

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

This Executive Summary contains the key findings of a Study on Volunteering in the EU contracted by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) to GHK and managed by the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission. The aim of this study was to help the Commission consider ways in which the voluntary sector could be further promoted at EU level and the extent to which volunteering could help the EU in achieving its wider strategic objectives set out in for example the Social Agenda and the Lisbon Strategy.

The importance of volunteering has long been acknowledged by the EU. However, there is a lack of a systematic and structured EU approach towards volunteering. In addition, no research has ever covered the full spectrum of volunteering and volunteering in sport in all 27 EU Member States. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to:

- Reach a better understanding of the volunteering landscape in all 27 Member States, in terms of facts and figures, regulatory and institutional arrangements, the influence of EU policies, programmes and actions and concentrating on specific issues such as competition, procurement, taxation, job and service substitution;
- Identify trends, similarities and differences, opportunities and challenges;
- Help determine the scope of possible future policies and actions which could be more effectively implemented at the European level rather than at national or regional/local level;
- Raise awareness of the possible benefits of supporting volunteering; and
- Serve as an information source and provide a detailed picture of what is ongoing in volunteering in the entire EU to inform the European Year 2011<sup>1</sup>.

The study also included sector specific analyses and recommendations focused on sport. Specific recommendations regarding volunteering in the sport sector can be found in section 5.2 and 5.4 of the final report.

It is important to stress that the aim of this study was not to define a uniform methodology for measuring volunteering in the EU, nor indeed to carry out empirical research on volunteering in the EU-27; rather this report aims to review what national studies, surveys, reports and key stakeholders stated about volunteering and volunteers in each individual EU Member State. While this report has collated and made use of a wide-range of sources to gather the most information possible on the level of volunteering in the EU, the discrepancies between different national surveys, studies and methods means that it has not been possible to provide a statistically accurate comparison across Europe. Therefore, the statistical analysis of the level and nature of volunteering should be seen as indicative only.

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<sup>1</sup> European Year of Voluntary Activities promoting Active Citizenship.

Whilst national reports have made use of a wide-range of sources the extent to which each national report relies on primary and secondary data sources varies, depending on the availability of data and reports, the number of stakeholders that could be consulted and the specific context of each country.

## Volunteering landscape in the EU

An analysis of the national surveys and reports on volunteering identified by key stakeholders in the Member States indicates that, there are around **92 to 94 million adults involved in volunteering in the EU**. This in turn implies that around **22% to 23%** of Europeans aged over 15 years are engaged in voluntary work. The national surveys tend to show lower levels of volunteering in comparison to some of the key European or international surveys<sup>2</sup>.

There are clear differences in the level of volunteering between Member States. Whilst certain EU Member States have longstanding traditions in volunteering and well developed voluntary sectors, in others the voluntary sector is still emerging or poorly developed. The national studies on volunteering show that the level of volunteering is<sup>3</sup>:

- **Very high** in Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK as over 40% of adults in these countries are involved in carrying out voluntary activities.
- **High** in Denmark, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg where 30%-39% of adults are involved in volunteering.
- **Medium high** in Estonia, France and Latvia where 20%-29% of adults are engaged in voluntary activities.
- **Relatively low** in Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia and Spain as 10%-19% of adults carry out voluntary activities.
- **Low** in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Lithuania where less than 10% of adults are involved in voluntary activities.

It must be reiterated here that given the discrepancies in the national survey tools, these findings should be treated with caution, and be read in conjunction with section 3.1.3 of the main report, which compares these figures with those from recent, pan-European surveys into volunteering (European Values Study and Eurobarometer). In brief, the comparison suggests that:

- Sweden and the Netherlands are the only countries which feature very high levels of volunteering in national studies, as well as in the Eurobarometer and European Values Study. Other countries which have consistently been identified as having either high or very high levels of participation in volunteering are Denmark, Finland and Luxembourg.
- Other countries with relatively high levels of volunteering are Austria, the UK and Slovakia.

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<sup>2</sup> National studies use different methodologies, target groups, forms of volunteering (informal vs formal), sample sizes, etc. For example, the Italian figures only include the number of volunteers in specific voluntary organisations and the Greek figures are based on estimates on the number of regular volunteers in the formal sphere in the absence of national surveys on volunteering. Therefore, these findings should be seen as indicative only.

<sup>3</sup> The results of Hungarian studies show a high degree of variance (from 5.5% to 40%).

- Countries which have consistently been identified by national reports and the Eurobarometer and European Value Study as having low or relatively low levels of participation in volunteering are Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

Regarding volunteers in sport, the data gathered indicates that **volunteering in sport represents a significant share of the adult population in Finland (16%), Ireland (15%), the Netherlands (12-14%), Denmark (11%), Germany (10.9%) and Malta (9.2%)**. Conversely, in Estonia (1.1%), Greece (0.5%), Lithuania (0.1%), Latvia and Romania (less than 0.1%) volunteering in sport does not appear to be a common practice.

Trends in the level of volunteering over the past decade vary between Member States. Overall however, there has been a **general upward trend** in the number of volunteers active in the EU over the last ten years. Reasons to explain this trend include increased awareness of social and environmental concerns; recent public initiatives to promote volunteering; increasing numbers of voluntary organisations which in turn means that volunteers are being spread across an ever larger number of organisations; growing numbers of volunteers needed to support the delivery of public services; increasing number of individuals involved in project based or short-term volunteering as opposed to long-term volunteering; increased involvement of older people and the change in public perceptions, particularly in the New Member States.

**Figure 1 – Trends in the number of volunteers in the EU over the past decade**

Trend	Trend over the past decade (prior to the economic crisis)
Increase	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain
Modest increase	Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia
Stable / fluctuation	Bulgaria, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Sweden
Decrease	Slovakia
Unclear / No comparable information	Cyprus, Portugal, United Kingdom

Source: Based on information from national reports

Trends in the number of volunteers in sport in the past decade, according to national data, appear to be the following:

**Figure 2 – Trends in the number of volunteers in sport in the EU over the past decade**

Trend	Trend over the past decade (prior to the economic crisis)
Increase	Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain
Stable / fluctuation	Cyprus, Sweden, the United Kingdom
Decrease	Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Luxembourg, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia
Unclear / No comparable information	Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal

Source: Based on information from national reports

**Gender** - In many countries a gender dimension is more apparent in specific sectors (e.g. sport, health, social and rescue services) and voluntary roles (e.g. managerial and operational roles) rather than in overall participation rates in volunteering. However, in general, most countries tend to have either a greater number of male volunteers than female (11 countries) or an equal participation between men and

women (9 countries). In many countries the dominance of male volunteers can be explained by the fact the sport sector attracts the highest number of volunteers and more men than women tend to volunteer in sport.

**Age** – In a number of EU countries the highest levels of volunteering are detected among adults aged 30 to 50 years. In a substantial number of countries the number of older people volunteering is increasing. This is the case in Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Young people make up the largest share of volunteers in many Eastern European countries and Spain.

**Education levels** – The national reports have illustrated that there is a clear, positive correlation between education levels and the tendency to volunteer.

**Employment status** – In the majority of EU countries employed individuals are the most active volunteers.

**Sectors** – In over half of EU countries, most volunteers are active in the sport and exercise sector. Volunteers in sport represent an important share of total volunteers in Denmark (31.5%), France (25%) and Malta (84%).<sup>4</sup> The highest level of voluntary activity across Member States is undertaken in football. In addition to sport, the most commonly reported sectors in which volunteers are active include:

- Social, welfare and health activities;
- Religious organisations;
- Culture;
- Recreation and leisure; and
- Education, training and research.

**Voluntary organisations** – Overall, there have been very strong increases in the number of voluntary organisations over the past decade; some countries have seen up to two to four-fold increases in the number of registered voluntary organisations in the last decade, with individual annual increases reaching 15% in some cases. These include countries where organised, formal volunteering is an established tradition (i.e. in France and Germany), as well as in countries where formal volunteering is a more recent phenomena (i.e. Bulgaria, Estonia, Italy, Romania). However, it is important to remember that the level of detail on the number and sector of voluntary organisations depends on whether the country has a registry of voluntary organisations and whether such organisations are either obliged or incentivised to register. Even in countries which have such registries, it is difficult to provide accurate data on the number of active voluntary organisations as in many cases the registries include both inactive and active organisations.

### *Institutional framework*

Only a small number of countries have in place a national strategy for volunteering. Even fewer countries have identified targets and where such indicators are in place, they tend to be qualitative rather than quantitative by nature. Only a small number of countries appear to have formal reporting and monitoring arrangements for volunteering in place. This is indicative of a lack of clear and consistent policy on volunteering at national level.

It is much easier to establish a national strategy on volunteering in countries where there is only one Ministry responsible for volunteering. In other cases, such a strategy would have to reflect the policy aims, objectives and goals of a wide range of different Ministerial departments. In such countries, the tendency is for the main Ministry responsible for volunteering to channel funding into key priority areas, such as youth volunteering or volunteer management.

The importance of volunteering in sport on the political agenda differs significantly between countries. Where it does feature on the agenda (in about ten Member States) it is often correlated to the existence of a sport/health policy. Member States have either integrated volunteering in sport in the general strategy on volunteering or in their general strategy on sport, rather than developing a separate strategy for volunteering in sport.

### *Legal framework*

There is no uniform way of regulating volunteering, primarily because of the diverse nature of volunteering together with the complexity and diversity of the voluntary sector across Member States. By way of categorising the regulatory framework for volunteering, three key distinctions can be made between Member States:

- Member States where a legal framework specifically relating to volunteering is in place (Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain);
- Member States that do not have a legal framework but where volunteering is regulated by or implicit within other existing general laws (Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK); and
- Member States who are in the process of developing a legal framework for volunteering (Bulgaria and Slovenia).

In the majority of Member States there is no specific legal framework covering volunteering in sport. Some rights and benefits attributed to individual volunteers can be in some cases specific to volunteering in sport (e.g. requirements related to qualifications and background checks). Regarding sport organisations, whilst most Member States have applied VAT reductions and exemptions there are important divergences between the countries due to different interpretations of the scope of the exemption. There are concerns that the interpretation of some Member States is too wide and not in compliance with Community rules.

### *Economic dimension of volunteering*

**Funding of the voluntary sector** – Levels of financial resources present significant challenges for the majority of voluntary organisations and agencies across the EU. The main source of funding for the voluntary sector in Europe is public funds. In some EU countries however, this trend is starting to change. The State's capacity to fund the social sector has been declining and non-governmental organisations began gradually taking over the provision of some social services. Simultaneously, the proportion of financial resources coming from the private sector has been marked by a steady growth. Public service delivery is increasingly driving the funding environment for the

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<sup>4</sup> Only some countries' studies indicated this proportion.

voluntary sector and contracts are therefore becoming a more important mechanism for the transfer of resources. As a consequence there will be a much greater emphasis on earned income as part of the funding mix of the voluntary sector in the future.

Regarding the sport sector, there are important differences in the sources of funding available to sport organisations. For Member States<sup>5</sup> where such information was available, sport organisations mainly rely on:

- Membership fees (Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain);
- Fundraising and donations (Estonia, Slovenia, Spain);
- Sponsorship (Slovenia);
- Public funding – state (Cyprus, France, Portugal);
- Public funding – regional and local authorities (Estonia);
- Other income (e.g. sales of tickets to sport events organised, bar and restaurant services, etc): Romania, Spain.

**Economic value of volunteering** – Estimating the economic value of volunteering is one of the key ways of evidencing the benefits of volunteering overall. In Member States where such calculations have been made there is usually no consensus on the estimation of the economic value of volunteering in the country. Estimates based on a harmonised methodology (replacement cost method) for all countries, indicate that the economic value of volunteering varies greatly, accounting for<sup>6</sup>:

- A tiny percentage of GDP in Slovakia, Poland and Greece (less than 0.1%);
- Below 1% of GDP in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia;
- Between 1 and 2% of GDP in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain;
- More than 2% of GDP in the UK, Finland and Denmark; and
- A significant share in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden (between 3 and 5%).

Estimates for 13 Member States indicate that the average contribution of volunteering in sport is estimated to correspond to 0.82% of GDP, ranging from less than 0.5% of GDP in Portugal, Czech Republic, Cyprus and Germany; between 0.5 and 1% of GDP in Austria, Ireland, Denmark, France, Slovenia, Finland and the Netherlands; and more than 1% of GDP in Sweden and the UK. Research further suggests that sport would become far less accessible without inputs from volunteers, as Member States would either have to substantially increase their financial contributions or organisations would have to increase their membership fees to a level which a large share of the population would not be able to afford. In the majority of countries, the average number of hours dedicated to volunteering in sport per week revolves around 4-5 hours.

### *Social and cultural dimension of volunteering*

In addition to their economic benefits, voluntary activities have a variety of broader social impacts that deliver significant added benefits to volunteers, local communities,

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<sup>5</sup> When identical levels were reported, Member States have been mentioned more than once.

<sup>6</sup> Such value could not be calculated for Cyprus, Estonia and Latvia because of missing data.

and society in general. Many of these impacts contribute directly to a number of key objectives set out in EU policies. Some of them are presented below.

**Social inclusion and employment** – Many voluntary activities and services involve the promotion of social cohesion, as well as social inclusion and integration, which are in turn often important elements of European social policy. Volunteer work provides important employment training and a pathway into the labour force. It enhances social solidarity, social capital, and quality of life in a society; it gives individuals a sense of self-satisfaction that they are making a contribution to the progress of society. As such, it contributes importantly to the promotion of ‘decent work,’ of work as a means of promoting human agency, dignity, and a feeling of self-satisfaction.

**Education and Training** – Volunteering can provide unemployed individuals with the experience needed to integrate into the labour market. Skills and competences gained through volunteering can be transferred into professional contexts. Many volunteers appreciate the opportunity that comes from volunteering to learn new skills, as well as practice existing competences. Volunteering is also seen as a useful way for young people to test out potential careers and therefore make an informed choice about future education and training pathways.

**Active Citizenship** – Volunteering leads to the direct involvement of citizens in local development, and therefore plays an important role in the fostering of civil society and democracy. The importance of youth volunteering for social inclusion and active citizenship has been evidenced in many Member States. For a majority of volunteers in sport, donating their time to a club is an opportunity to actively contribute to their community.

**Sport** – It is important to remember that volunteers and voluntary organisations often provide vital activities and services, which are used by members of the community. These can range from local sport clubs to transportation for the elderly or specific health care services, all of which have a significant impact on the lives and well-being of local people, as well as on the local environment. Sport clubs are one of the best examples, as the sport movement mainly relies on volunteers throughout Europe. In the majority of Member States the sport sector in particular relies heavily on volunteers (e.g. Austria 14% paid staff and 86% volunteers; France almost 80% volunteers; the Netherlands 13% paid staff and 87% volunteers). Voluntary engagement allows sport clubs to maintain low membership fees, thus removing financial barriers to participation.

## **Conclusions: main challenges and opportunities for volunteering**

### *Main challenges*

**Engaging volunteers** – Overall, the level of volunteering has increased in the great majority of EU countries over the past decade. The main difficulties seem to be related to the changes that are affecting the nature of voluntary engagement, as well as a mismatch between the needs of voluntary organisations and the aspirations of the new generations of volunteers, rather than a drop in the number of volunteers. Factors include the inadequate knowledge of the needs of organisations, the difficulty in matching volunteers with appropriate organisations, preference for short rather than long-term voluntary commitments, and increases in the number of voluntary organisations which means that volunteers are being spread across an ever larger number of organisations. In the sport sector, the fact that organisations are placing

high demands on the skills and qualifications of volunteering was sometimes seen as a deterrent for potential volunteers. Overall, both the sport sector and people's lifestyles are changing. Whilst demands on volunteers in the sport sector are becoming increasingly specific, requiring higher skills and more qualifications, volunteers appear to be less willing to commit to one organisation for long periods of time and take on decision-making responsibilities.

**Professionalisation of the voluntary sector** – The increasingly professional nature of staff employed in the voluntary sector means new challenges in terms of management of human resources within organisations engaging volunteers. Volunteers are also confronted with increasingly demanding tasks that require specific competences and skills, creating a tension between, on the one hand, increasing professionalisation and demands placed on volunteers and, on the other hand, the ability of volunteers to meet these demands and remain willing to do so in an unpaid fashion.

**Legal and regulatory framework** – The lack of a clear legal framework or clear rules is considered as being a key challenge for the development of volunteering in at least six countries. On the other hand the increasing legislative burden can impede volunteering by the accumulation of rules and laws applying to the voluntary sector. Stakeholders were therefore emphasising the risks of over-regulation of the sector. Finally, legal constraints that limit volunteering (e.g. limits on the number of hours of voluntary work that an unemployed person or somebody on early retirement can perform) can pose restrictions on recruitment among certain groups. The recent requirements in several Member States for volunteers in sport to have background checks, or to hold specific qualifications or a licence to work with young people, are adding an increased burden on both individual volunteers and sport organisations.

**Lack of monitoring and information** – The need for more accurate and detailed data on volunteering has been highlighted in all Member States. Information and data relating to volunteering are often unstructured and non-standardised even at national level. This clearly represents a major challenge in terms of accurately understanding volunteering within countries, in particular the impact of governmental support on volunteering in different European countries.

**Sustainable funding** – Findings indicate that funding issues are a key concern of the voluntary sector. In the past years, voluntary organisations have witnessed a considerable change in the relations between voluntary organisations and public authorities. Subsidies are being increasingly replaced by contracts, awarded through calls for tender, calls for projects and the outsourcing of public services. Local authorities seem to partly use public procurement as an 'umbrella' to avoid any risks of infringing rules that are unclear to them. Consequences include increased competition between voluntary organisations, application of rules that are designed for the business sector and the risk of driving away volunteers. For sport organisations, the opening up of gambling markets to competition raises important questions in terms of future funding and potential loss of income for the sport movement. In many Member States the income generated by lotteries is amongst the most important financing sources for the sport sector.

**Risk of instrumentalisation of the voluntary sector** – In some countries the sector is increasingly seen as an instrument for tackling problems or providing services that the state cannot provide anymore. These difficulties are expected to increase due to the economic crisis, which will increase the demand for these services. In the sport

sector some level of tension was identified between the state wishing to pursue specific social goals (and making this conditional in funding decisions), such as inclusion and integration, through the sport movement, and the sport movement considering that this may affect their autonomy.

**Lack of recognition** – Recognising voluntary activities and volunteering can play a big part in rewarding existing volunteers for their participation in voluntary activities and in attracting new volunteers. The validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) provides important opportunities to recognise the skills and competences of volunteers. Opportunities for VNFIL are limited in at least eight countries that have not fully established arrangements for VNFIL to date. A further seven countries are in the process of developing arrangements for VNFIL though their application to volunteering remains limited. Even in countries that have well established arrangements and policies in place for VNFIL there is evidence to suggest that it does not always apply to volunteering.

**Perceptions and prejudices** – This was identified as a key challenge in some former communist countries which are still struggling with stereotypes and negative connotations and where trust in civil society organisations is rather low.

**Lack of a clear strategy and a fragmented political landscape** – In countries that do not have a national strategy for volunteering, the policy aims and objectives for volunteering are implicit within a wide range of broad policy discourses. There is concern at national and EU level that the issue of volunteering is widely dispersed across a broad range of policy areas.

### *Main opportunities*

**Improving the legal environment for volunteering** – The legal framework is only part of the social and institutional context that shapes volunteering in a country. It becomes particularly important when it creates obstacles and impedes volunteering, as the experiences of some EU countries show. Therefore, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in particular have moved beyond publicly recognising volunteering to creating a legal environment that aims to promote volunteering. In addition, a number of countries have taken steps to review their legislation and address shortcomings. In some countries, such as Hungary and Luxembourg, these initiatives are clearly related to the preparation of the European Year 2011. In the sport sector, the existence of tax benefits and exemptions applying to volunteers and sport organisations appears to have a favourable influence on the share of volunteers.

**Measures to support volunteers within organisations** – The retention of volunteers is an important challenge faced by voluntary organisations. Many volunteers have raised the issue of a lack of leadership/coordination within voluntary activities. Some good practices have been highlighted as efforts to prevent the disengagement of volunteers, in particular the development of support roles within organisations. There is also evidence of many countries investing significant resources in education and training opportunities for volunteers.

**Improving perceptions of volunteering** – A number of successful campaigns have been run and have raised the status of volunteering, particularly in countries which lack a tradition of organised volunteering (e.g. Estonia). Measures have also been implemented by the voluntary sector itself to help raise awareness about the benefits

and opportunities of volunteering, such as the launch of ‘the week of volunteering’ and volunteer award ceremonies. In order to stimulate youth volunteering and address what is perceived as a disengagement of young people, campaigns have been launched to make youngsters aware of the positive sides of voluntary work (e.g. the Netherlands). In addition to campaigns and information tools, experience from Greece, France, the UK and other countries shows that major sport events can be a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of volunteering. Popularity of the European Voluntary Service was highlighted as an important factor in several countries as having the potential to promote volunteering among young people.

**Recognition of volunteers’ skills and experience** – Interesting practices are put in place in a number of Member States, many of which are influenced by the European agenda of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). A number of countries have recently established arrangements for VNFIL where no tradition of VNFIL existed.

**Data collection and research** – Evidence shows that there is a clear momentum towards improving knowledge and understanding of volunteering at national level, through the collection of reliable, regular and systematic data. These are encouraging developments towards an enhanced recognition of the social and economic value of volunteering. At organisation level, it seems that there is now a growing consensus among voluntary organisations that measuring the economic value of volunteering can bring substantial benefits in terms of recognition and visibility. Finally, the International Labour Organisation is currently developing the first-ever set of international guidelines for generating regular and reliable statistics on volunteering which will be comparable across countries and regions.

**Sustainable funding** – Accompanying measures to help voluntary organisations to adapt to the new funding environment, increasingly based on public procurement procedures, have been put in place in a limited number of Member States, such as the UK where the Learning and Skills Council provides one-to-one support on the tendering process of third sector organisations. The Agreement between the Swedish government and the third sector is also exemplary as it aims to ensure a growth in the diversity of providers and suppliers, clarifies the role of voluntary players in the social sphere and enables voluntary organisations to compete on equal terms. In many Member States the voluntary sector is calling for a modernisation of the relationship between the state and the sector, which should include a clarification of their ‘funding’ relationship. In the sport sector, evidence suggests that it is important, in particular for sport organisations at grass-root level, to have a diversified income, which includes membership fees, revenue from events and other activities, donations and fundraising, etc. In several Member States, there is increased focus on creating and accessing new ways of funding the sport sector.

**Developing strategies for volunteering at national level** – There are clear indications that volunteering is increasingly appearing on the national agenda, which has led certain countries to adopt (or plan to adopt) full-fledged strategies or policies on volunteering. This trend has clearly gathered momentum after the UN International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001 which has had a tremendous impact in some countries. When no strategy is being developed, volunteering is increasingly included in strategy documents and programmes in various policy areas such as employment, civil society and the care of elderly people.

**Setting up volunteering infrastructure** - Experience from Member States such as Germany shows how the setting up of an efficient, well structured infrastructure can drastically improve the environment for volunteering. Such networks and platforms are now being set up in countries where no such infrastructure existed, in particular in New Member States. These include volunteer centres to provide information, training and coordination services regionally for host organisations, developing databases and providing brokerage services between volunteers and organisations.

**Corporate social responsibility and employer support of volunteering** – Though there is no legal provision or specific support schemes for profit-making organisations in most countries, there have been reports on the increase of corporate volunteering, whereby companies encourage their employees to take part in volunteering as part of the drive toward corporate social responsibility (CSR). In many countries the notion of corporate volunteering is a relatively new concept for profit-making organisations.

## Recommendations

### *Recommendations at EU level*

#### **Promoting legal and policy frameworks to support volunteering**

A comparative study carried out by the European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)<sup>7</sup> suggests that countries should, where necessary, revise laws or enact separate legislation in order to promote volunteerism, protect volunteers, and remove legal impediments. The EU could consider promoting guidelines for countries who wish to adopt legislation, treating aspects such as:

- How volunteering could be distinguished from other types of legally recognised or regulated relationships. The key issue here is that the role of volunteers should be to complement the work of paid staff, or add value, and not replace paid staff;
- How volunteers could be entitled to reimbursement of expenses;
- How volunteers could be protected while they are performing voluntary activity (e.g. insurance coverage);
- How to prevent volunteering having a negative effect on entitlement to unemployment and other social benefits;
- How additional support schemes (e.g. validation of experience) could be provided to volunteers; and
- How international volunteering could be facilitated.

#### **Measuring the economic value of volunteering**

At EU level, Eurostat could play a role in supporting the collection of statistics on volunteering, to comply with ILO and UNV recommendations on the measure of volunteering. As Eurostat collects data from National statistical institutes, which often do not have this information, it is therefore important that Eurostat asks national offices for this data to instigate a change. A related issue is considerations regarding how volunteering could be taken into account when measuring the social well-being of

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<sup>7</sup> European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), Comparative Analysis of European Legal Systems and Practices Regarding Volunteering, Katerina Hadzi-Miceva

Member States, stemming from the Stiglitz report and developments regarding ways to measure social well-being alongside raw economic growth (GDP). The need for taking account of these 'social indicators' beyond GDP to measure the wealth of a society could be recognised by Eurostat and reflected in data collection at EU level.

#### **Clearer EU rules concerning public procurement and the Services Directive**

Research at national level has clearly shown the need for a clarification of the definition of Social Services of General Interest (SSGI) and the use of public procurement rules applying to services provided by voluntary organisations. The position of social services of general interest within Community law is still unclear. Given that this concept is much more recent than those of services of general interest and services of general economic interest, it was not established in primary law by the Lisbon Treaty and is therefore subject to lesser legal guarantees. In particular reviewing the status of implementation of the current legislation in all Member States would be helpful (e.g. to what extent the possibility of introducing social criteria is actually used in the different Member States. In Member States where this possibility is under-used, identify reasons why, and encourage Member States to take advantage of this possibility). Greater certainty should be introduced to avoid the consequences of litigation and over-caution by all parties. Finally, the EU should promote the recognition of the added value of the voluntary sector in the provision of SSGI.

#### **Networking to promote volunteering: encouraging research and exchange of good practices**

The European Year 2011 will be an excellent opportunity to put volunteering on the agenda of Member States, raise awareness about volunteering, and promote exchange of good practices. There is a strong demand for sharing experience and identifying regulatory and policy frameworks that really work. The EU has a role to play in enhancing recognition, and encouraging Member States to avoid legislative barriers to volunteering. In the sport sector, the new EU competence for sport provided by the Lisbon Treaty will help the EU add value by supporting platforms of exchange and debate, providing legal clarity and co-financing various initiatives, taking account of the specific nature of sport, its structures based on voluntary activity and sport's social and educational functions.

#### **Encourage recognition and validation of experience**

Research has shown that the impact of EU policies in the field of VNFIL is important. Member States are following EU practice in this field as they continue to develop their own arrangements for VNFIL. The EU should disseminate good practices in the area of VNFIL, highlighting the need for its application to voluntary experience.

### *Recommendations to Member States*

#### **Adapting/improving legislation**

In countries where there is nothing existing for volunteering, where there is a weak tradition or culture of volunteering, adopting legislation can support the development of volunteering. The establishment of a legal framework for undertaking voluntary work (that would resolve the uncertainty concerning volunteers' expenses, work conditions and insurance) would represent considerable opportunities for developing the voluntary sector. The law should ensure that volunteering is protected and promoted and that the legal requirements do not discourage volunteering. There is a need to be very clear

about the purpose of the legislation and the policy aims it tries to pursue, which need to be developed in partnership with voluntary organisations.

In other countries where a long-lasting tradition exists, it has been very important up to now not to regulate voluntary organisations and any attempt to formalise volunteering in law has always been abandoned. Avoiding over-regulation has emerged as a key concern on the voluntary sector's side.

### **Supporting volunteering among senior and young people**

Given the demographic trend and the increasing share of elderly people in the population, the increasing involvement of senior people in the voluntary sector will be essential for the vitality of the voluntary sector and to address the needs of organisations in terms of voluntary work. The development of volunteering amongst the elderly will require a promotion of voluntary engagement at an early stage (i.e. before retirement age), as well as proper support structures to accompany this target group. Experience has shown that people rarely start volunteering when they enter retirement.

This relates to the importance of promoting volunteering among the active population but also among young people, through curricular and extracurricular education. The promotion of volunteering in the education system and its more systematic integration into the education pathway could increase young people's engagement.

### **Increasing recognition of volunteering**

A key opportunity for volunteering is the strength of marketing, raising awareness and promoting positive images relating to volunteering. The benefits for individuals, organisations and communities need to be publicised and celebrated. Moreover, the public bodies should continue to finance awareness raising campaigns on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. It is very important to provide volunteers with updated and accurate information.

### **Developing validation procedures applicable to volunteering**

As countries continue to develop arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), raising awareness of the possibility to apply VNFIL to volunteering together with the appropriate level of resources to ensure VNFIL is carried out is essential. The recognition and valorisation of the time that volunteers dedicate to volunteering can be an important motivation factor, in particular among younger generations and as a bridge between volunteering and education.

### **Enhancing knowledge about volunteering and improving data collection**

The efforts that have been made to measure volunteering have been sporadic and frequently uncoordinated, leaving Member States without up-to-date, reliable data on the scope of volunteering. This not only limits the understanding of volunteering but poses problems for the more general understanding of the labour market. The United Nations Handbook on Non-profit Institutions includes guidelines for national statistical offices to prepare regular 'satellite accounts' on the non-profit sector and volunteering as part of their official economic data gathering and reporting. Member States should therefore work towards integrating these accounts into their economic data gathering and reporting, as well as cooperating with the ILO initiative to integrate a measure of voluntary work into national Labour Force Surveys. Establishing Volunteering observatories could help assess the trends of the voluntary sector and collect both quantitative and qualitative data on volunteering.

### **Clarifying public procurement rules and ensuring sustainable funding**

Member States should promote the adoption of adapted rules for the funding of voluntary organisations and accompany the change in the type of funding relationship between the state and the voluntary sector as contracts are becoming a more important mechanism for the transfer of resources. The adapted use of the public procurement rules (e.g. inclusion of social clauses<sup>8</sup>) should favour the implementation of public tenders respecting the specificity of voluntary organisations. The possibilities to include social, environmental, and ethical considerations are currently under-utilised. It would be helpful to highlight the importance of the complementarities between public services and services provided by these organisations – the voluntary sector should be seen as a resource to develop wellbeing in society rather than as a way of cutting costs. Member States could also set up support schemes/programmes to equip voluntary organisations with the practical tools to meet the challenges associated with public procurement.

### **Setting up volunteering infrastructures**

Various actions could be taken to improve the infrastructure at national level, in Member States where it is poorly developed:

- Provide a central platform for information on volunteering where citizens can learn about opportunities and ways to get involved (and whom to contact);
- Further develop and strengthen networks at local, regional and federal levels, and enable the bundling of resources, exchange of best practice among actors, and the development of appropriate funding strategies;
- Use of service bureaus which could help with giving advice in technical, juridical and financial areas, ensuring good information provision on the opportunities for funding;
- Stimulating local volunteer brokers; and
- Promoting a discussion platform between voluntary organisations and the State.

### **Support corporate volunteering**

Though the research suggests support for corporate volunteering is increasing, incentives should be provided to companies to encourage greater opportunities for corporate volunteering. Member States should provide the regulatory environment that encourages this type of initiative (e.g. tax relief) and ensure the infrastructure is in place to encourage partnerships with the voluntary sector.

## *Recommendations to organisations engaging volunteers*

### **Better management of volunteering resources**

Changes in demography and the labour force suggest that in many Member States large reservoirs of potential volunteers remain 'untapped' for the expansion of the voluntary sector. Findings suggest that the main challenge for the sector is not the

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<sup>8</sup> In relation to procuring social and welfare services from voluntary sector organisations, Directive 2004/18/CE contains several dispositions stating that contracting authorities can impose conditions in order to promote social issues (so-called 'social clauses'), as long as those conditions respect the EU laws and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory. These social clauses may be intended to favour on-site vocational training, the employment of people experiencing particular difficulties in achieving integration into the workplace, the fight against unemployment and protection of the environment.

decline in the number of volunteers but rather increased competition between organisations, changes in the way people volunteer, and a mismatch between the expectations of today's volunteers and what hosting organisations can offer. Voluntary organisations should set up volunteer policies to provide a more favourable environment for volunteers. Professionalisation of human resource management practices is therefore needed, to improve the recruitment, training and retention of volunteers. In particular, the specific needs of the various groups involved (elderly, young people, etc.) must be better taken into account.

#### **Encourage use of accreditation/validation tools**

Organisations engaging volunteers should be more involved in the implementation of procedures and arrangements for VNFIL and support their volunteers in using tools such as Portfolios/Volunteer Passports or Cards. This could be done for instance by identifying key competences required for each position, or by undertaking a review of the competences and resources needed in the organisation and a mapping of the competences and skills available. This is particularly relevant when seeking to engage young people, who are increasingly aware of the importance of the skills they can gain through volunteering.

#### **Providing adequate training to volunteers**

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. As volunteering is getting more popular, volunteers' demands are increasing in terms of experience, training and support. Host organisations should pay close attention to the way they meet these expectations.

#### **Increasing transparency/image of the voluntary sector**

Voluntary organisations should ensure that budgets and expenditures are circulated to the stakeholders in order to allow for constructive criticism and transparency. Especially in former communist countries where trust in civil society organisations is still rather low and where the media have focused on scandals, corruption, and fraudulent activities of a few NGOs, organisations engaging volunteers should pay attention to the image they convey.

#### **Coordination of the voluntary sector**

It would be useful to build bridges between different organisations that work on related issues in order to avoid duplication and promote mutual learning and project development. The role played by voluntary organisations in influencing social policy makers is pivotal for the needs of vulnerable groups to be adequately addressed. In countries where coordination of the voluntary sector is weak, it is therefore crucial that organisations 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.

Specific recommendations regarding volunteering in sport are presented in Table 5-3 Recommendations to EU institutions, to Member States and to the sport movement p. 274.