

## **NATIONAL REPORT – ITALY**

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN ITALY

## 1.1 History and contextual background

The non-profit sector in Italy, as for most European countries, can be traced back to the Middle Ages, with the first organised form of volunteering based in Tuscany: Confraternite di Misericordia<sup>1</sup>. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was mainly characterised by religious institutions dedicated to charitable activities in the areas of social, welfare and health.

It is only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the country's process of unification came to an end, that the predominant presence of the church in the non-profit sector became challenged. As Italy became a State in 1860, a new political elite was created which wished to reduce the strength and influence of the Catholic Church and its institutions: in 1866 and 1867, two laws were passed aimed at slowly reducing the presence of the Church by either suppressing religious orders and congregations or confiscating the assets of religiously-affiliated institutions. Finally, in 1890, the State reaffirmed its presence in the sectors formerly covered by the Church passing a law<sup>2</sup> for the creation of a state controlled social services system thus incorporating within the public sector all organisations offering social services.

Consequently, the Italian welfare system expanded greatly after World War II and saw its role increase through the public provision of health and education services. It is important to note, nevertheless, that whilst social security, health and education were largely provided by the government, most other social services, although funded by public authorities as a result of the 1890 law, were administered primarily by Catholic organisations. Conversely, the role of non-profit organisations decreased during those years until the early 90s.

Indeed, this trend started reversing in the 1990s with the increasingly pressing issue of the fiscal crisis of the welfare system characterised by a reduction in State's expenditure. As a response to this crisis, Italy witnessed an increase in the number of community-based non-profit organisations created in order to respond to the needs no longer (effectively) addressed by the State. Thus, from a traditional reparative and charitable role, the third sector moves on to pursue one of prevention and social promotion, with the intent of removing the causes that produce discrimination, social hardship, environmental degradation and poor quality of life<sup>3</sup>. Following this transition, the State saw possible benefits in contracting services to private non-profit organisations mostly in the field of social welfare, but also to some extent in health.

Today, non-profit organisations in Italy play a crucial role in providing social services and contributing to achieving social policy goals. As a consequence of the decentralisation of health and social services subjecting non-profit organisations to local authorities, as well as flowing from the recent increase in the number of services being contracted to these organisations by local authorities, some areas of health and welfare are heavily dependent on the non-profit sector.

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<sup>1</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.4

<sup>2</sup> Crispi law: organisations offering social services which were willing to be incorporated (to receive personalità giuridica, or legal standing) were required to obtain a public IPAB charter, which placed them within the public sector. Ultimately, the law required any institution offering public assistance and having some "economic relevance" to submit to public control.

<sup>3</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.5

## 1.2 Definitions

The term 'volunteerism' in Italy refers to all types of activities, whether formal or informal, full-time or part-time, at home or abroad. It is undertaken of a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and is without concern for financial gain. It benefits the individual volunteer, communities and society as a whole. It is also a vehicle for individuals and associations to address human, social or environmental needs and concerns. Formal voluntary activities add value, but do not replace professional, paid employees<sup>4</sup>.

Two main activities are covered by this definition:

**Volunteering** – can occur informally (for example neighbourly "helping-out"), or within the structures of a non-profit organisation. It is often (but not always) of a part-time nature. It may occur over one day or many years in a range of different fields. It is good practice to ensure that formal volunteers are covered by appropriate accident, health-care and third party liability insurance, that they receive appropriate training and management, as well as the reimbursement of all out-of-pocket expenses<sup>5</sup>.

**Full-time voluntary service** – refers to specific, full-time project-based voluntary activities that are carried out on a continuous basis for a limited period of time. Voluntary service activities may occur at home and abroad. It is good practice to ensure voluntary service volunteers are afforded appropriate social protection, such as accident, health-care and third party liability insurance. Volunteers should also receive appropriate training and management, reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses as well as appropriate accommodation and subsistence allowances as agreed between the volunteer and the non-profit organisation (and the State as appropriate)<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to note that 'volunteering' as it is defined by the European Commission i.e. encompassing all forms of non-remunerated work, poses a problem in Italy due to the very strict regulation of the sector. The definition of volunteering was established in 1991 with law 266/91 'Framework law on volunteering' and explicitly states that a volunteering activity must be: spontaneous, gratuitous, without intended remunerative aims and should be undertaken **exclusively for solidarity purposes**. To this effect, the Italian definition of a volunteer is "a person, who, having carried out the duties of every citizen, places her/his own capacity at the disposal of others, for the community or for all humanity. She/he operates in a free and gratuitous manner promoting creative and effective responses to the needs of beneficiaries of her/his own action and contributing to the realization of common goods". Since this definition excludes any activity that is not undertaken for solidarity purposes, other non-remunerated activities considered as 'volunteering' in other countries would not be considered as such in Italian law.

## 1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Statistical data provided in this report is based on three main sources:

- European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006 (statistical data available for 2003 and based on ISTAT survey)
- Ministry of social solidarity, *Volontariato – Rapporto biennale sul volontariato in Italia* 2005 (statistical data available for 2003 and based on ISTAT survey)

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<sup>4</sup> Italy's response to the questionnaire 'Voluntary activities in Italy', compiled by the Council of Ministers' Presidency, Department of Youth, 2008

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> ibid

- Frisanco R., *Volti e orizzonti del volontariato*, Diocesane Caritas 33rd National congress 'Do not conform to this world', 2009 (statistical data available for 2006 and based on FEO-FIVOL survey)

It is important to note that all statistics are based on voluntary organisations registered in the Regional and provincial registers. Consequently, the following statistics on volunteers' profiles and voluntary organisations exclude all non-registered organisations and the volunteers therein. No study has been carried out on the number of voluntary organisations not registered in these registers.

Furthermore, these studies have not considered people volunteering in other organisations (NGOs, social cooperatives etc.). It is therefore important to remember that there is a component of volunteering, even though a minority component, whose weight in "volunteering Italian geography" has not been taken into consideration<sup>7</sup>.

### **Total number of volunteers**

The last survey of volunteers was carried out in 2006<sup>8</sup> by the FEO-FIVOL (Rome Foundation – Third sector) and examined 12,686 voluntary organisations<sup>9</sup>. It estimated that there were approximately **1.125 million volunteers donating their time to voluntary organisations for solidarity purposes**. This represents 2.2% of the adult population<sup>10</sup>.

### **Trend**

As mentioned previously, it is estimated that the number of volunteers in 2006 was approximately 1.125 million. A comparison of this number with ISTAT (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica – National Statistics Institute) surveys from 2003 and 1995 reveals that the number of volunteers donating their time to voluntary organisations has increased in the past decade: in 2003 there were 826,000 volunteers donating their time to 21,021 voluntary organisations, an increase by 71% of the number of volunteers in 1995<sup>11</sup>.

This trend is however unlikely to be sustainable in the long term due to Italy's demographic situation. The past eight years (2000-2008) have witnessed a decrease in the country's

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<sup>7</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.20

<sup>8</sup> Frisanco R., *Volti e orizzonti del volontariato*, Diocesane Caritas 33rd National congress 'Do not conform to this world', 2009, p.3

<sup>9</sup> Voluntary organisation: In the Framework law 266/91 on volunteering, 6 criteria are listed to define and recognize a VO. Only the simultaneous presence of these following 6 criteria let an organisation be admitted in the Regional Voluntary Register. 1) Composition: volunteers who give spontaneous and gratuitous services must make up VOs prevalently. Paid staff is admitted exclusively in the limits necessary for the regular functioning of the organisation or when needed to qualify or specialize the activity carried out. 2) Legal form: VOs can choose the legal form that is most suitable (as long as it is compatible with the solidarity aim). 3) Structure and functioning: VOs must have a democratic structure where elections are held in order to choose the governing positions. The statute of VOs must also foresee specific criteria for the admission and exclusion of members, and define their duties and rights. 4) Gratuitousness: Absence of profit making objectives, gratuitousness of the associative position and of the services provided by members. 5) Solidarity: VOs pursue a solidarity aim and are leaded by a solidarity purpose. 6) Obligations: VOs must prepare an annual budget where declaring their assets, the contributions received, etc.

<sup>10</sup> According to Eurostat, the total population in Italy in 2006 was 58,751,711 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00001&plugin=1>) and 85.9% (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00010&plugin=1>) of this population was 15 and over (age groups are 0-14, 15-24 etc. Therefore in order to include young people in their 20s, adults are here considered to be 15 and over), thus amounting to 50,467,719. Of this number, 2.2% are volunteers in 2006.

<sup>11</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.20

young population by 13.9%, which today represents only 16.3% of the population<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, the country's birth-rate has been in steady decline since 2003, from 9.18 to 8.18 in 2009<sup>13</sup>, thus threatening a decline of the Italian population. Whilst it might be argued that the significant immigration experienced by the country and the high fertility rates of the immigrant women may palliate to this trend, it is not certain what incidence this could have on volunteering.

### ***Gender***

The last survey analysing the percentage of volunteers by gender was carried out in 2003<sup>14</sup>. It showed that despite an increase in the number of women doing voluntary activities between 1995 and 2003 (from 40.1% to 45.6%), male volunteers still outnumbered their counterparts (from 59.9% to 54.4%).

### ***Age groups***

The 2003 survey revealed that: 22.1% of volunteers were under 30 years old; 41.1% were between 30 and 54 years old; and, 36.8% were beyond 54 years old.

Furthermore, it compared these statistics with 1995 survey results and revealed that the number of people aged 30 and over undertaking voluntary activities had increased between 1995 and 2003 (39.2% to 41.1% for 30 to 54, and 30.4% to 36.8% for 54 and beyond). Conversely, the number of young people (29 and under) becoming volunteers decreased from 30.4% to 22.1%.

### ***Geographical spread of volunteering***

The 2006 survey of volunteering in Italy illustrates a contrasting geographical spread of volunteers on the territory:

- 31.3% of volunteers can be found in the north-west regions;
- 23.5% can be found in the north-east regions;
- 21.7% can be found in the centre regions;
- 15.2% can be found in the southern regions; and,
- 8.3% can be found on the islands.

These statistics show that there is a clear propensity in the **north** for undertaking voluntary activities whilst southern regions and the islands seem to count (sometimes significantly) fewer volunteers.

### ***Education levels***

Volunteers in Italy generally tend to hold an **upper school degree**. The figures for 2003 show that 44.4% of the surveyed volunteers had an upper school degree and 42.8% had a lower degree. Conversely, 12.8% were holders of university degrees.

Furthermore, the same survey showed that this trend was already established in 1995 with 52.4% of volunteers had a lower degree, 36.3% had an upper school degree and only 11.3% of volunteers held a university degree.

Finally, female volunteers are generally more educated than male volunteers (14,6% have a university degree, 47,2% have an upper school degree against 11,3% of male volunteers with a university degree and 42,1% with an upper school degree).

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.indexmundi.com/it/italia/tasso\\_di\\_natalita.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/it/italia/tasso_di_natalita.html)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/it.html>

<sup>14</sup> It examined 21,021 voluntary organisations in Italy totalling a number of 826,000 volunteers.

### ***Volunteer involvement by sectors***

The volunteering activity in Italy by sector area is not illustrated in terms of percentage of volunteers per sector, but by percentage of voluntary organisations operating in those sectors (see section 1.4).

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

Regarding the profile of volunteers in terms of employment status, in 2003<sup>15</sup>:

- 52.2% were employed;
- 29% were retired; and,
- 18.3% fell within an alternative category (e.g. students, housewives, unemployed etc.)

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

The 2006 survey estimated that out of the 1.125 million volunteers operating in Italy, 57.3% of these volunteers (650,000) carry out their voluntary activities on a regular or systematic basis and was committed to an average of **five hours a week**. Overall, this means that in 2006, approximately 3.2 million hours a week were dedicated to volunteering, the equivalent of the work produced by **80,600 full time employees**<sup>16</sup>.

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

As mentioned previously in the introduction to section 1.3, the data included in this report is based on two surveys which only analysed data for **organisations registered in the regional and provincial registers**. Therefore a small share of the organisations present on the territory is not included in the data presented here. . It is estimated that the share of these organisations is fairly small compared to those that are registered because, as stipulated by law 266/91, voluntary organisations can only receive public funds if they are registered.

### ***Definition of voluntary organisations in Italy***

Voluntary organisations in Italy (Organizzazioni di Volontariato – OdV) are defined on the basis of the Framework law 266/91 on volunteering. It lists six criteria which define a voluntary organisation (VO) and which need to be fulfilled for an organisation to be admitted in the Regional Voluntary Register. These criteria are<sup>17</sup>:

- Composition: volunteers who give spontaneous and gratuitous services must make up the most prevalent share of VOs' staff. Paid staff is admitted exclusively and in strictly necessary numbers for the regular functioning of the organisation or when needed to qualify or specialize the activity carried out.
- Legal form: VOs can choose the legal form that is most suitable to them (as long as it is compatible with the solidarity aim).
- Structure and functioning: VOs must have a democratic structure where elections are held in order to choose the governing positions. The statute of VOs must also foresee specific criteria for the admission and exclusion of members, and define their duties and rights.

<sup>15</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.22

<sup>16</sup> Frisanco R., *Il volontariato: un fenomeno in evoluzione sulle vie del nuovo welfare*, p.8

<sup>17</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.4

- Gratuitousness: Absence of profit making objectives, gratuitousness of the associative position and of the services provided by members.
- Solidarity: VOs pursue a solidarity aim and are driven by a solidarity purpose.
- Obligations: VOs must prepare an annual budget where declaring their assets, the contributions received, etc.

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

The most complete set of data per sector is available for 2003 and reveals that<sup>18</sup>:

- 28% of organisations operate in the health sector;
- 27.8% operate in the social assistance sector;
- 14.6 operate in the leisure and culture sector;
- 9.6% operate in the civil protection sector;
- 3.2% operate in the education sector;
- 4.4% operate in the environment sector;
- 2.8% operate in the protection of rights sector;
- 2% operate in the sports sector; and,
- 7.6% operate in other sectors.

Whilst data for 2006 is incomplete, it is nevertheless interesting to note that between 2003 and 2006 there has been a switch between health and social assistance: in 2006, 47% of voluntary organisations operated in the social assistance sector whilst the share of organisations working in the health sector decreased to 22.2%.

### ***Trend***

Between 1995 and 2003, the number of voluntary organisations registered in the regional registries regularly increased from 8,343 in 1995 to 21,021 in 2003<sup>19</sup>. Between 2003 and 2007, this number has soared to 35,200<sup>20</sup>.

The 2003 ISTAT study found that the number of organisations had increased dramatically in comparison with 2001 (+14.9%) and 1995 (+152%). Other interesting data emerging from the study are a stronger presence of voluntary organisations in the Northern regions, and a great number of small organisations, both in terms of number of active volunteers and of economic available resources.

The significant increase in the number of voluntary organisations that Italy has witnessed in the past decade can be associated with the creation of law 328/2000 on the recognition of voluntary organisations as official partners of local authorities for programming and implementing social assistance programmes. Through this law, voluntary organisations that are registered in the regional registries can participate in calls for tenders issued by local authorities and, if their projects win, become equal partners with local authorities, consequently also receiving their funds, to implement projects that will benefit their communities.

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of social solidarity, *Volontariato – Rapporto biennale sul volontariato in Italia 2005* (statistical data available for 2003)

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of social solidarity, *Volontariato – Rapporto biennale sul volontariato in Italia 2005* (statistical data available for 2003), p.9

<sup>20</sup> Frisanco R., *Volti e orizzonti del volontariato*, Diocesane Caritas 33rd National congress 'Do not conform to this world', 2009, p.2



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

In addition to voluntary organisations, as defined by law 266/91 and referred to in this report, the third sector in Italy also includes the following six different legal entities<sup>21</sup>.

#### **Association**

It is a non-profit entity originating from a contract (constitutional act) and within which a majority of subjects decides to assemble in order to pursue an ideal and, at the same time, discipline the existence of such entity with an ensemble of rules (statute) uniquely shared by the founding associates and the association's members. There can be two types of associations: recognised, thus having a legal status; and, not recognised, thus not having a legal status.

#### **Social promotion association**

This type of association was introduced by law no.383 from 2000. This law provides a framework to associations which operate, nationally, regionally or provincially, for social purposes, including the possibility to register in the appropriate registries. Amongst of the main characteristics of the new law, it is important to note the provision within Art.6 paragraph 2 giving subsidiary, and not supportive, responsibility with regard to third parties to the subjects that have adopted obligations in the name and on behalf of social promotion associations. Finally, it is foreseen, within Art.8, that social promotion associations be able, if necessary, to hire staff or contract autonomous staff, also by resorting to their own associates.

#### **Volunteering Service Centres**

These centres aim at supporting and qualify voluntary activities. To this end, they deliver their services to voluntary organisations, both registered and not registered, in regional registries. For more details, see section 2.3.

#### **Social cooperatives**

These cooperatives aim at promoting the general interests of the community and citizens' social integration. There are two different types of cooperatives: a) managing social, health and education services; and, b) facilitate the integration in the labour market of social disadvantaged citizens.

#### **Non-profit entities**

To qualify as a non-profit entity the following criteria must be met, regardless of the type of organisation chosen (association, foundation, committee etc.):

- Pursuing an ideal;
- Non-lucrative purpose; and,
- Prohibition to distribute gains.

#### **Foundation**

This is a non lucrative entity characterised, similarly to what is stipulated for the committee, by the allocation of a private legacy to a determined public utility purpose.

### ***Share of paid staff and volunteers in voluntary organisations***

In terms of share of paid staff in voluntary organisations, in 2003, volunteering organisations inscribed in regional registers had circa **12,000 employees and 826,000**

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<sup>21</sup> National Observatory for Volunteering and the Ministry of Labour and social policies, *Questions and answers – a tool for who wishes to have information on volunteering*, 2001

**volunteers**; in comparison with 1995, the former figure shows an increase of + 77%, the latter of + 71.4%.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.5 Main voluntary activities

The nature of volunteers' involvement in an organisation obviously varies between organisations depending on their sector of activity and their needs. It should nonetheless be noted that, as mentioned previously, the majority of voluntary organisations are present in the health, social assistance and leisure and culture sectors. Consequently, it could be argued that the main volunteer activities revolve around:

- Counselling – this is particularly relevant for the health and social assistance sector;
- Administrative and logistics tasks – this can be found in all sectors;
- Activities within the community – this could be essentially related to leisure and culture, but it also applies to most sectors involving volunteers.

# 2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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

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

The **Ministry of Labour, Health and Social policies** is the public administration in charge for the implementation of the laws on voluntary activities. In particular, it promotes the development of voluntary activities through: the realisation of research studies and the publication of triennial reports (through the National Volunteering Observatory); agreements with public and private organisations; funding and administrative management of projects implemented by voluntary organisations and financed under the National Fund for Social Policies; and, the monitoring of the activities of the Volunteering Service Centres.

More specifically, within the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social policies, the **National Volunteering Observatory** (created in 1991) has three main functions: publishes, or offers supports for, research studies (in Italy and abroad) and triennial reports on volunteering; approves experimental projects submitted by voluntary organisations to the local authorities' calls for tenders; and, promotes volunteering through, mainly, the issue of a bulletin on volunteering and the organisation of the triennial national conference on volunteering.

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

Within the Youth Ministry, the **Youth Policies Department** is responsible for policies promoting volunteering to young people. It represents the government in all international and community organisations promoting youth policies. It provides support and coordination to voluntary organisations wishing to involve young people in voluntary activities, in particular those that are members of the National Youth Forum and those working with Civil Protection.

It is important to note that in Italy **regions and autonomous provinces** have a significant recognised role. They are responsible for drafting their own policies and programmes, in compatibility with national legislation, in relation to voluntary activities and promotion.

<sup>22</sup> ISTAT, Le organizzazioni di volontariato in Italia. Anno 2003, Istat, Rome 2005

Additionally, under law 266/91, regional and provincial public bodies are responsible for the implementation and management of the Regional registries.

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

The **Volunteering Service Centres (VSCs)** are the main actors for the promotion, facilitation of cooperation and information exchange in the area of volunteering. They were created in 1991 with law 266 on voluntary work and can be found today in every Italian province with the exception of Bolzano. Overall, there are 77 VSCs in Italy, 71 of which are members of the national coordination.

These centres are set up and managed by voluntary organisations, which are also the direct beneficiaries of the services and activities they supply. They represent the platform of coordination for a network of 8,600 member associations. Their main fields of activity are:

- Promotion of voluntary work and of the culture of solidarity – e.g. initiatives to promote youth engagement in voluntary work, in particular through the promotion of volunteering in schools;
- Help desk – to listen, provide information, guidance, counselling and accompanying on legal, tax, administrative, regulatory, management issues and for the relations with institutions and local organisations;
- Training – training courses and initiatives for voluntary workers and operators. Counselling for organisations and management of training processes is also offered;
- Support – provide assistance for planning and access of voluntary organisation to calls for tenders;
- Logistics – through the provision of infrastructure and equipment for the organisations' activities;
- Communication – support to improve communication in all the operating fields; and,
- Financing – economic support to the projects being carried out by voluntary organisations.

Additionally, as mentioned previously, the National Volunteering Observatory also contributes to the promotion of volunteering in Italy and abroad.

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

There are a few Italian voluntary organisations affiliated with European umbrella organisations (e.g. three organisations<sup>23</sup> are affiliated with AVSO). However, desk research has shown that generally, voluntary organisations *per se* are not affiliated directly to these umbrella organisations; rather, it is national umbrella organisations or coordination platforms that become members. This can be seen, for instance, within CEV, where Italian member organisations are Volunteer Service Centres from different regions, or within UNV – the two cooperating agencies are a coordination platform<sup>24</sup> and a federation of Christian organisations<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> These are : AFSAI, ARCI Servizio Civile and Luna.

<sup>24</sup> Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni non governative per la cooperazione Internazionale allo Sviluppo (COCIS)

<sup>25</sup> Federazione Organismi Christiani Servizio Internazionale Volontario (FOCSIV)

## 2.2 Policies

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

The role of volunteering in achieving social policies goals is widely recognised in Italy. Whilst it is a priority in the political agenda to ensure that the voluntary sector receives the support it needs to continue playing this role, policies and programmes to this effect are developed at regional level.

As explained in section 1.2, the **decentralisation of welfare and social assistance policies to regions and communes** conferred to the third sector in Italy an essential role in the provision of some services in these policy areas. The implementation of framework law 266/91 and law 383/2000 established the basis for a **close cooperation between public authorities and voluntary organisations**, dictating not only the rules for public funding to voluntary organisations but also defining the necessity for both bodies to collaborate towards policy making as well as the programming and implementation of projects for the benefit of their communities. This element of collaboration can be seen as a **'circular subsidiarity' system** whereby voluntary organisations share their local knowledge with local authorities in order to influence policy making, whilst local authorities provide the funds to support voluntary organisations in their delivery of these needs-oriented programmes.

Consequently, at national level the government is simply responsible for legislating the third sector, for the allocation of the National Fund for Volunteering and for providing coordination. The development of policies and programmes related to the third sector and volunteering lies within the responsibilities of the regions, and to a certain extent communes. This will be further elaborated in section 3.2.2 below.

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

There are no specific targets regarding volunteering. Nevertheless, it is clear that volunteering plays a crucial role in the welfare sector in Italy and it is therefore inherent to this condition that policy makers and promoters in Italy ensure that, despite the demographic challenges, an increasingly high number of young people undertake voluntary activities. This would ensure the turnover in the sector, which is presently not secured.

There are no specific reporting arrangements in place to monitor volunteering activity. There are however two main organisations responsible for surveying voluntary organisations and producing regular statistical reports (generally every two or four years): the Italian Institute for Statistics (ISTAT) and the organisation the Italian foundation for the third sector (FEO-FIVOL).

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social policies is also committed to producing a triennial report on the state of volunteering in Italy, including statistical data by age, gender, regions, education and employment status, as well as the challenges and opportunities faced by the third sector.

All statistical reports base themselves on the organisations registered in the regional registries. As a consequence, as mentioned previously, whilst these statistics are comprehensive and cover the majority of the organisations, it is important to take into consideration the absence in these statistics of much smaller, community-based, non-registered organisations.

### 2.2.3 *International policies*

The voluntary sector in Italy is well established and its crucial role in providing social welfare and assistance is widely recognised by all public bodies and actors involved.

Consequently, whilst initiatives and programmes driven by European and International actors are well received, and implemented as is the case for the yearly Volunteers' week event, national strategies and framework are generally driven by the history of volunteering in the country and influenced by the needs identified on the territory.

## 2.3 Programmes

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

As mentioned previously, policies related to the third sector fall within the mandate of the **regions**; there are therefore no national policies aimed at stimulating volunteering at national level.

There are however two key programmes which aim to promote the involvement of people, and in particular youth, in voluntary activities:

**National civic service** – It is an opportunity available to youth between 18 and 28 years old. It allows accredited organisations to make use of young and motivated volunteers who, stimulated by the possibility of qualifying experience in the field of social assistance, ensure a continuous and efficient service. The projects employing volunteers, elaborated by public institutions and organisations of the Third Sector, are presented to the National Civil Service who shall examine them, approve them and put them in their calls for the selection of volunteers who are published in the Official Journal of the Republic (Gazette)<sup>26</sup>.

**National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme** – the Youth National Agency (ANG) is the National agency Youth in Action, the EU programme for young people aged 15-28 that promotes mobility within and beyond the EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. The ANG is responsible for managing the programme at national level by providing appropriate information and support to project promoters, selecting and monitoring projects, as well as managing EU funds and programmes (e.g. European Voluntary Service)<sup>27</sup>.

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

Italy is subdivided into 20 regions (five of which have a special autonomous status) within which there are a total of 109 provinces. Following a constitutional reform in 2001, they have been conferred both administrative and legislative powers. Therefore, as mentioned previously, whilst there is a national framework law for volunteering, regions can also create their **own legislative framework** concerning voluntary activities and the third sector in general.

The purpose of this report is not to attempt to reconstitute the legislative framework for volunteering for each region. Alternatively, three regions have been selected as examples to illustrate the different approaches taken to volunteering:

- Lombardia – one of the regions with the highest concentration of voluntary organisations (3499 in 2003);
- Lazio – one of the regions with an average to low number of voluntary organisations (661 in 2003); and,
- Alto Adige – one of the five autonomous regions.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.serviziocivile.it/Contenuti/Default.aspx?PageID=6>

<sup>27</sup> Italy's response to the questionnaire 'Voluntary activities in Italy', compiled by the Council of Ministers' Presidency, Department of Youth, 2008

The following table illustrates the different regional pieces of legislations and the programmes/actions implemented to promote/support volunteering at regional level:

**Table 2-1 Examples of regional programmes and legislations**

Region	Regional legislative framework	Regional programmes
Lombardia	Law 14 February 2008 – unique text on regional laws in relation to volunteering, social cooperation, associationism and mutual assistance society <sup>28</sup>	<p>Borsa progetti sociali (Social Projects 'Basket') is a platform created by the region to facilitate interaction between voluntary organisations and private companies<sup>29</sup>.</p> <p>Nonprofitonline is a website platform created in order to keep voluntary organisations in Lombardia constantly updated on all issues related to volunteering (e.g. provincial news, welfare, fund raising etc)<sup>30</sup>.</p> <p>CSV Lombardia is a coordination platform for all the regional Volunteering Service Centres. It aims at ensuring that there is effective communication between all the centres within the region and that all work towards common objectives and exchange good practices<sup>31</sup>.</p>
Lazio	Law 28 June 1993, No.29 – Discipline of volunteering activity in the Lazio region <sup>32</sup>	<p>Comune di Roma V dipartimento (Rome Commune, 5<sup>th</sup> department) is a website providing information on volunteering services and the House of Volunteering<sup>33</sup></p> <p>House of Volunteering</p> <p>VolontariatoLazio is a platform created by the Volunteering Service Centre of the region to provide information about volunteering in the region, relevant pieces of legislation and calls for tenders and financing<sup>34</sup></p> <p>Solidarity Registry of the commune of Rome (RES) allows citizens interested in undertaking voluntary activities to register their interest. This provides a database of possible volunteers for voluntary organisations<sup>35</sup></p>

28

<http://www.famiglia.regione.lombardia.it/cs/Satellite?blobcol=urldata&blobheader=application%2Fpdf&blobheadername1=Content-Disposition&blobheadername2=ssbinary&blobheadervalue1=inline%3B+filename%3D53%2F209%2F12008.pdf&blobheadervalue2=true&blobkey=id&blobnocache=true&blobtable=MungoBlobs&blobwhere=1213301440550&ssbinary=true>

29

<http://www.borsaprogettisociali.it/>

30

<http://www.nonprofitonline.it/>

31

[http://www.csvlombardia.it/Index.asp?ID\\_Menu=81](http://www.csvlombardia.it/Index.asp?ID_Menu=81)

32

[http://www.socialelazio.it/opencms/export/sites/default/sociale/social/resourceGalleries/docs/Leggi\\_regionali/L.R.\\_29\\_1993.pdf](http://www.socialelazio.it/opencms/export/sites/default/sociale/social/resourceGalleries/docs/Leggi_regionali/L.R._29_1993.pdf)

33

<http://www.spqrdipsociale.it/default.asp>

34

<http://www.volontariato.lazio.it/csv/default.asp#testo>

35

<http://www.resroma.it/modulo.asp>

Region	Regional legislative framework	Regional programmes
Alto Adige	Provincial law 1 July 1993, No.11 – Discipline of volunteering and social promotion <sup>36</sup>	No information found

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

See ‘National Agency of the Youth Action Programme’ above.

## 3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 General legal framework

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

The past decade has seen a considerable effort from the Italian government to affirm the positive role of volunteering within social policy. Three main laws have been created in order to give a **legislative framework** to this role and **determine the nature of the relationship between public authorities and voluntary organisations**.

The law 266/91, also known as the “**framework law for volunteering**”, was the first step taken by the government in these regards. In addition to defining the activity of volunteering and voluntary organisations, as reported in section 1.1 and 1.3, it also established: the regional registries, with the formalities for voluntary organisations to receive their funds; the National Observatory for Volunteering and its functions; and, the Special Fund. The Special Fund is financed by Bank Foundations and distributed to each Volunteering Service Centre on the territory. It is then managed by a Management Committee set up within each of these Centres. Its creation was particularly important in that it symbolised the first step towards delegation of responsibilities to regions.

Law 460/97, also known as the “Onlus<sup>37</sup> law”, concerns voluntary organisations which, through the registration in the regional registries, are automatically recognised as non-profit organisations with social utility (Onlus). This system enables Onlus to benefit from tax incentives, such as the possibility given to donors to deduct 19% of their taxes, for an amount not superior to €2000, in aid of non lucrative organisations with social utility.

Finally, law 328/2000, also known as the “framework law for assistance reform”, was established in 2000 in order to reaffirm the **positive contribution of voluntary organisations to meeting social policy objectives**. More specifically, it drew a legislative framework within which voluntary organisations are called to cooperate with public authorities in the designing and implementation of social assistance projects.

It is also important to note that, as seen previously, Italian regions have, since 2001, administrative and legislative powers. More specifically in the context of volunteering regions have the power to create their own legislative framework in addition to the national framework. As the table in section 2.3.2 shows, these pieces of legislation generally define the processes through which voluntary organisations can: get registered in the Regional Registry; receive the funds from the region; and, draft conventions with local authorities for the delivery of certain services.

<sup>36</sup> The website for this legislation does not exist – to access it, it is necessary to download a programme allowing access to all legislations in the region

<sup>37</sup> Organizzazioni non lucrative di utilità sociale : non lucrative organisations with social utility

It is interesting to note, however, that whilst the legislations from Lombardia and Lazio bear a lot of resemblances, the legislation drawn by the Bolzano province (Alto Adige) differs from the other two. This is due to the autonomous status of the region whereby certain rules included in the national framework law do not apply. Therefore, within the Law of 1 July 1993, additional articles related to the distribution of the special funds and the institutional organisation of the Provincial Volunteering Observatory can be found.

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

As seen above, volunteering in Italy is very clearly defined and regulated within the national legislative framework, including the rights of a volunteer to insurance and reimbursement of expenses. Self-regulation is therefore not common.

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

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

Whilst the national legislative framework on volunteering defines very specific characteristics which a person needs to fulfil in order to be called a 'volunteer', **no legal status** is conferred to the person carrying out this activity.

Anyone wishing to carry out voluntary activities can do so without any consequences on his/her benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits, social benefits etc.).

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

The precondition that volunteering is before anything else carried out gratuitously and for solidarity purposes implies that the first incentive to become a volunteer is the personal growth benefit that people gain through these activities. Such drive however mostly applies to elderly and/or retired people undertaking these activities.

The main incentives set up by the government to promote volunteering to young people follow the spirit of the **Assessing Volunteering Experiences** project (AVE). It is a European instrument aiming to identify, validate and certify the competences acquired during voluntary activities thus valorising non-formal and informal learning in a professional perspective<sup>38</sup>. To this end, a 'credit system' was set up in some schools and universities enabling young people to use their volunteering experience to improve their academic performance.

### **3.2.3 Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers**

Law 266/91 stipulates that volunteers can be reimbursed by their organisation of the expenses they have incurred while carrying out their voluntary activities. The limit for the reimbursement is left to the discretion of the volunteer and her/his organisation who shall pre-determine the conditions at the start of the volunteer's involvement.

The law does not however specify which expenses can be reimbursed; it is left to the volunteer's and her/his organisation's discretion. Nevertheless, in general terms volunteers are reimbursed of any transport and subsistence costs.

In relation to expenses, volunteers are not taxed on the amounts reimbursed by voluntary organisations.

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

As previously explained, the activity of volunteering in Italy needs to be totally gratuitous to be qualified as such. There can therefore be **no rewards or fees for individual volunteers**.

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<sup>38</sup> EC & Regional Council of the Champagne Ardennes Region in France, *The volunteering experiences portfolio – a tool to validate competences acquired during volunteering experiences*



The National Voluntary Service is the only volunteering activity remunerated in Italy. It is specified that volunteers carrying out the Voluntary service will receive €433.80 net per month, thus implying that volunteers are not taxed on this amount. This is however not a national policy; it is a rule strictly applied to this particular type of volunteering activity.

### 3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

Fiscal regulations provided by the Testo Unico sulle Imposte Dirette (Unique text on direct tax) introduce a taxonomy different from the Civil Code within which a distinction is made between commercial and non-commercial bodies. Voluntary organisations are regarded in this context as non-commercial bodies and therefore enjoy income tax-exemption for all activities, regardless of whether they are intended to generate profits, with the exception of those specified under Article 2195 of the Civil Code. The Code lists the following non-exempt activities<sup>39</sup>:

- Industrial operations involved in the production of goods and services;
- Commercial operations involved in distribution;
- Transportation of goods and people;
- Banking and insurance; and
- Activities that supplement the above.

Any income derived from these specified activities is subject to taxation.

### 3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

To date, the national legislation provides a framework for private organisations to allow their **employees to carry out voluntary activities only within the context of civil protection**. This legal provision is based on framework law 266/91 and Ordinance of 30 March 1989 of the Ministry for the coordination of civil protection: it gives the possibility, to people enrolled in Civil Protection, to ask permission to their employer to take leave in order to be able to carry out Civil protection activities in the event of natural catastrophes or for the purpose of training. This request should be handed to the employer 24 hours previous to the commencement of the activity.

With regard to all other forms of voluntary activities, framework law 266/91 allows employees of private organisations who are volunteers in voluntary organisations registered in the Regional Registries, the right to agree with their employers on a certain **flexibility of working hours** in order to be able to carry out their voluntary activities.

In relation to health and safety issues, employees carrying out voluntary activities are covered by the insurance schemes provided by the voluntary organisation they are affiliated to.

Despite these possibilities, it is believed that Italy could be more pro-active in promoting CSR, and therefore voluntary activities carried out by employees.

### 3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

Law 266/91 stipulates that 'voluntary organisations must insure their volunteers against accidents and diseases related to their voluntary activities'. They must also insure them against any liability to a third party.

There are no subsidies, taxation or procurement schemes in place for volunteers.

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<sup>39</sup> Salamon L. and Anheier H., *Working paper of the John Hopkins Comparative Non profit Sector Project*, 1993, p.10

## 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

### 4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

#### 4.1.1 *National budget allocated to volunteering*

Through the **National Fund for Social Policies**, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social policies annually allocates between **€1.9 and €2.5 millions to volunteering**. The funding is then allocated by the government to regions and provinces. It is then their responsibility to distribute these funds through calls for tenders and agreements with organisations.

Furthermore, as mentioned in section 3.1.1, Law 266/91 (Art.15) stipulates that Volunteer Service Centres are financed through **Special Funds**. These funds are made available by banking foundations which must provide a contribution of no less than one fifteenth of their incomes. Every region has a Special Fund and it is managed by a controlling body: The Management Committee (Comitato di Gestione)<sup>40</sup>. These regional controlling bodies hold office for two years and are responsible for<sup>41</sup>:

- Distributing the money amongst Service Centres – this is done yearly and on the basis of pre-determined criteria and deadlines;
- Approving the programmes set up by the Centres; and,
- Monitor their implementation – through the drafting of criteria for the implementation of a Centre, management of the requests for the implementation of centres and establishment of regional registries.

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

In terms of sources of funding, a breakdown of the resources of associations is available for 1995 and 2003<sup>42</sup>:

- Voluntary organisations receiving funds only from the private sector – 24.9% in 1995 and 29.8% in 2003;
- Voluntary organisations receiving funds mainly from the private sector – 33.7% in 1995 and 35.1% in 2003;
- Voluntary organisations receiving funds mainly from the public sector – 35.8% in 1995 and 29.9% in 2003: and,
- Voluntary organisations receiving funds only from the public sector – 5.7% in 1995 and 5.2% in 2003.

These statistics show that in 2003 the part of funds coming from the private sector has increased while funds from public origin have fallen.

Furthermore, data from the study on the third sector carried out by the John Hopkins University, revealed that in 1996 the non-profit sector in Italy received funds from<sup>43</sup>:

- Public sector – 40.7%;
- Private giving – 4.9%; and,

<sup>40</sup> European Volunteer Centre, *Voluntary action in Italy – facts and figures*, Brussels 2006, p.15

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.emiliaromagnasociale.it/wcm/emiliaromagnasociale/home/volontariato/fondospec.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>43</sup> Salamon L. and Anheier H., *Working paper of the John Hopkins Comparative Non profit Sector Project*, 1996, p.15

- Private fees – 55.7%.

In 1999, the distribution was 36% for government revenues, 3% for philanthropy, and 61% from fees.

It is important to note that, whilst no detailed breakdown is available for all the sources of funding, framework law 266/91 allows voluntary organisations to also receive funds from: membership fees; international organisations; own commercial activities, although it is clearly stated that this should not be the priority and should only be a minor share of the funding; and, donations. The latter can be done through normal donations, through people dedicating the 5‰ of the amount declared in their taxes to the organisations of their choice, and through wills<sup>44</sup>.

Generally, stakeholders felt that funding arrangements are transparent as they include reporting systems to ensure full recount of how funds were used.

#### **4.1.3 Provision of Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)**

##### ***Involvement of non-profit organisations in SSGI***

Public procurement in Italy is managed by the Directorate General for Volunteering, Associations and Social training, within the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social policies through the National Fund for Social policies. At the beginning of every financial year, within this fund the DG establishes annual 'Directives' which allocate priorities and funds. They are then approved by the Minister. These funds are subsequently distributed to **regional and provincial authorities which are responsible for launching the calls for tenders**, selecting the projects and allocating these funds to the winning projects.

Over the past decade, the **share of volunteering organisations participating in these calls for tenders has dramatically increased**. This increase is a direct consequence of the **decentralisation** in the areas of health and social assistance, whereby regions are responsible for policy-making as well as programming and implementation of social projects. Consequently, the establishment of law 328/2000 officially recognising volunteering organisations' significant role in these areas by providing a legislative basis for their cooperation with local authorities has led to volunteering organisations becoming the primary competitor in these calls for tenders.

Additionally, the Italian system offers local authorities and volunteering organisations the possibility to establish agreements for the provision of certain services. These services are also mostly related to health and social assistance.

##### ***Issues related to non-profit organisations delivering SSGI***

Whilst the contribution of non-profit organisations based on volunteering principles is significant, a number of issues have appeared with the provision of SSGIs by volunteering organisations under this system.

##### **Financing**

The main problem related to the financing of SSGIs through the calls for tenders mechanism is financing itself. Part of the rationale behind establishing this system was that the tendering competition between organisations was expected to encourage a variety of small innovative and creative projects. These projects however, are funded for one year only, after which the organisations running them need to look for funding elsewhere. This is widely criticised as the reality of the implementation of this system has shown that the majority of these projects were too small to have a significant and sustainable impact on communities. Instead, it has been suggested that less projects should be selected and the

<sup>44</sup> 5 per thousand website: <http://www.5-per-mille.it/>

funding should last more than a year in order to enable organisations to set up a sustainable management and financing system. This would then ensure that projects are sustainable and have lasting impacts on communities.

### **Obstacles for small non-profit organisations**

Additionally, there have been issues with the transfer of funds from the local authorities to the volunteering organisations. Reportedly, the system has been running on the basis of organisations incurring the expenses and the government disbursing the money at a later stage. However, it is frequent for organisations to wait from one to three years to receive the funds from the government. Consequently, in addition to the crucial problem of organisations becoming indebted whilst running these projects, this issue has also proven a deterrent for people to continue working for these organisations: if the funds are not received on time, core staff can remain without salaries for long periods of time. This could lead to a high number of volunteering organisations offering essential services to cease to exist.

Furthermore, it has been noted that the procurement regime introduces more administrative/bureaucratic burdens (tender writing, reporting and control) which are rather burdensome for small organisations and may exclude them from the competition for service provision and insofar, at least in mid-term perspective, from the market<sup>45</sup>.

### **Monitoring processes**

During a seminar held in March 2008 on 'commissioning from the third sector in the EU', Italy's spokesperson Mathias Maucher stated that the **public procurement service in Italy lacks appropriate instruments to measure quality, processes and outcomes and to involve the service users as well**<sup>46</sup>. Indeed, at the project level, there are no ex-ante or ex-post evaluations being carried out, therefore making it difficult to determine if the project was indeed necessary initially or whether it has had any impact on the target communities.

At the tendering level, although there are formal and quantifiable criteria in the tendering documents, they tend to be on the input side with a focus on the qualifications of the staff, staffing ratios and size of premises for example<sup>47</sup>. Furthermore, local authorities tend to award funding to the most economically advantageous offers in view of a set of pre-defined objectives of measures (e.g. social protection or social work)<sup>48</sup>. Thus, it is not uncommon for some organisations to be formed for the purpose of a particular tender in order to receive funds. As a consequence, whilst these organisations may be able to present very qualified teams, once they win the project they however lack the community knowledge and know-how possessed by organisations that have been operating in the field/area for a long time. This has therefore a negative impact on the delivery and the impacts of the project.

## **4.2 Economic value of volunteering**

### **4.2.1 Income generated through volunteering**

Data from the study on the third sector carried out by the John Hopkins University, revealed that in 1999, fees represented 61% of the revenues of the non-profit sector in Italy.

There is no other data available on the income generated through volunteering.

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<sup>45</sup> CSV and SOLIDAR, 'Lessons from Europe conference report – A comparative seminar on Commissioning from the Third Sector in the EU', March 2008, p.23

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

#### 4.2.2 Economic value of volunteering

Volunteering represented in 2006, approximately 3.2 million working hours a week, the equivalent of the work produced weekly by **80,600 full time employees** (FEO-FIVOL survey). However, no national study has ever attempted to measure the economic value of volunteering.

There is reluctance generally in Italy to measure the economic value of volunteering. This can partly be related to the importance that is given to the gratuity and the solidarity aspects of a volunteer's work. It can therefore be assumed that such attitude stems from a desire to retain the social value of volunteering rather than attempt to transform it into an economic benefit.

The study published by the John Hopkins University however attempted to quantify the economic value of volunteering in 1999. The following table illustrates the result of the institute's research<sup>49</sup>:

**Figure 4-1 Civil society sector in Italy in 1999**

The civil society sector at a glance: Italy, 1999

Field	Employment	Volunteers	Expenditures	Revenue from:			Total revenue millions*
				Government	Philanthropy	Fees	
Culture and recreation	12%	37%	17%	25%	2%	73%	12,718,207
Education and research	20%	6%	14%	38%	2%	59%	9,864,197
Health	21%	11%	19%	71%	2%	27%	13,752,333
Social services	27%	21%	20%	42%	5%	53%	14,631,395
Environment	0%	2%	0%	41%	4%	54%	342,220
Development and housing	5%	1%	4%	52%	1%	47%	2,846,098
Civic and advocacy	2%	4%	3%	27%	5%	68%	1,952,531
Philanthropy	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%	96%	1,504,440
International activities	0%	1%	1%	35%	35%	30%	839,881
Religious worship	2%	11%	2%	12%	24%	63%	1,630,443
Professional and unions	9%	3%	12%	9%	0%	91%	8,108,519
Not elsewhere classified	2%	0%	4%	4%	0%	96%	4,926,602
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>73,116,866</b>
	FTE	FTE	millions*				
	580,109	430,130	65,969,548				
<b>Totals as a percent of:</b>							
Economically active population	2.3%	1.7%					
Gross domestic product			3.1%				

\* Local currency.

"-" = Data not available.

updated: 1/18/2005

SOURCE: Adapted from Lester M. Salamon, S. Wojciech Sokolowski, and Associates, *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*, Volume Two (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2004).

It is important to note that the difference in the number of volunteers equivalent to full time employees is significantly different between national data and the John Hopkins (430,130 in 1999) findings. This is due to the different data collection samples, as national data only takes into account registered organisations.

#### 4.2.3 Issues of service substitution and job substitution

With regard to service substitution, stakeholders believe that there is a risk in Italy that certain voluntary activities might slowly replace services to be provided by the state. It is a likely consequence, in certain sectors, of the close cooperation between voluntary organisations and local authorities.

When these two entities cooperate together, especially as a result of a tendering process, there are two possible scenarios for voluntary organisations to follow:

<sup>49</sup> Salamon L. and Anheier H., *Working paper of the John Hopkins Comparative Non profit Sector Project*.

[http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/CNP/CNP\\_Italy\\_WrkExp.pdf](http://www.ccss.jhu.edu/pdfs/CNP/CNP_Italy_WrkExp.pdf)

- They can choose to carry on the services they have been contracted to provide through their project by setting up a social cooperative which would then become responsible for the management of the service; or,
- The type of contract under which the organisations are operating to implement their project allows local authorities to determine the characteristics that the organisation needs in order to deliver the service (e.g. an increase in the number of permanent staff) and/or the specific social needs the project should focus on.

In the first case scenario, voluntary organisations maintain their independence. In the second case scenario, on the other hand, they are submitted to conditions and priorities defined by the local authorities, thus losing some of their independence *vis à vis* local authorities in the planning and implementation of the project. Consequently, as the project goes on, organisations *de facto* become executive bodies of local authorities. In this case, there is a significant chance that voluntary activities partly or wholly replace the services provided by the state.

It is important to note that this is however only likely to be the case in interventions related to **health and social assistance** where a specific know-how and the motivation of volunteers, are needed (e.g. working in rehabilitation centres, working with disabled people etc.).

Conversely, in relation to job substitution, stakeholders do not feel that there should be a significant concern about volunteering partly replacing employment. There is a belief that the value of volunteering as a personal growth experience prevails on the perception of volunteering as a valuable experience for volunteers' professional careers. This might also be related to the fact that a significant share of volunteers is 54 and beyond (36.8% in 2003), thus not threatening to lead to employment substitution.

On the other hand, the current economic climate, worsened by the recent financial crisis, has seen young people, and in particular young graduates, increasingly struggle to enter the labour market. There is therefore a possibility that young people shift their view of volunteering from prevalently based on solidarity principles to an opportunity to gain new skills and experience which could make them more employable. This might particularly be the case for the National Civic Service which is remunerated (€433.80 a month), lasts for a year and gives the opportunity to be carried out abroad.

## 5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

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

Volunteering in Italy, in particular in relation to young people, is particularly viewed as a **civic education experience**. In the past decade two factors have contributed to volunteering gaining this role: on the one hand, civic education in schools has been slowly taken out of the education curriculum and now represents only a few hours over a limited number of academic years; on the other hand, the national military service has been abolished. Young people today are therefore less aware of the importance of solidarity and the consequences of their own actions on their communities and direct environment.

Thus, volunteering has become an opportunity to sensitise young people to become responsible citizens and respond to the needs not only of more vulnerable citizens, but also of their communities as a whole.

In relation to elderly people, who in 2003 represented 29% of active volunteers, volunteering is an opportunity to socialise and continue to contribute to society.

To date, no study has attempted to determine the social benefit of volunteering in terms of unemployment. This is due to the fact that in 2003, unemployed people who carried out voluntary activities were part, amongst students and housewives, of the 18.3% of the volunteers who were neither employed nor retired. As mentioned previously, the professional value of volunteering is a very recent concept and no direct link with the ability to (re)enter the labour market can be drawn.

It is evident, on the other hand, that the crucial role played by voluntary organisations in the **health and social assistance sectors** means that it must significantly contribute to social policy goals.

Additionally, voluntary activities carried out by retired people have a particularly positive impact on their morale, as they feel that they can still contribute to society, and therefore on their health as a whole. Consequently, this does not only contribute to social policy goals, but also to economic goals in the area of health as less people are ill and need care and attention early in their lives.

## 5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

In general, volunteering is seen as a possibility to contribute to society and be a responsible citizen. This is often considered a motivation in itself.

More specifically, a study has been carried out by FEO-FIVOL in 2008 (on 1,904 volunteers) on the motivating factors for people to undertake voluntary activities. The following reasons emerged<sup>50</sup>:

- Altruism – 55.3%
- Personal growth – 51.1%
- Participation – 48.2%
- Values – 45.1%
- Socialising – 27.9%
- Sensitisation – 17.1%
- Religion – 13.8%

Additionally, the same study also revealed that across generations the two most common motivations remained generally the same. However, whilst the majority of people beyond 60 years old (63.2%) chose to volunteer for altruistic motivations, a significant share of young people below 29 years old chose to volunteer for personal growth (71.5%).

# 6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

The recognition of skills and competences are not yet recognised in Italy at a legislative level.

Nonetheless, as part of a incentive to encourage young people to engage in voluntary activities, a '**credit**' system has been implemented in some schools and universities:

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<sup>50</sup> Frisanco R., *Volti e orizzonti del volontariato*, Diocesane Caritas 33rd National congress 'Do not conform to this world', 2009, p.23

- In schools – young people who engage in voluntary activities are then credited with positive points. These points are not the equivalent of a class, but they are taken into account at the end of the academic year in the judgement of the overall pupil's performance. As a result, a pupil who may not excel in certain classes but carried out voluntary activities can receive an overall more favourable judgement on his performance.
- In universities – students who decide to carry out voluntary activities during their academic year can obtain a certification of their experience and submit this certificate to get their experience taken into account as an additional topic/class they have 'attended'. In this case, the volunteering experience is counted as part of the academic course and has the same value as other classes.

Furthermore, whilst the government has not yet recognised the role of volunteering in education policies, FEO-FIVOL is cooperating at the European level with other organisations for the development and promotion of the AVE project (Assessing Voluntary Experience).

## 6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

With the acquisition of an increasingly important role in the areas of **health and social assistance**, it has become clear in the voluntary sector that more structured and regular training was needed for volunteers thinking of engaging, or already engaged, in voluntary activities. In certain areas such as working with HIV-AIDS, elderly people, drug addicts and emergency relief, training is particularly important as not only does the nature of the work require that volunteers be carefully trained to acquire very specific skills, but it can also prove very emotionally distressful to work in these environments. Preliminary training before engaging in the activity is therefore an opportunity for possible-candidates to be confronted with the reality of the work and decide beforehand if they will be capable of working in these environments.

Training is provided by three different entities:

- Volunteer service centres – they organise generic training for people interested in becoming volunteers. It consists in explaining the concept of volunteering and its legislative framework, what are the sectors people can choose to volunteer in and where to find voluntary organisations which are happy to explain what they do and how they do to the general public.
- Organisations – big voluntary organisations and organisations requiring very specific skills organise their own training sessions. These are very structured and offer the prospective volunteer the tools for carrying out their activities as well as the possibility to reflect whether this is an activity for them or not.
- Civil protection organisations – because these organisations deal with emergency relief, it is crucial that volunteers be appropriately trained in first aid and other relevant areas. They therefore provide their own training sessions.



## 7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

Within national literature there is no information on the impact of EU policies on volunteering in Italy. Nonetheless, during case study interviews, stakeholders appeared mostly aware of awareness raising actions taken by the EU in the fields of volunteering (such as the European Year of Volunteering) and youth (European Youth Week). In fact, since the EYV will take place in the same year of the publication of the Triennial Report on Volunteering in Italy, a small number of working groups will be discussing the event and the issues at stake.

In relation to particular pieces of legislations such as the 'Service Directive', stakeholders did not seem to be particularly aware of any impacts this may have had on the voluntary sector in Italy. The issue of SSGI does not appear to be widely debated in Italy. Few organisations are aware of the European legislation on the topic and those who believe that the legislation in its current form does not contribute to bringing clarity to the concept.

During the seminar on 'commissioning from the third sector in the EU', Italy's representative noted that when applying European legislation, local authorities apply a principle of 'anticipatory obedience': where there are uncertainties regarding the applicability and application of EU-directives or regulations, public authorities apply the procurement rules everywhere and in every circumstance regardless of whether it is really needed and/or appropriate. This is essentially a consequence of the fear by local authorities that if they use existing social clauses and unsuccessful bidders complain about the process, they might be subjected to infringement procedures<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> CSV and SOLIDAR, *'Lessons from Europe conference report – A comparative seminar on Commissioning from the Third Sector in the EU'*, March 2008, p.23

## 8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

The challenges and opportunities detailed in this section are a reflection of the views and concerns expressed by the stakeholders interviewed for the purpose of this report. The most significant issues and opportunities have been reported.

### 8.1 Challenges for volunteering

In order to ensure that they can still contribute to policy making and have a real impact on the well being of the Italian population, voluntary organisation should consider the following points:

#### ***Fragmentation***

The voluntary sector in Italy is very fragmented i.e. there are many small organisations with few staff and volunteers. This leads to three problems:

- Despite the general increase in the number of volunteers, the decreasing number of staff and volunteers in small organisations means that many of them are becoming 'President organisations', that is with few permanent staff willing to manage and ensure the continuity of the organisation and its activities.
- An increasing number of small organisations addressing a wide variety of problems means that on the long term it will become increasingly difficult to gather a clear picture of the social issues affecting Italy as a whole and its regions and provinces in particular.
- As the number of organisations increases, it becomes more difficult to implement a coordination system. This could eventually lead to organisations becoming marginalised or seeking privileged relationships with local authorities to the detriment of their relationships with other organisations.

As a result of this fragmentation, voluntary organisations lose their ability to cooperate to draw a clear and informed picture of the social needs of communities and country, thus hindering their own ability to influence decision-making with their grass root knowledge.

#### ***Demographics***

Italy, as most countries in Europe, is witnessing the ageing of its population. As a result, the turnover for voluntary organisations is no longer ensured. Additionally, a study has revealed that number of voluntary organisations are reluctant to have volunteers of different age ranges (no more than 2 out 10 organisations receive volunteers with significant age gaps).

#### ***Institutionalisation***

As explained previously, an increasing number of organisations working closely with the public sector are slowly losing their independence and becoming more institutionalised, that is losing their internal flexibility. This has a profound impact not only on the core values and functions of voluntary organisations i.e. feeding the circular subsidiarity established between them and local authorities by providing them with their know-how, but also on the motivation of individuals working in these organisations who see the commitment of these organisations to social values lose its priority.

## 8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

### ***Increasing coordination between voluntary organisations***

The role played by voluntary organisations in influencing social policy makers is pivotal for the needs of vulnerable groups to be adequately addressed. It is therefore crucial that organisations of all sizes make a conscious effort to create a platform for communication, best practice exchange and for prioritising together the needs to be inserted in the social agenda of the country/regions/provinces.

The public sector can support this initiative by modelling more its social policies to the needs identified by voluntary organisations.

### ***Attracting and retaining young volunteers***

There should be more promotion of volunteering, especially in schools in order to promote more active citizenship from a young age. This could be done through strengthening and spreading the credit system already in place in some schools/universities and by valuing punctual voluntary activities, not just continuous ones.

Additionally, voluntary organisations, with the financial and administrative support of the public sector, should ensure that volunteers' training is consistently done on a structured and regular basis. This would not only promote volunteering, through generic training sessions organised by the Volunteering Service Centres, but would also show a renewed commitment of voluntary organisations to their original mission, thus increasing motivation amongst existing and potential volunteers.

Finally, voluntary organisations should be more transparent. They should ensure that budgets and expenditures are circulated to the stakeholders in order to allow for open criticism and transparency. They should also have more regular evaluations in order to be able to better determine what impact their projects have had not only in the present but also in terms of sustainable impacts.

### ***Collaboration without dependence***

Voluntary organisations should make a conscious effort to maintain their independence and decline, as much as possible, the conditions imposed by local authorities on their collaboration. They should instead encourage cooperation with local authorities through their participation in both the planning and implementation of the project. This would enable them to safeguard their critical contribution.

In general, voluntary organisations should ensure that they can not only make a difference in public policy decision-making but also in the mindset of the population; this would ensure more lasting impacts.

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### *Interviews*

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