations are active at the local level; in 2006, only 1,000 were national organisations and a further 3,000 were district/regional organisations²⁸.

Most voluntary organisations are found in the culture and recreation sectors, followed by the health sector and business and professional associations and unions.

Table 3: Voluntary organisations by sector, 1996

Sector	Number of organisations
Culture and recreation	28,000
Health	13,000
Business and Professional Associations, Unions	12,000
Philanthropic Intermediaries and Voluntarism Promotion	11,000
Education and Research	4,500

Source: Helander and Laaksonen, 1999, in Harju, A (2006) *Finnish Civil Society*. KVS Foundation.

²⁶ Based on information from the National Board of Patents and Registration of Finland (*Patentti- ja rekisterihallitus*).

²⁷ Harju, A (2006) *Finnish Civil Society*. KVS Foundation.

²⁸ Harju, A (2006) *Finnish Civil Society*. KVS Foundation.

Trend

There has been a considerable increase in the number of voluntary organisations in Finland over the past few years and more new voluntary organisations have been established this decade than ever before. There was a 15% increase between 2006 and 2007 alone; the number of association increased from 110,000 in 2006 to 127,000 in 2007. The record year was 1997 when ten new associations were registered daily. The biggest increases have been seen in the number of²⁹:

- Leisure and hobby organisations;
- Sport and exercise clubs;
- Cultural associations;
- Environmental and ecological organisations;
- Social and health organisations; and
- Village and district associations.

One the main reasons for this surge in numbers is that, in order to access funding, organisations must be registered as a non-profit association³⁰.

A major challenge for the future is linked to an ageing population. Many voluntary organisations are heavily reliant on older people aged 50 years and over to fulfil leading and management positions in a voluntary capacity.

Interviewees estimate that around 80% of voluntary organisations do not have employees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the older an organisation is the more likely it is to have employees.

In the future, voluntary organisations are expected to become more reliant on paid staff and are likely to become more professional and commercially orientated³¹. As a result it is likely that in the future, voluntary organisations will place greater emphasis on strategic planning, targets, efficiency and productivity. Moreover, they are likely to rely increasingly on self-funding than on subsidies.

Types of organisations engaging volunteers³²

There is currently no precise data available on the types of organisations engaging volunteers. However, interviewees suggest that the voluntary sector accounts for the majority of volunteers (99%), with minimal voluntary activity in the public or private sector (both under 1%). Around two thirds of volunteers take part in organised volunteering through voluntary organisations, the remaining one third volunteer through informal channels (such as, neighbourly help, 'talkoot', etc).

A more detailed description of organisations in Finland that engage volunteers is provided below. It is a grouping of 17 categories covering a range of different activities and sectors (see Table 4 overleaf).

²⁹ Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

³⁰ Kansalaisareena, 2009.

³¹ Yeung, A. B. (2002), Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

³² Information from: Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

Table 4: Organisational forms in Finland engaging volunteers

Groups	
Sport and exercise clubs	In Finland most sport activity takes place in sport clubs and clubs are increasingly on one specific sport.
Cultural associations	There has been an increase in the number of cultural associations over recent years and, like the sport clubs, many are focused on one particular theme (i.e. different art forms, the preservation of the local community, promoting multicultural dialogue, etc)
Leisure and hobby organisations	These cover a wide-range of different activities and act as a common platform through which individuals can meet like-minded people and demonstrate their skills (i.e. pet associations, dance associations, car and boat clubs, etc).
Social and health associations	These often relate to their members' interests and offer peer support and professional help (i.e. the Finnish Red Cross, associations for people with disabilities, child welfare organisations, etc).
Youth organisations and student societies	Youth work is a core element of Finnish organisational activity.
Political organisations	Political parties in Finland have local organisations in villages, municipalities and districts. Some also have women's organisations or federations, as well as child and youth organisations and educational and cultural associations.
Trade unions	Over the past few decades there has been a reduction in people's interest in trade union activities. Nevertheless most occupations are represented by trade unions and some have trade organisations with locally or regionally based activities.
Economic and industrial associations	Most medium and large enterprises belong to a national confederation and smaller companies/entrepreneurs have their own interest groups.-sized and
Advisor organisations	These have a long history in Finland, especially in rural areas.
Religious and ideological associations	Different religious groups have associations but membership is relatively small.
Pedagogical, scientific and study organisations	In Finland, scientific organisations, teachers' organisations, educational and study organisations and the support groups of educational institutions have their own organisations group.
Ecological associations	This is a relatively recent development and covers a wide range of different areas (i.e. animal welfare, nature conservation, bird-watching, etc).
Pensioner and veteran	Many veteran organisations date back to participation in the

organisations	Second World War and as such membership numbers are gradually decreasing. In contrast pensioner organisations are growing rapidly as the population in Finland ages.
Village and local organisations	In recent years these organisations have focused on supporting local development with state and EU funding.
National defence and peace organisations	Reservist organisations are typically male dominated and interest in voluntary national defence has grown over recent years. There has also been an increased participation of women. Peace organisations in contrast currently have relatively low levels of membership.
Friendship societies, ethnic organisations and development cooperation organisations	Friendship societies often bring together people from different countries and cultures (i.e. League of Finnish American Societies, Finland-Russia Society, and the Finnish-Arab Friendship Society). The aim is to foster good relations, disseminate information and organise cultural events, trips and language courses.
Service organisations	Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs are found throughout Finland. They focus on charitable work and providing aid through either, financial support or voluntary work.

Source: Harju, A (2006) *Finnish Civil Society*. KVS Foundation.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

No studies have been carried out on the types of activities undertaken by volunteers, apart from volunteers in the sport sector (these findings are reported in the related volunteering in sport report). Anecdotal evidence however suggests the following:

- Voluntary activities depend on the level of organisation they are involved in (e.g. international, national or local voluntary organisation).
- It is the ethos of the Finnish voluntary sector that everyone can volunteer regardless of their level of experience, skills or background. This means that there are no minimum requirements for individuals to be able to participate in voluntary activities. As a result, volunteers can carry out a range of different tasks, from those that require no skills or experience, to tasks that require some experience, and others, which require a high-level of skills.
- Many young volunteers increasingly want tailor made volunteer positions according to their own wishes and aspirations. They also tend to prefer concrete action over administrative duties.
- Many managerial and administrative roles even in small voluntary associations require an increasingly high level of skills in order to deal effectively with increasingly complex bureaucracy and administration (i.e. complex and changing tax regulations, challenges related to procurement, employment of staff, etc.).

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

This section details the current institutional framework of the voluntary sector in Finland. It presents an overview of the main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering in Finland, and policies and programmes in place at transnational, national and regional and local level to promote volunteering.

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

Main public body responsible for volunteering

There is no one public organisation that regulates the voluntary movement in Finland; a number of government bodies support volunteering as part of their wider responsibilities, and mainly by funding third sector organisations. These public bodies include:

- Ministry of Education (voluntary activities related to youth, culture and sport sectors);
- Ministry of Justice (regulations, and they also lead the new inter-ministerial, multi agency working group on civil society and volunteering, KANE - see Section 2.2);
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (international development, volunteering abroad, especially in third world countries);
- Ministry of Interior (volunteering in rescue services);
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (volunteering in social and health sectors);
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (issues related to rural development);
- Ministry of Finance (taxation issues); and
- Ministry of Employment and the Economy (employment programmes from which voluntary organisation can benefit, e.g. labour market subsidy programmes for the unemployed)

The most important ministries are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

Other important players are the three gaming organisations, which are the only three operators allowed to operate in the Finnish gaming market. Under the Lotteries Act, the tasks of three gaming organisations RAY (Finland's Slot Machine Association, which supports the work of health and welfare organisations), Veikkaus (the Finnish lottery, which supports art, sport, science and youth work) and Fintoto is to raise funds through gaming operations to support the work of voluntary organisations. This monopoly situation is the backbone of the Finnish voluntary sector as it ensures a sustainable form of funding for the sector. The gaming organisations also have a duty of social responsibility and an obligation to prevent gambling problems

The role of municipalities in relation to volunteering is four-dimensional. Municipalities offer facilities, sometimes free of charge, sometimes at a discounted rate, for the use of voluntary organisations. For example in the sport sector, about three-quarters of sport facilities are run by municipalities. Municipalities also support the voluntary movement by playing an important role in the development and delivery of training to many people involved in volunteering. Municipalities are also becoming increasingly important partners for many voluntary organisations who provide services for them and they also provide grants.

Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information

Most organisations that promote volunteering are sectoral organisations that carry out promotional and developmental work related to volunteering among their other activities. Only a small number of organisations focus on the development of volunteering alone.

Some of the most important other types of organisation that are involved in promotion of volunteering and exchange of information in the field of volunteering include the following organisations and networks (among others):

Citizen Forum **KansalaisAreena** is a service, development and information centre for voluntary actors in Finland. It promotes active citizenship and voluntary activity, and acts as a service centre for volunteers, voluntary organisations and professionals working in the field on volunteering. It works with grassroots level voluntary organisations.

Educational Association Citizen's Forum **Kansalaisfoorumi** promotes and develops Finnish civil society. It functions at a more strategic level than Kansalaisareena.

There are around 37 organisations that offer **volunteer brokerage services** (*vapaaehtoiskvälitys*). Two-thirds are in the Helsinki region³³. In addition to their other activities, they also aim to unite voluntary organisations looking for volunteers and people who wish to volunteer.

The **Members of Parliaments** have opened a support group on volunteering. The group is facilitated by the Citizen's Forum Kansalaisareena, and the members of the group are expected to raise awareness about issues affecting voluntary organisations and volunteers, and help to promote the volunteering agenda.

The Finnish Youth Cooperation **Allianssi** is a key player in the youth sector and works with voluntary youth organisations to promote and facilitate volunteering in the youth sector. **Youth Academy** (*Nuorten Akatemia*) is another organisation supporting voluntary organisations and voluntary activities in the youth sector. **Young Advocates** (*Nuoret vaikuttajat*) is an educational, information, collaboration organisation of Finland's Youth Councils.

The **co-operation association of social and health service organisations YTY** (*Sosiaali- ja terveystyöjärjestöjen Yhteistyöyhdistys*, www.sosteryty.fi) operates as an umbrella organisation for its 121 national members.

The **Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health** (*Sosiaali- ja terveysturvan keskusliitto*) is another federation in social and health care fields. The **Finnish Centre for Health Promotion** (www.health.fi) is a cooperation network bringing together organisations of different fields (public health, sport, education, disabled, social services). It aims to promote the health and wellbeing of citizens through dissemination of information and knowledge.

The Evangelic-Lutheran **church** is an important player in Finnish society, both as a civil activity forum and an organiser of services, including voluntary activities.

Finnish sector specific sport organisations and federations are in charge of organising the activities voluntary sport organisations, as well as their activities in relation to volunteering. The **Finnish Sport Federation** (*Suomen Liikunta ja Urheilu ry, SLU*) is the umbrella organisation that provides support for all its 125 member organisations (national and regional sport organisations). Its main aim is to support volunteering-based, non-profit civic activity in sport. Its member organisations and federations in turn bring together and provide

³³ Hilger, P. (2008) A case of human service dominance: volunteer centres in Finland. Paper prepared for the 'Volunteering Infrastructure and Civil Society' Conference, Aalsmeer, the Netherlands, 24-25 April 2008.

support for grassroots level sport clubs, which are heavily dominated by volunteers (the majority of all volunteers in the sport sector are active in sport clubs).

The **Service Centre for Development Cooperation** (*Kehitysyhteistyön palvelukeskus*) is an umbrella organisation for Finnish NGOs involved in development co-operation or other global issues.

Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks

KansalaisAreena, Citizen Forum, is a member of CEV. The youth, health and sport federations are also affiliated to the relevant European umbrella organisations.

2.2 Policies

National strategy/framework for volunteering

Volunteering is seen to be at the policy agenda. Overall, the significance of volunteering to many different sectors, sport and recreation in particular, is recognised by different stakeholders.

With regards to national strategies, in 2007 the Finnish government set up a new committee to enhance cooperation between the civil society and the public administration (*kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta, KANE*). Its legal foundation, including its aims and tasks, are seen as a key strategic document in Finland for the development of volunteering in the country.

The operations of the committee are currently led by the Finnish Sports Federation and co- led by the director of Finnish Federation for Social Welfare and Health (*Sosiaali- ja terveysturvan keskusliitto STKL*). Other members of the committee are: representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Environment, the National Board of Patents and Registrations of Finland (*Patentti- ja rekisterihallitus*), the Tax Administration, representatives from a number of non-profit organisations and representative organisations for the Finnish civil society, as well as researchers, academics, experts and social partners.

The committee will run until 2011 and one of its main tasks is to explore the ways in which the work of non-profit organisations can be made easier. It will also look at how to solve the barriers faced by non-profit organisations in their activities. Importantly these include a clarification of the administrative challenges that have arisen from EU regulation, especially in relation to taxation rules concerning service delivery by non-profit organisations (this is discussed in greater detail later in the report). The developments it will take forward will have relevance to voluntary organisations in the country. Experts have highlighted the importance and the uniqueness of the committee, in that so many different stakeholders from public and third sector spheres are working closely together to tackle problems that hinder the work of voluntary organisations and volunteers.

Four of the committee's working groups have particular relevance to voluntary organisations:

- The working group on taxation is exploring ways of solving problems relating to the taxation of non-profit organisations;
- The working group looking at issues around public procurement and service delivery by non-profit organisations, as well as the impact of public procurement rules on voluntary organisations, volunteers and disadvantaged groups;
- The working group on research, which will map out the situation of the Finnish civil society and report on the needs and challenges faced by the sector; and
- The working group on the financial situation of non-profit organisations.

The Citizen Forum (*Kansalaisareena*) has also established a programme of which aim is to formulate a national strategy on volunteering. The goal is to develop a common understanding of volunteering, to define good practice in volunteering, to gain political support, secure future support and importantly, include grassroots level voluntary organisations into the strategic planning process of volunteering at national level. See Section 2.3 for further information.

The Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007-2011 (*Lapsi- ja nuorisopolitiikan Kehittämishjelma*) highlights the importance of integrating an element of volunteering into secondary level education in Finland. The programme stressed the significance of an understanding of the importance of volunteering from a young age.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

As yet, there are no quantitative **targets** in relation to volunteering in Finland. However, the new committee to enhance cooperation between the civil society and the public administration (*kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta*, KANE) has several qualitative targets in relation to volunteering. These include:

- Clarifying problems related to taxation of non-profit organisations;
- Clarifying issues around public procurement and service delivery by non-profit organisations, as well as the impact of public procurement rules on voluntary organisations, volunteers and disadvantaged groups;
- Clearer analysis of the Finnish civil society and the needs and challenges faced by the voluntary organisations; and
- Clarifying the financial situation of non-profit organisations.

International policies

The UN year of volunteering had an impact on the volunteering agenda in Finland. It resulted in more research been carried out on volunteering in Finland and it also helped to promote the importance and contribution of volunteering to the society.

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

Volunteer brokerage services and sector specific umbrella organisations (such as the Finnish Sports Federation, Allianssi, etc.) help to promote volunteering. There are also a number of employment programmes in place, which benefit the voluntary sector:

- Employment schemes of the PES financially support the employment of long-term unemployed individuals (including former volunteers) into voluntary organisations. Although the positions are temporary, many have ended up finding permanent employment as a result of these interventions; and
- Apprenticeship schemes are also available to voluntary sector organisations

A new internet portal, www.vapaaehtoiseksi.fi, will be opened in 2010. It is a new portal aimed at functioning as a national brokerage platform between organisations looking for volunteers and individuals interested in volunteering. The portal has been established by KansalaisAreena ry and the Finnish Centre for Health Promotion, and is supported by RAY.

The Citizen Forum KansalaisAreena run a preparatory programme between 2007 and 2010 to introduce a cross-sectoral, national strategy for volunteering. At the moment most of the development work takes place at sectoral level. Hence, the aim is to develop joined-up, national level co-operation in the field of volunteering that aims to benefit the sector as a whole, and not only volunteering in certain sectors.

The preparatory programme will continue with a national strategy programme for volunteering between 2010 and 2013. It continues to be led by the Citizen Forum with key partners. The overall aim is to involve grass-root level voluntary organisers in the planning and development of volunteering in the country, and thereby improve the foundation and the infrastructure for volunteering. The programme also aims, for example, to:

- Improve networking among local and national stakeholders in the field of volunteering;
- Improve brokerage services (such as the internet portal mentioned earlier);
- Raise awareness about the possibilities offered by volunteering;
- Improve the image of volunteering;
- Seek to develop new practices for co-operation between municipalities, companies and voluntary organisations in the field of volunteering;
- Define and clarify boundaries between voluntary and professional, paid work.
- Collect and disseminate information on good practices in the field of volunteering; and
- Collect information and data on volunteering in order to better demonstrate the impact and value of volunteering.

A range of national, regional and local events, developments activities and projects will be implemented to achieve the aims. Funding is sought from a number of different sources and the work is overseeing and monitored by a management committee consisting of different NGOs and networks.

Key transnational programmes that stimulate volunteering at transnational level

Allianssi Youth Exchanges is a youth exchange agency providing young Finns opportunities to work abroad. Every year around one thousand young Finns volunteer abroad and around 100 international volunteers come to volunteer in Finland.

Finnish Volunteer Programme **ETVO** is a volunteering programme led by KEPA (The Service Centre for Development Cooperation). It channels volunteers to non-governmental organisations in the South (mainly developing countries).

The purpose of the programme is to enhance dialogue between the South and the North and to strengthen the partnership between the two. It is aimed that the involvement of the Finnish NGOs helps the volunteers to become active members of the civil society when they return to Finland. ETVO has been active since 1995, and it has no political or religious affiliations.

The volunteers have worked, for example, in environmental conservation, with street children and with people with disabilities. The volunteering period varies from six to twelve months.

Finnish Branch of Service Civil International (KVT) is a peace organisation that aims at promoting equality, social acceptance and respect for the environment. The most important activities include an organisation of international work camps in Finland and sending Finnish volunteers to work abroad.

International Cultural Youth Exchange, ICYE (Maailmanvaihto) is an international non-profit youth exchange organisation promoting youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The third section of the report outlines the regulatory framework in place in Finland. A number of different elements within the regulatory section are examined, covering:

- The general legal framework;
- The legal framework concerning individual volunteers;
- The legal framework related to organisations engaging volunteers;
- The legal framework related to 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 on volunteering in Finland. Volunteering is regulated by a number of laws, including:

- Associations Act 894/2002 (26.5.1989/503) (*Yhdistyslaki*)
- Co-operatives Act 1488/2001 (*Osuuskuntalaki*)
- Foundations Act 248/2001 (*Säätiölaki*)
- Accounting Act 300/1998 (*Kirjanpitolaki*)
- Lotteries Act 23.11.2001/1047 (*Arpajaislaki*)
- Youth Act 27.1.2006/72 (*Nuorisolaki*)
- Sport Act 18.12.1998/1054 (*Liikuntalaki*)
- Occupational Safety and Health Act (23 Aug 2002/738)
- Act on Rescue Services (13 June 2003/468)

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

No codes of conduct exist at the moment but there are plans to create one.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

Finnish volunteers do not have a specific legal status. Volunteers are sometimes regarded as (corresponded to) employees, and voluntary service has usually been treated according to the taxation practices of the Employment Contracts Act³⁴. According to the definition in the Employment Contracts Act, an employment contract is characterised by working for remuneration. Neighbourly help, for example, has not been regarded as subject to employment contract legislation, even if the parties had clearly agreed on the benefits and responsibilities involved.

Provisions for specific categories

All people can volunteer but unemployed people should inform the Public Employment Service about their voluntary engagements as voluntary work should not prevent them for taking up work or labour market training if such opportunities are made available. This means that volunteers must be able to stop their voluntary work at a relatively short notice.

Some stakeholders have highlighted the ambiguity of the Unemployment Security Act (*Työttömyysturvalaki* 30.12.2002/1290) in relation to volunteering as one of the barriers

³⁴ Youth Partnership (2009) Voluntary activities, Finland.

related to the development of volunteering. It is claimed that the rules should be clearer in this regard.

There are also some implications in terms of taxation for voluntary organisations if skilled healthcare professionals, such as doctors, volunteer their time to carry out activities related to their profession.

Support schemes and incentives

Individual volunteers do not gain income tax exemptions or financial benefits from volunteering and there are no other financial support schemes in place to encourage people to volunteer. At the same time people are not penalised for volunteering either.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers

In principle, volunteers can be reimbursed for the expenses occurred as a result of volunteering and there are a couple of groups of volunteers in the field of child protection who get their expenses reimbursed automatically. However, normally the arrangements concerning reimbursements depend on the rules and practices of each sector and/or individual organisation.

Reimbursement of expenses is tax-free up to a certain figure (around EUR 2,000). In practice, this is not really an issue as the expenses are low-cost items, such as travel costs, etc. Furthermore, tax rules are rather unclear with regards to this matter - each tax office tends to treat this differently.

Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

Some volunteers are given a nominal payment for their voluntary work, especially sport coaches. This must be declared and is taxable income

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

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

Voluntary organisations that work for public good do not need to pay income tax, VAT or property tax on their earnings as long as they are carrying out activities for the public good³⁵. This means that income gained through fundraising, donations, membership fees etc is not taxable income. For a non-profit organisation to classify to these benefits, it must meet the following requirements:

- It operates fully and only for the public good, in the material, spiritual, educational or social sense;
- Its activities are not directed to an exclusive group of people only; and
- Those involved do not gain financial benefits such as dividends, profits shares, high salaries or other compensation for participating in the activities of the organisation³⁶.

Around two-thirds of voluntary organisations are eligible for above-mentioned exemptions³⁷.

If a non-profit organisation is engaged in delivering services on behalf of a public or private organisation, their status changes. They must pay taxes for such income, although such organisations can apply for tax relief on the operational and fund-raising income. But more importantly, these taxation rules are unclear at the moment (some non-profit organisations have privatised their service delivery activities, other continue to deliver services, etc.). As

³⁵ Harju, A. (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Educational Association Citizen's Forum SKAF, KansalaisFoorumi

previously mentioned, a government working group *KANE* has been established to clarify these rules.

There are no subsidies linked to establishing voluntary organisations.

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

There are some company specific schemes to promote volunteering, and some ministries have also established 'volunteering days'. Also, many large companies, especially Nokia and Telia-Sonera support the voluntary sector through significant levels of sponsorship.

Employer is responsible for the insurance and protection of an employee if she carries out voluntary work during working hours.

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

It is not legal for voluntary organisations to provide insurance but in practice almost all voluntary organisation have an insurance which ensure that all volunteers are insured. The volunteer insurance system is well developed, easily available and relatively inexpensive. One of the best insurance schemes is available in the sport sector.

This means that the lack of volunteer insurance is not a problem in Finland.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

The following section details the economic dimension of volunteering in Finland.

4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

National budget allocated to volunteering

There is no national budget allocation to volunteering as such but the public sector supports voluntary organisations, for example, by enabling activities of national federations and umbrella organisations. The turnover of voluntary sector organisations is approximately EUR 5 billion³⁸. Around 32%, (EUR 1.6 Billion) comes from public sources. The largest amount of funding goes to social and health organisations. The state funding provided for many voluntary organisations and federations come from the proceeds of the gaming industry.

Gambling and betting activities in Finland are regulated by the Lotteries Act (23.11.2001/1047). Under the Lotteries Act, all gaming arrangements in Finland require a gaming licence. A gaming licence is issued separately for running money lotteries, pools and betting, for keeping slot machines, operating casino games and running casino activities, and for operating totalisator betting³⁹. Only one licence is granted at a time for each of these purposes. The official justification for this limitation is to protect those who engage in gaming activities, prevent abuse and criminal activities and reduce social problems created by gaming, such as gaming addiction. Gaming licences may be issued for a maximum of five years at a time and the licences are granted and revoked by the Finnish government. The current gaming licences, which are in force until 2011, have been granted to the following three gaming operators⁴⁰: Veikkaus Oy (state-owned), Raha-automaattiyhdistys (state-owned) and Fintoto Oy (privately owned). Due to the current legislation no other gaming operators are allowed to offer gaming services in Finland.

³⁸ Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

³⁹ Stranius, D. and Nevalainen, J. (2008) Gaming law in Finland – a regulated monopoly contrary to the EU Treaty?

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Only a small percentage of voluntary sector funding comes from budgetary funds; funds are largely proceeds from the gaming industry, and this is the reason why the Finnish actors feel strongly about the need for the Member States to be able to decide on their own gaming policies. It is expected that the Finnish voluntary movement would suffer significantly if the gaming industry in Finland was opened to competition. It is expected that the level of funding for the voluntary sector would reduce and thereby weaken the volunteering infrastructure in the country as a whole.

Finally, a significant form of public support for sport is the tax-free nature of volunteer work. As stated earlier, non-profit organisations do not need to pay taxes on the income gained through fundraising, donations, membership fees, etc. provided that no one receives direct personal benefit from it but all funds are used for 'common good' - to support activities for the entire club or team.

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

The sources of Finnish voluntary organisations are:

- Membership fees;
- Fundraising;
- Donations;
- Benefits in-kind (e.g. use of facilities for free of charge, voluntary workforce);
- Income from service provision;
- Sale of products;
- Income for advertisements (e.g. in a magazine of a voluntary organisation);
- Agreements with private companies;
- Funding through national gaming organisations (e.g. Veikkaus, Fintoto and RAY);
- Grants from local and national authorities;
- EU funds;
- Project funding; and
- Capital income (e.g. rent income, etc.).

Usually, the most important funding sources include: own funding (e.g. membership fees, fundraising), donations and service delivery and public funding. However, sectoral differences are apparent in funding sources of voluntary organisations. For example, membership fees are crucial for voluntary social and health organisations while sport organisations benefit more from private sponsorship than most other voluntary organisations. Religious organisations tend to benefit from private donations. Voluntary youth organisations are funded by state subsidies (28%), EU funds, foundations and other ministries (19%), and private sources such as membership fees, donations and fundraising (53%)⁴¹.

Overall, Finnish voluntary organisations are more dependent on self-financing than their counterparts in many other European countries; the proportion of state funding is relatively low. Own fundraising emphasises the central role of the members and enhances the autonomy of the sector⁴².

⁴¹ Ministry of Education, 2009.

⁴² Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

No tensions were identified between the state aid rules and allocation of grants and subsidies to voluntary organisations. This is down, for example, to a long tradition of voluntary sector activity.

Funding arrangements for voluntary organisations are deemed transparent.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

The public services were reorganised after the recession of mid / early 1900s. Aaro Harju reports that “*Finland moved from the welfare state thinking to the idea of a pluralistic welfare society*”⁴³. According to this theory, the responsibility for a welfare society is shared between several different actors. In fact, a significant increase in voluntary organisations was seen in social and health service fields as budget cuts led to increased responsibilities for municipalities⁴⁴. Growing numbers of voluntary organisations started to deliver services for municipalities, for example, in the field of domestic support, support for the elderly, services for the disabled, etc.

Today, just over 50% of member organisations of YTY (which represent voluntary organisations in social and health care sectors) are involved in service delivery⁴⁵. Eleven out of 102 respondents had established a company to deliver these services in 2006/2007.

Voluntary organisations provide about 17% of social services and 5% of health services. The figures for the public sector are 67% and 83%, and 6% and 12% for the private sector, respectively. In 2000, voluntary organisations in the field of health and social affairs employed 11% of all staff in the health and social sector⁴⁶. The share of staff employed by the state was 81% and 8% by the private sector.

There need to be clearer rules on taxation of voluntary organisations that deliver SSGI because at the moment tax offices apply the rules differently (see Section 7 for further information).

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

Income generated through volunteering

No information was obtained on this question.

Economic value of volunteering

Voluntary work in voluntary organisations totalled 123 million hours in 1996. This translates to 80,000 full-time equivalents (4% of the total labour force)⁴⁷.

In practice, there are around 82,000 people working in voluntary organisations, of which 25,000 are part-time workers. They make up 3.5% of the labour force.

The calculated value of voluntary work is approximately EUR 2 billion.

It has been estimated that the price of an hour of voluntary work by a volunteer reached EUR 15 in 2007.

⁴³ Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation. Page 30.

⁴⁴ Ruohonen, 2003 in Hilger, P. (2006) Organising volunteers: Activating infrastructures and reflexive volunteering in the municipality of Helsinki. A report to City of Helsinki Urban Facts, Urban Research Unit.

⁴⁵ Lyytikäinen, M. (2008) Palvelutuotanto YTY:n jäsenyhteisöissä vuonna 2008. Sähköisen kyselyn yhteenveto. Sosiaali- ja terveysjärjestöjen Yhteistyöyhdistys YTY ry.

⁴⁶ Ylä-Anttila, T. (2006) Kansalaisjärjestöt rakentavat vahvempaa demokratiaa. www.kansanvalta.fi

⁴⁷ Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP

The share of the voluntary sector from GDP is 3-4%⁴⁸. This figure however includes the value of the voluntary sector as a whole, including 80,000 employees.

Issues of service substitution and job substitution

Service substitution is not an issue in Finland but the issue of volunteering potentially replacing employment caused big public debates some years ago, although the situation has calmed down now. Traditionally, the Finnish voluntary sector has played a relatively small role in delivering social welfare. However, today the sector plays an increasingly important role in the supply of services, in particular social and welfare services.

Some years ago trade unions raised concerns about potential job losses caused by the increases in the number of municipalities purchasing their services from voluntary organisations. However, as new jobs have been created in voluntary organisations and the positions have been filled by trained and qualified professionals, the concerns are not as serious as before.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

This section of the report 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

With regards to the benefits to the community, a leading researcher Yeung (2002) has stated that "*Volunteering has become of one of the fundamental pillars of the society... Volunteering is one dynamic base, on which social capital and active citizenship can build*"⁴⁹. Aaro Harju has stated that "*the Finnish society would not function without the contribution of volunteers*"⁵⁰. He also highlights that the quality of life in the country would be worse without voluntary activities carried for the common good. Volunteering also allows delivery of certain services for example by enabling the running of youth and sport activities at a low cost⁵¹.

As mentioned earlier, a significant change in attitude towards volunteering came with the economic crisis that took place in the early / mid 1990s when voluntary sector organisations started to play a growing role in the delivery of welfare state services⁵².

With regards to benefits to direct beneficiaries, voluntary workforce can offer aspects that paid staff do not. For example, they can be more subjective than paid employees who have to remain impartial and more professional in their approach. Volunteers can also differ from employees with regards to their motivation; volunteers are assisting beneficiaries as they really want to help rather than being employed to do so⁵³.

⁴⁸ Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

⁴⁹ Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

⁵⁰ Harju, A. (2004) Vapaaehtoistoiminnan merkitys kasvaa. Kansalaisfoorumi.net verkkolehti, 14.12.2004.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Yeung, A. B. (2002) Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta? Helsinki: YTY.

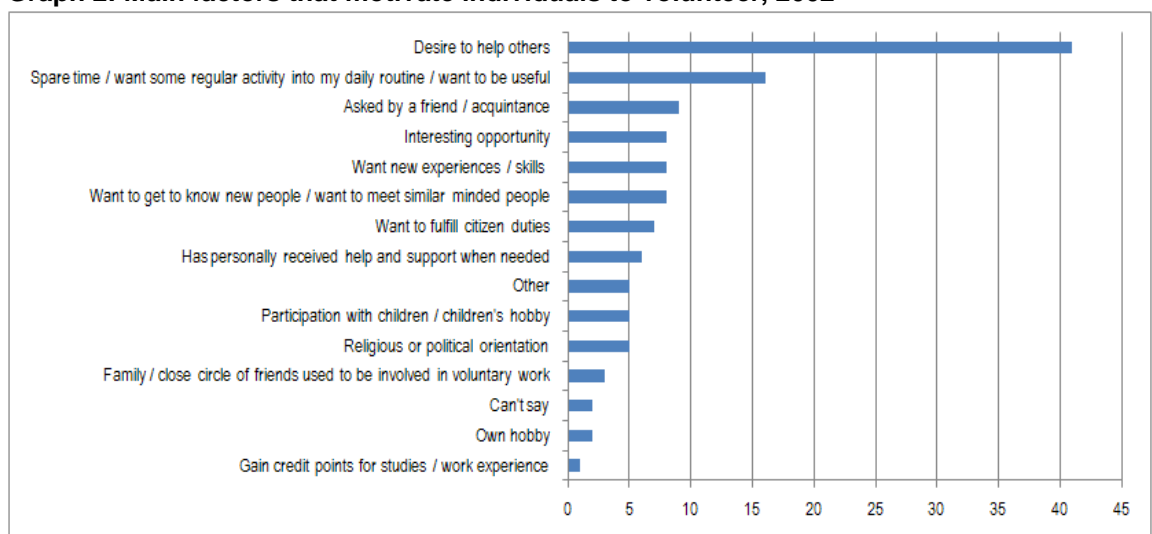
⁵³ Lehtinen, S-T. (1997) Vapaaehtoistoiminta – kasvava voimavara? Näkökulmia ammattityöhön. KansalaisAreena.

Volunteers themselves feel that they benefit from volunteering by being able to learn new skills, gain new experiences and strengthen his/her identity⁵⁴. Many also believe that volunteering can help them with their career and many feel good about themselves as they can help others. Volunteering can also improve self-confidence of volunteers and give them an opportunity to enhance their people skills⁵⁵. Volunteering can also offer a platform for meeting new people.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

Research has shown that by far the most important motivating factor recorded by volunteers in Finland is the desire to help others (41% of volunteers)⁵⁶. The second most important factor is the wish to use spare-time productively and to have a regular activity as part of a daily routine (16%). Other important motivating factors were: requests by friends and family (9%); the opportunity to take part in an interesting activity (8%); wanting to gain new experiences and skills (8%); and meeting new people (8%).

Graph 2: Main factors that motivate individuals to volunteer, 2002



Source: Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

It is important to note that the factors that motivate people to volunteer vary according to their gender, employment status and age group. A recent Finnish report on volunteering⁵⁷ highlighted that the factors that motivate women to take part in voluntary activities often differ significantly from those motivating men. Women are more likely to engage in voluntary activities out of a desire to help other people, to expand their knowledge (for example, learn new skills) and to meet new people. In contrast, men are more motivated by the influence of friends and acquaintances, a desire to use their free-time productively and/or feelings of civic responsibility.

The report also found that different age groups tend to be motivated by different factors. Young people are more motivated to volunteer in order to learn new skills than older people. They are also heavily influenced by friends. Indeed, every sixth young person in Finland was primarily motivated to volunteer because of one of these two reasons.

⁵⁴ Yeung, A.B. (2004) *Suomalainen vapaaehtoistoiminta kansainvälisessä kentässä.*

⁵⁵ Lehtinen, S-T. (1997) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta – kasvava voimavara? Näkökulmia ammattityöhön.* KansalaisAreena.

⁵⁶ Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

⁵⁷ Yeung, A. B. (2002) *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

Conversely, individuals aged over 50 years or retired volunteered were more motivated to volunteer in order to meet new people and were much less influenced by friends than were young people. In addition, the desire to help others and to regularly take part in an activity that benefits society and others (i.e. to maintain a routine) were two further key motivating factors for older individuals.

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The following section looks at how volunteering in Finland has been integrated into policy frameworks regarding 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 system⁵⁸

Finland has had a structure to validate informal and non-formal learning since the mid-nineties, when the competence-based qualification system for initial, further and specialist VET was first established. Competence-based qualifications can be awarded regardless of how and where the skills and knowledge have been acquired; recognition of prior learning is at the very core of the system. They can be demonstrated and accredited in officially approved practical skill demonstrations / tests. Candidates can take their exams after or during formal training or without any formal training at all. In brief, the basic idea behind the system of competence-based qualifications is that adults with previous work (paid or unpaid) and/or study experience should only study those areas of study programmes that provide them with skills that they do not as yet command. Between 1997 and 2006, just under 365,000 individuals took part in the system. However, no information is available on the number of individuals who had their voluntary work experience recognised as part of the system.

Legal provisions are in place to ensure that based on an assessment of an individual's competencies, access may be granted to upper secondary level studies and / or exemptions even if they do not meet the standard entry requirements:

- The legislative framework on general upper secondary schools outlines that studies completed elsewhere, even outside formal education systems, can in special circumstances be accredited.
- The legislation also permits people to apply for general upper secondary schools even if they do not meet the standard entry requirements.
- The upper secondary schools with vocational orientation accept a greater number of candidates without standard entry qualifications than upper secondary schools with a general (academic) orientation. Approximately four per cent of people starting basic vocational education each year are chosen through the 'flexible student selection' that allows individuals to demonstrate their competencies and experience in the field in which they are aiming to study, while the legislation permits up to 30 per cent of students in any subject area to be selected on this basis.

With regards to validation of voluntary experience and higher education institutes, the law states that individuals can be accepted to polytechnics and universities if they can demonstrate that they possess the competences required to complete the course they have applied for. Furthermore, the Act on Polytechnic studies 351/2003 also states that

⁵⁸ Nevala, A-M (2007) Validation of informal and non-formal learning, Finland. European Commission.

individuals may be exempt from part(s) of the polytechnic study programme if they are able to show that they have gained relevant knowledge through other studies (formal or non-formal), hobbies or paid/unpaid work experience.

There is limited evidence to suggest that competencies gained in previous studies and employment are taken into consideration in polytechnic adult education, as the students' average study period in polytechnic adult education is usually slightly shorter than study periods in 'regular' polytechnics.

With regards to policies, already since 1999 national strategies for education have recognised that the assessment and recognition of knowledge should be developed in a manner that allows young people and adults to make use of the knowledge they have acquired earlier during work, civic activity or studies.

Finally, Recreational activity study book was developed by the Finnish Youth Academy and it offers young people a chance to identify and record the competences they have developed during their voluntary engagements. It is aimed at all young people above 13 years of age who are involved in recreational and voluntary activities. The system does not measure the young person's competences and does not aim for formal accreditation, but it serves young people as a tool for making all the experiences and learning outside formal schooling visible when applying for a job or further education. Over 80,000 Recreational activity study books have been distributed to date and around 5,000 young people take up this activity each year.

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

Voluntary sector umbrella organisations, representative bodies of voluntary organisations, local authorities and many individual voluntary organisations are involved in facilitating education and training opportunities for volunteers. For example, the Finnish Sport Federation has introduced a new training programme for the leaders of voluntary sport organisations. The Finnish Red Cross provides volunteers with training, support and work counselling and the Evangelic-Lutheran church arranges courses on social skills for young volunteers.

7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

A number of EU policies have a direct impact on volunteering in Finland. First of all, Finland joining the EU reinforced the recognition of the third sector as an important actor alongside the public and private sectors⁵⁹. Secondly, volunteering was also a priority during the Finnish EU presidency in 2006⁶⁰. And thirdly, there is a general consensus among stakeholders that EU regulation, which affects voluntary organisations, should be kept to a minimum. This is in relation to the fact that it is important that any new national and EU policies should not increase the administrative burden on voluntary organisations.

Future EU level activity could support the voluntary sector by making funds available for voluntary organisation so as to enable them to arrange relevant training for their volunteers and paid staff.

It is recognised that EU policies have mainly affected larger voluntary organisations, and their representative organisations/federations, and the overarching policy framework, rather than local voluntary organisations which form the great majority of voluntary organisations.

With regards to specific policy areas, the following impacts have been identified.

⁵⁹ Harju, A (2006) Finnish Civil Society. KVS Foundation.

⁶⁰ Ministry of Education, 2009.

Competition

A key policy priority concerns the national gaming policy and the importance of ensuring that the country is able to hold on to the current funding arrangement for non-profit organisations working for the public good. The opening of the Finnish gaming market to competition could jeopardise the funding system of the whole non-profit sector, in which many of the different fields of activity rely heavily on a voluntary workforce. It is expected that the level of funding for the non-profit sector would reduce and thereby weaken the non-profit sector and volunteering infrastructure in the country as a whole. The focus on responsible gaming could also diminish. Finnish actors in the voluntary sector feel strongly about the need for the Member States to be able to decide on their own gaming policies.

Taxation

EU competition and taxation laws and regulations on public procurement have affected the Finnish voluntary sector. As previously mentioned, Finnish non-profit organisations that work for the public good and meet certain criteria do not need to pay income tax, value-added tax VAT or property tax on their earnings. In contrast organisations that engage in business activity must pay income tax and VAT on its earnings (although they can apply for a tax relief on fundraising and operational activities). Currently, taxation rules for non-profit associations engaged in service delivery are unclear; some voluntary organisations have privatised their service delivery activities and are taxed for such business activities, others continue to provide such services as a non-profit organisation. As previously mentioned, an inter-ministerial working group has been established to clarify these rules. However, some Finnish stakeholders would welcome clearer EU rules regarding the delivery of SSGI by voluntary organisations.

Social policies

Social policies in relation to the delivery of SSGIs have had a clear impact on voluntary organisations in Finland.

Structural funds

Structural funds have had an important positive impact on volunteering, in particular through the ESF.

Youth policies

EU youth policies have had a positive impact. They have affected the national youth policy and programmes such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS) has helped to promote volunteering among young people

Active citizenship

The EU policies on active citizenship have had a major impact on the theme's agenda in Finland. Notably it has brought the issue from the margins of the policy agenda to an area of political priority. For example, the government run a Citizen Participation Policy Programme (*kansalaisvaikuttamisen politiikkaohjelma*) between 2007 and 2010 and the results included the establishment of the new committee to enhance cooperation between the civil society and the public administration (*kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta, KANE*), which is now working to remove obstacles affecting the work of voluntary organisations.

Active citizenship has also been included in the initial training programme of teachers, as a result of the EU policy focus on this issue.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Interviews and the review of literature has highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities, which impact directly on the success of the voluntary sector in Finland.

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

Interviewees have highlighted a number of challenges, which affect volunteering in Finland.

Attracting volunteers

Some voluntary organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to attract individuals to take part in volunteering on a long-term basis. There is a challenge to develop effective volunteer recruitment and retention strategies.

It is also becoming harder to find volunteers who are willing to commit to a voluntary position of responsibility/leadership, for example, sitting on the board of a voluntary organisation.

In addition, stakeholders have reported that it becoming harder to attract volunteers given that they spread across increasing numbers of voluntary organisations. A key challenge linked to the difficulty of attracting volunteers is how to advertise volunteering opportunities better.

Busy working lives have negatively impacted on the time and energy people have to engage in long-term voluntary activities.

The fact that the lowest levels of volunteering can be seen in some of Finland's biggest cities has also led to a drive towards effectively identifying and reaching people in urban areas who are interested in volunteering but who do not yet participate in voluntary activities.

The welfare state model in Finland has allowed volunteering to concentrate on sport, youth and cultural activities. Budget cuts that are expected in the years to come will however place a growing need for volunteers and voluntary organisations in health and social spheres. The challenge here is to ensure that there are enough volunteers to these new emerging sectors as well as for the traditional voluntary sectors.

Change in public perceptions

Although the level of involvement in volunteering has remained stable over the years in Finland and shows no signs decreasing, there have been changes in peoples' patterns of involvement in voluntary activities. Many Finnish people, in particular young people, now prefer to determine their own level of involvement. They speak more openly about what they want to achieve with their voluntary engagement and volunteers also switch more easily from one voluntary organisation to another. They are also more interested in project based voluntary efforts rather than, for example, in administrative duties. For these reasons voluntary organisations are required to 'innovate' in terms of providing new and different types of voluntary engagement opportunities.

Some Finnish people are increasingly focussing on donating money or paying for products produced through voluntary activities, rather than actually participating in them. This change in attitude is partly due to the progressive improvement of living standards and the availability of disposable income.

Certain stakeholders have also called for greater recognition on the part of policy-makers and high-level decision-makers to acknowledge the work done by volunteers, for example through awards, certification, etc.

Coordination of voluntary activities

Many volunteers have also raised the issue of a lack of leadership/coordination within voluntary activities. Many volunteers have indicated that they would like to see a specific person designated in their voluntary organisation who is responsible for organising and coordinating their voluntary roles and activities. This would also help to ensure that volunteers are thanked and recognised better for the work they are doing from their goodwill. A study carried out in relation to Aseman Lapset Voluntary Bank project found that co-operation between different voluntary organisations, which allows organisations to assess the volunteer recruitment and management practices of other organisations ('peer review') has proved beneficial as it has allowed organisations to see how other similar voluntary organisations manage this process⁶¹.

There is also evidence to suggest that there is an increasing need for highly skilled and highly experienced individuals to participate in voluntary activities. For example, many managerial and administrative roles even in small voluntary associations require a high level of skills in order to deal effectively with increasingly complex bureaucracy (i.e. complex and changing tax regulations). In addition, voluntary organisations which engage paid staff must apply the necessary administrative structure (i.e. payroll, adhere to employment legislation, etc), which require specific skills and competences from volunteers in managerial or leadership positions.

Funding issues

The loss of control by the Finnish government over the gaming market is seen as the greatest threat for the voluntary movement in the country. The sustainability of the current funding regime is one of the key strengths of the sector (funding that is based on lottery proceeds). Finnish actors feel strongly about the need for the Member States to be able to decide on their own gaming policies. As a result many Finnish stakeholders believe that the potential opening up of the gambling market to competition could jeopardise the Finnish funding system for voluntary organisations.

In addition, the rapid increase in the number voluntary organisations has meant that there is more competition amongst the different actors for funding.

It has also been highlighted that too many voluntary organisations rely on project based funding. This prevents some organisations from engaging in long-term planning.

It is also important to bear in mind that volunteering only functions when certain conditions are met⁶². Firstly, volunteers need to be taken care of, they need to be looked after and they need to feel valued. This means that they need to be provided with necessary training, co-ordination and rewards (non-financial). Secondly, volunteering also costs. Funds are required for example for the recruitment of volunteers and reimbursement of their costs. And finally, volunteering needs to be supported but not regulated too much.

Taxation issues

Unclear taxation rules regarding public procurement arrangements are also creating a challenge for many voluntary organisations, especially for voluntary organisations in social and health spheres which are increasingly engaging in the delivery services for public authorities. Voluntary organisations also need to understand the administrative and regulatory implications of such activity. Such organisations also need to have resources and expertise to compete for the provision of such services.

In addition, some of the taxation rules regarding volunteers (e.g. reimbursement of expenses to volunteers) remain subject to different interpretations.

⁶¹ Lahtela, M. (2009) Vapaaehtoistoiminnan ammattilaisten ääni kuuluviin. Aseman Lapset Ry.

⁶² Lehtinen, S-T. (1997) Vapaaehtoistoiminta – kasvava voimavara? Näkökulmia ammattityöhön. KansalaisAreena.

Administrative burden

Voluntary organisations often struggle with bureaucracy. As such, new national and EU policies should not increase the administrative burden for voluntary organisations.

Shortage of detailed research on volunteering in Finland

More research is needed on volunteering in Finland. To date, little has been carried out given the significance of volunteering in the country as a whole.

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

Information from the interviewees and relevant literature has also identified some key opportunities for volunteering.

- The voluntary sector as a whole is not likely to suffer from any major shortfalls in the number of volunteers participating in and supporting their activities in the near future. Having said that the increases in the number of voluntary organisations have meant that volunteers are spread across an ever larger number of organisations.
- Research has shown that young people, students in particular show the greatest interest in voluntary activities if they are asked to get involved⁶³. Two-thirds of young people currently not involved in volunteering would get involved if they were asked.
- Volunteering in Finland has a strong organisational structure and base.
- There are signs that the voluntary sector is becoming increasingly professional and a range of programmes are in place to support voluntary organisations, including programmes that offer opportunities to employ paid staff that can help to co-ordinate voluntary activities and could also combat the negative impact of ageing population of volunteers.

A range of developments are taking place to tackle some of the challenges identified above. These include, for example:

- Introduction of the new volunteer portal which allows organisations to promote their voluntary positions and potential volunteers to search for voluntary opportunities.
- In order to increase volunteering among young people, the committee established to enhance cooperation between the civil society and the public administration (*kansalaisyhteiskuntapolitiikan neuvottelukunta, KANE*) has proposed that voluntary organisation and volunteering should become a part of the working life familiarisation period of compulsory education. One of the two weeks for working life familiarisation could be spent working in voluntary organisations or as a volunteer⁶⁴.
- As mentioned, in order to clarify the situation concerning the taxation of voluntary organisations that deliver services, the Finnish government has established a cross-ministry working group *KANE*.
- The Citizen Forum is working on a national strategy for volunteering, which would provide a joined-up framework for voluntary activities in Finland.

⁶³ Yeung, A. B. (2002), *Vapaaehtoistoiminta osana kansalaisyhteiskuntaa – ihanteita vai todellisuutta?* Helsinki: YTY.

⁶⁴ www.kansanvalta.fi

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