

## NATIONAL REPORT – LATVIA

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN LATVIA

Considerable difficulties were encountered while gathering information on volunteering in Latvia. Studies and reports touching upon the subject are scarce and no data has been systematically gathered on the subject at local, regional or national levels. The state and non-governmental institutions that had competence in volunteering have been liquidated or closed. The information that does exist comes from ad hoc articles in the press, publications on non-governmental sectors in Latvia and ministry representatives who are not directly related to the field.

## 1.1 History and contextual background

Most information available indicates the revival of volunteering in Latvia at the end of the 1980's, shortly before the regaining of independence. At the beginning of the 1990's a large number of non-governmental organisations were created, however there is no data available with regard to the contribution of volunteers to the work of these organisations.

Discussion in relation to the legal side of volunteering with a specific focus on health and safety issues that arise through volunteering was sparked in 2005 by a tragic accident that took place in Latvia<sup>1</sup>. In that same year the Secretariat of the Special Assignments of the Minister for Social Integration (ĪUMSILS) started the consultation on the draft Volunteering Activity Law and the State programme "Strengthening of Civil Society 2005-2009"<sup>2</sup>.

The ĪUMSILS was curtailed in 2008 and the Volunteering Activity Law never reached Saeima<sup>3</sup> for approval. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2009 the Ministry for Children, Family and Social Integration Affairs (MCFIA) took over the functions of the ĪUMSILS. In turn the MCFIA was liquidated in July 2009 and its areas of responsibility were divided among three other Ministries. Since volunteering was not among the competence fields transferred, it seems to have disappeared from the State institutions' agenda.

## 1.2 Definitions

At the present time, volunteering is not defined in a specific legislative act regulating the field. However, volunteering has been defined in the context of associations, in Article 8 of the 2003 Associations and Foundations Law,<sup>4</sup> as "unpaid work or provision of services performed by a person without entering into employment legal relations and which is aimed at the achievement of the objectives laid down in the articles of the association or foundation"<sup>5</sup>. In almost identical terms volunteering is defined in the State Programme "The Strengthening of Civil Society 2005-2009"<sup>6</sup>.

The Youth Law<sup>7</sup> does not offer a specific definition of volunteering, but it does set out the requirements for volunteers from 13 to 25 years of age and for organisations engaging such volunteers. The section 9 of this Law defines youth volunteering as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Ieva Valpetere "Algas kontā — smaids", 2005.

<sup>2</sup> ĪUMSILS. Valsts programma "Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšana. 2005. – 2009. gads"

<sup>3</sup> The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia

<sup>4</sup> Biedrību un nodibinājumu likums, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Associations and Foundations Law, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Valsts programma. "Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšana. 2005. – 2009. gads"  
<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?f=659>

<sup>7</sup> Youth Law (Jaunatnes likums) [http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Youth\\_Law.doc](http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Youth_Law.doc)

- Youth volunteering shall be oriented towards activities of public benefit and promote the development of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes thereof, as well as providing a way to spend leisure time usefully.
- A young person shall carry out volunteering free of charge, and not enter into a legal employment relationship with the organiser of the volunteering.
- Youth volunteering shall not be used for the purpose of profit-making of the organiser of the volunteering or a third party.
- Prohibitions and restrictions specified in the regulatory enactments regulating legal employment relationships shall be applicable to youth volunteering.

Volunteering was also defined in Article 3 of the draft Volunteering Activity Law<sup>8</sup> as “work or services delivered without remuneration that are undertaken on a voluntary basis for the benefit of other persons or society, without entering into legal work relations. The work or service should be delivered without pay for the benefit of volunteers, voluntary organisations or beneficiaries. Any work with the aim of making a profit or in relation to commercial activity is not considered volunteering”. The work on the Volunteering Activity Law stopped in 2006 and this legal act did not come into force.

### 1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Due to the lack of regular and systematic data gathered in the field, it is hard to produce a reliable estimate of the number and profile of volunteers in Latvia. The information that exists is scarce and fragmented.

In 2007 a citizen survey indicated that 24.3% of respondents had engaged in some voluntary activity during the course of that year<sup>9</sup>.

#### **Total number of volunteers**

At the present time there is no data gathered on the total number of volunteers in Latvia. This fact makes a yearly overview or examination of trends in the voluntary sector impossible.

#### **Trends**

As already indicated, there is no body collecting data on voluntary activities on a national scale. Without systematic and regularly gathered data, it is impossible to provide a reliable analysis of the trends in volunteering.

There are some indications in the literature that the range of voluntary activities has been increasing throughout the last two decades<sup>10</sup>. However, the interviews carried out for the purpose of study indicate that since the recession started (end of 2008) it has become increasingly difficult to engage volunteers. The disappearance of the Latvian Volunteer Centre in 2005 and the present lack of a State body responsible for volunteering have contributed to a lack of overall promotion and visibility of volunteering in the country.

#### **Gender**

There is no data gathered.

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<sup>8</sup> Likumprojekts "Brīvprātīgo darbības likums", 2005.

<sup>9</sup> TUMSILS Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšanas programma 2008.-2012.gadam Rīga, 2008

<sup>10</sup> The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities: Latvia, 2005

### **Age groups**

According to Brīvprātīgais.lv, (an organisation that supports the development of volunteering in Latvia), most people engaging in volunteering are between 15 and 25 years old. But persons in the 30 to 50 year old age group also participate in voluntary activities<sup>11</sup>. The literature review and interviews with experts in the field indicate that young people seem to be the most active in volunteering for cultural and sport events. There are people of all ages involved in volunteering in religious organisations and in environmental issues. However, there is no data gathered or available on the approximate numbers of people or the percentage of volunteers from the different age groups.

### **Geographical spread of volunteering**

There are no statistics available on the geographic spread of volunteering in Latvia. The literature review and interviews point out that voluntary activity in Latvia is mainly event based. Latvia's capital city Riga has a large percentage of the country's population and consequently hosts the biggest sport and cultural events, therefore, this is also where the most volunteering activity is concentrated. On a smaller scale there is also volunteering in Latvian municipalities related to sports, religious and environmental fields and project based volunteering activities in some of the country's biggest cities.

With regard to the percentage of NGOs involving volunteers, the study "What is missing for the growth of volunteering movement in Latvia?"<sup>12</sup> was undertaken by the Research and Training Programme NVO Institutes in 2007. It illustrated that there is no significant difference in the amount of volunteering between Riga and Latvia's regions – Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale and Zemgale.

### **Education levels**

There is no data available in relation to the education level of volunteers. The literature review and interviews suggest that there are no specific educational requirements for volunteering in Latvia. Most volunteers for national and international events are recruited through the relevant faculties of higher education institutions. Most volunteers at the local level come from schools.

### **Volunteer involvement by sectors**

The data on volunteering by sector is not available. The literature review and the interviews indicate that there are regular events involving volunteers in the fields of sport, culture, religion and environment as well as ad hoc projects with the involvement of volunteers addressing various social issues.

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

Though there is limited data available, the literature review and the interviews identify volunteers in sports and culture events as mostly students. Volunteers contributing to religious and environmental events as well as social projects could also be persons that are employed.

### **Time dedicated to volunteering**

In regard to time dedicated to volunteering it is impossible to estimate as there is no data systematically gathered on volunteering in Latvia.

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<sup>11</sup> Lana STRODE for Mnemosine: Muzeju Valsts Parvaldes Specializdevums. "Kas regulē brīvprātīgo darbu?", 2008

<sup>12</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. Study by the NVO Instituts "Kā trūkst brīvprātīgo kustības izaugsmei Latvijā?", 2007, pg. 6. [http://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/noderigi/sabiedribas\\_integracija/ka\\_trukst\\_brivpr\\_kustibai.pdf](http://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/noderigi/sabiedribas_integracija/ka_trukst_brivpr_kustibai.pdf)

The above mentioned study undertaken by the NVO Institutes indicates that approximately 80% of NGOs surveyed across Latvia do not gather information on the number of hours contributed by volunteers. It also notes that such information would have been essential in regard to being able to reward volunteers that have contributed a certain number of hours.

The study also notes that approximately one third of volunteers most often dedicate time once a week to activities in NGOs across Latvia. However, in Riga, volunteers usually contribute on a daily basis to the work of NGOs. Around 60% of NGOs in Riga and 72% in the regions claim they have developed a long term relationship with their volunteers.

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

There is no data available on the number and type of voluntary organisations.

##### ***Definition of voluntary organisations in Latvia***

Though limited information on this issue is available, Section 2 of the Associations and Foundations Law defines the nature of these organisations. Associations are defined as voluntary unions of persons founded to achieve the goals specified in the articles of the associations, and these goals should not be of a profit-making nature. While a foundation is an aggregate of property that has been set aside for the achievement of a goal specified by the founder, and once again the goal should not be of a profit-making nature. However, these definitions are not specific for voluntary organisations.

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

There is no data available.

##### ***Trend***

There is no general data available.

According to the study "What is missing for the growth of volunteering movement in Latvia?"<sup>13</sup> the Latvian NGOs are attracting a relatively small number of members and supporters (20-30 people) and often do not involve people from outside their immediate surroundings. Little more than 50% of Latvia's NGOs that were consulted in the framework of the above mentioned study<sup>14</sup> relied on volunteer contributions.

Representatives of the NGO sector believe that in the future volunteering will play a more important part due to the following reasons: decline in national and international support for their activities, national budget restraints, and a worsening socio-economic situation due to the current economic recession.

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

No data has been gathered on the types of organisations engaging volunteers in the private and public sectors.

In the third sector the study undertaken by the NVO Institutes shows that on average there are approximately 28 volunteers to one NGO in Latvia. However, in Riga the NGOs have on average 47 volunteers, while the NGOs in the regions have on average 13 volunteers

When comparing the number of workers to the number of volunteers in the NGOs (that participated in the study) the ratio is 1:8 (i.e. one paid worker to every 8 volunteers).

<sup>13</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. NVO Instituta petijums "Ka trukst brīvprātīgo kustības izaugsmei Latvijā?" 2007.

<sup>14</sup> All together 118 organisations and 10 experts were consulted during this study. Among the organisations consulted 91% were associations and 9% foundations. 43% of the consulted organisations were operating in Riga, 57% - in Latvian regions (Kurzeme, Vidzeme, Latgale un Zemgale).

## 1.5 Main voluntary activities

With regard to NGOs, the third sector most often involved volunteers in the organisation and implementation of campaigns and events (69%) as well as in the implementation of concrete project activities (64%) across Latvia.

However, the NGOs in the regions used volunteers more often than the NGOs in Riga and these regional NGOs involved more volunteers in the following activities: organisation of campaigns and events (75% and 61% respectively), implementing project activities (72% and 53%), daily office work (55% and 35%) and organisation boards (73% and 61%).

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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

At present the institutional framework for promoting volunteering in Latvia is non-existent. The main public organisations responsible for promoting volunteering in Latvia at the present time could not be identified. As noted before ĪUMSILS, the public body which was responsible for the promotion of volunteering in Latvia was closed in 2008. The Ministry of Children, Family and Integration Affairs (MCFIA) that took over the functions of ĪUMSILS was in turn liquidated in July 2009. The efforts to identify civil servants responsible for the field of volunteering in the three Ministries that took over the functions of the MCFIA have all been fruitless.

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

ĪUMSILS was the main public body responsible for volunteering. Since its closure in 2008, these functions were taken over by the MCFIA. On the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009 the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation "On the Reorganisation of the Ministry for Children, Family and Social Integration Affairs" Nr.359 instructed that the functions of the MCFIA should be taken over by the Welfare Ministry, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education and Science. Volunteering does not seem to be among the responsibility areas transferred<sup>15</sup>.

#### ***Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate co-operation and exchange of information***

The absence of a centralised body to gather information and promote volunteering in Latvia means that only fragmentary information exists on the landscape of the voluntary organisations in the country. The literature review alone is not enough to create an up-to-date snapshot of this field, as some of the organisations mentioned in the literature may no longer exist or may have been closed due to the recent recession. Some others may not be available on the Internet.

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy estimated in 2005 that there could be between 100 and 300 organisations involving volunteers in Latvia<sup>16</sup>. The study of NVO institutes undertaken in 2007<sup>17</sup> involved more than 50 NGOs that at the time benefited from the work of volunteers. National and regional NGOs' support centres not only support NGOs but also initiate different volunteer activities, for example, "Volunteers Clubs" in secondary schools.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.bm.gov.lv/lat/informacija/jaunumi/?doc=11927>

<sup>16</sup> Key priorities

<sup>17</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. NVO Instituta petijums "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?" 2007.

The association Brīvprātīgais.lv unites a number of activists in the fields of social work, sociology, public relations, communication and information technologies, who aim to contribute to addressing society's social and other problems by promoting active citizenship, and one of the ways they do this is by encouraging the development of volunteering in Latvia<sup>18</sup>. At the present time the database<sup>19</sup> of the association includes notices requesting voluntary assistance from around 30 organisations, and most of them are NGOs. This database facilitates the matching of volunteering supply and demand<sup>20</sup>.

The Olympic Competitions Agency (OSA) promotes volunteering in sport through the facilitation of co-operation and the exchange of information. The overall aim of the OSA is to promote the engagement of youth in sports and to promote co-operation among various institutions in the field of sport. The development and implementation of volunteer education programmes at the municipality level is one of the aims of the OSA that is listed in its statutes<sup>21</sup>. Since 1998 this organisation has managed groups of 90-250 volunteers who were involved in the organisation of local, national and international sporting events and conferences.

The Latvian Youth Council is an umbrella organisation for different youth organisations and it supports organisations and institutions in developing volunteer services<sup>22</sup>.

Collective volunteering projects are an important part of the volunteering scene in Latvia. In such projects large numbers of volunteers jointly assist at cultural, sporting or environmental events. Some examples of such projects include:

- Latvian Dance and Song Festival for young people<sup>23</sup>. The event of July 2005 benefited from the help of 90 volunteers, contributing to organisational aspects, co-ordination of activities and participants.
- Since 2002 a project called Footprints<sup>24</sup> has organised environmental events that promote environmental awareness, and the education and involvement of the public in addressing environmental issues.
- A yearly Great Cleanup Day<sup>25</sup> has been organised since 2008. The 2009 Great Cleanup Day saw the participation of 110,000 volunteers who filled 340,000 (60 litre) bags with waste. The activities of the Great Cleanup Day were made possible by the efforts of 834 co-ordinators throughout Latvia, including 392 local governments, 269

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.brivpratigais.lv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=36](http://www.brivpratigais.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12&Itemid=36)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.brivpratigais.lv/datubaze/>

<sup>20</sup> After registering, individuals can fill in their volunteer profile and organisations publish advertisements on their volunteer needs.

<sup>21</sup> Statutes of establishment "Olympic Competitions Agency"  
[http://www.osagentura.lv/files/Olimpisko\\_sacensibu\\_agentura\\_statuti\\_02\\_07\\_2007.pdf](http://www.osagentura.lv/files/Olimpisko_sacensibu_agentura_statuti_02_07_2007.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities: Latvia, 2005

<sup>23</sup> [www.nacgavilet.lv](http://www.nacgavilet.lv)

<sup>24</sup> [www.pedas.lv](http://www.pedas.lv)

<sup>25</sup> The Great Cleanup Day is organised by a non-governmental organisation "Project Footprints" (Projekts Pēdas) and an interest group "For Clean Forests" (Tīriem mežiem) in cooperation with the Chancery of the President of Latvia, the State Chancellery, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, the Ministry of Environment, the joint stock company "Latvijas Valsts meži", "Latvijas Valsts ceļi" and other partners.



schools, 161 companies and organisations, and 12 higher educational institutions, in addition to the individuals who cleaned up their own properties<sup>26</sup>.

- The organisers of the NATO Rīga Summit in 2006 received 2361 applications from Latvian citizens, which was four times more than was required<sup>27</sup>.

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

No voluntary organisations are affiliated with European umbrella organisations or networks, however the National Youth Council of Latvia (LJP) was founded in 1992 as a children's and youth's public organisation whose members are youth organisations. LJP unites more than half of Latvia's youth organisations and their activities involve approximately 30 000 young people across Latvia. LJP is a member organisation of the European Youth Forum and organisations in Latvia such as the Civil Alliance Latvia and the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation<sup>28</sup>.

## **2.2 Policies**

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

The policy framework for volunteering was laid down in the State Programmes for Strengthening of Civil Society 2005-2009 and 2008-2012. The development, overseeing and financing of these programmes was carried out through ĪUMSILS. Now that this institution has been liquidated, there is no clear understanding of who (if any institution) will be responsible for the implementation of this programme. It has not been possible at this stage to identify the Ministry responsible for volunteering.

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

The national targets and the resources to achieve the expected results of this policy were laid down in the State Programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society 2008-2012. It was aiming to increase the percentage of citizens who work as volunteers from 24.3% in 2007 to 30% in 2009 and to 40% in 2012. It has also laid down specific actions and allocated financing to promote these aims in order to reach the figures listed above<sup>29</sup>.

As the progress on promoting integration, active citizenship and voluntary involvement was expected to be slow moving it was decided to report on the State programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society every two years rather than annually. The last and only report on the ĪUMSILS. State Programme (2005-2009) is available from November 2006 (very early in the first phase of the programme life), and this makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to review progress made.

## **2.3 Programmes**

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

The objectives for promoting volunteering as well as the concrete actions and financing is previewed in the State Programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society 2008-2012 as illustrated in figure 1 below<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.talkas.lv/?page=21&article=314>

<sup>27</sup> ĪUMSILS Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšanas programma 2008.-2012.gadam Rīga, 2008

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.ljp.lv/content/view/26/11/lang.en/>

<sup>29</sup> ĪUMSILS Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšanas programma 2008.-2012.gadam Rīga, 2008

<sup>30</sup> ĪUMSILS Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšanas programma 2008.-2012.gadam Rīga, 2008

**Figure 1: The action programme for implementing the sub-objectives of the Programme relating to promotion of volunteering**

Nr.	Activities	Results of activities	Financing allocated (in thousands)	Planned financing (in thousands of Lats <sup>31</sup> )				Institution responsible for financing
				2009.	2010.	2011.	2012.	
			2008 <sup>32</sup> .					
<b>1.</b>	<b>Sub-objective I: Increase the proportion of people in Latvia, who have informally and formally co-operated to promote their own aims and those of the society, thus increasing the social capital</b>							
<b>1.2.</b>	<i>Direction of the action: Promote charity and the development of volunteering</i>							
<b>1.2.1.</b>	Promote the gains provided by active citizenship, including the implementation of campaign promoting volunteering							
	1.2.1.1. E-newspaper, publications and stories in media. The promotion of volunteering work in the Internet, homepage of ĪUMSILS, promote volunteering.	Each year at least 200 recipients receive at least six newspaper publications. At least three publications in media on the volunteering theme.	In the framework of existing budget				ĪUMSILS -	
<b>1.2.2.</b>	Promote volunteering work							
	1.2.2.1. Develop the legal regulation for volunteering.	Regular analysis undertaken on the legal regulation of volunteering to, if needed, repeatedly develops draft normative act change projects to improve the legal regulation of volunteering.	In the framework of existing budget				ĪUMSILS -	
	1.2.2.2. Organise biennial forum on volunteering.	Volunteer forum in 2009 and 2011.	-	7,5	-	6,0	-	ĪUMSILS -
	1.2.2.3. Expression of acknowledgment to the volunteers (rewards to the most active volunteers and NGOs).	A public event in the fourth quarter of 2008, which included rewarding of volunteers.	1,23	2,0	2,5	3,0	3,5	ĪUMSILS -

<sup>31</sup> Provisionary calculations

<sup>32</sup> Programmas projekta īstenošana 2008.gadā tiks nodrošināta iesaistītajām institūcijām piešķirto valsts budžeta līdzekļu ietvaros

1.2.2.4. Ensure a continuing support to the sustainers of volunteering.	Offer financial support (State budget donation) to organisations, which offer regular, quality consultations and support to volunteers and providers of volunteering.	-	10,0	12,0	14,0	16,0	ĪUMSILS -
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It is noted that ĪUMSILS was dissolved in 2008 and there is no information as to the extent that the above activities were implemented, which objectives were achieved or which were taken over by another state institution.

The status of the State Programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society is currently unclear. Furthermore, there seems to be no other nationwide framework for promoting volunteering.

The Guidelines for Youth Policy 2009 – 2018 developed by the MCFIA were accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers and they entered into force on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2009<sup>33</sup>. This document sets out aims to reduce the barriers to youth involvement in volunteering and to promote volunteering among young people. Specifically, it aims to increase the number of young people who have participated in at least one voluntary activity in their lives from 33% in 2009 to 90% by 2018. It also aims to increase the number of young people who participate in voluntary activities in the framework of the European Youth Programme, to increase the number of young volunteers at state level events and to also increase the number of young people who perceive volunteering as an important element in their lives.

The State Youth Policy Programmes for 2005-2009 and 2009-2013 developed by the MCFIA foresees, among others, the development of voluntary activities among youth. In 2005 the programme supported 43 informal education, volunteering and valuable use of leisure time projects<sup>34</sup>. However, a concrete sum dedicated to supporting voluntary activities is not indicated in the report.

In the future however, the MCFIA has indicated that because of the current recession it will have a very small budget to support voluntary activities in the youth and sport sectors.

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

There is no information on official voluntary programmes at the regional and local level.

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

There is no information on official transnational voluntary programmes.

## **3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 General legal framework**

At the moment the legal framework for volunteer work activities is provided by the Associations and Foundations Law, which entered into force in 2003 and covers the rights

<sup>33</sup> Pielikums Ministru kabineta 2009.gada 20.aprīļa rīkojumam Nr.246 "Jaunatnes politikas pamatnostādnes 2009. – 2018.gadam" (informative part) Rīga, 2009. [http://www.bm.gov.lv/files/text/BMpamn\\_090309.pdf](http://www.bm.gov.lv/files/text/BMpamn_090309.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> MCFIA "Informatīvais ziņojums par Jaunatnes politikas valsts programmas 2005.-2009.gadam izpildi", 2006. 2005.gadā [http://www.bm.gov.lv/lat/projekti/valsts\\_programmas/?doc=8742](http://www.bm.gov.lv/lat/projekti/valsts_programmas/?doc=8742)

and responsibilities of associations in general. The Article 8 of this Law provides a definition of what is considered volunteering work and its sub-points stipulate:

- A written agreement shall be entered into regarding the performance of volunteer work upon the request of a person, indicating the work to be performed and the performance deadline thereof.
- A person performing volunteer work may request the compensation of such expenses which have arisen during the course of the volunteer work, if it has been provided for in the articles of the association or foundation or by the decisions of the executive board.
- An association or foundation shall be liable for any harm caused to a person while performing volunteer work and also if the harm was caused due to the fault of the association or foundation<sup>35</sup>.

This regulation was complemented by the Youth Law<sup>36</sup> that entered into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2009 and it only applies to persons aged from 13 to 25 years. Section 8 of this Law notes that the State and local governments shall promote informal education, volunteering, physical activities and the engaging of young people in cultural life as valuable ways of using their leisure time. Furthermore, section 9 of this Law defines youth volunteering as follows:

- Youth volunteering shall be oriented towards activities that benefit the public and that promote the development of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes thereof, as well as the useful utilisation of leisure time.
- A young person shall carry out volunteering free of charge, and should not enter into a legal employment relationship with the organiser of the volunteering.
- Youth volunteering shall not be used for the purpose of profit-making of the organiser of the volunteering or a third party.
- Prohibitions and restrictions specified in the regulatory enactments regulating legal employment relationship shall be applicable to youth volunteering.

The Youth Law also establishes the responsibilities of the employer vis-a-vis a young volunteer in its Section 10:

- Youth volunteering may be organised by associations and foundations, as well as by State and local government institutions.
- An organiser of youth volunteering:
  - Shall be responsible for providing safe volunteering conditions, which will not harm the health of a young person;
  - Shall issue a written certification regarding the time spent in volunteering and on the duties, acquired knowledge, skills and abilities upon the request of a young person; and
  - Is entitled to request that a young person, upon commencing volunteering, presents a statement issued by a doctor regarding his or her state of health, thus ascertaining the suitability of the young person for the intended volunteering.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/action/popup/id/4921>

<sup>36</sup> Youth Law (Jaunatnes likums) [http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Youth\\_Law.doc](http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/Youth_Law.doc)

- A written contract regarding volunteering may be entered into upon the initiative of the organiser of the volunteering or a young person, specifying the work to be done and the time period for the fulfilment thereof.

As previously mentioned, a work group was created by the ĪUMSILS in 2005 to develop a draft of the Volunteering Activity Law. However, this Law never entered into force. The draft of the Law stipulated the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and organisations employing them.

The then existing Latvian Volunteer Centre and Latvian Youth Council participated in the activities of the work group. The International Youth Programme Agency and the Latvian Red Cross expressed their positions on the draft Law. Various other associations and networks also expressed their opinions on this draft legislation in a seminar<sup>37</sup> organised by ĪUMSILS in September 2005<sup>38</sup>.

The discussion on the need to and the ways to improve the regulation of voluntary work in Latvia was renewed at a meeting on the implementation of the memorandum of co-operation between NGOs and the Cabinet of Ministers in November 2009. As the result of this meeting it was decided to ask the Prime Minister to create a work group that will develop the Volunteering Activity Law. Such a work group will consist of the representatives of the relevant Ministries and the NGO sector and should be created by the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2009. The task of this group will be to review and complement the 2005 draft Law project, on which work was stopped in 2006<sup>39</sup>.

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

There is no specific legal framework in respect to volunteering. The development of such draft legislation was initiated in 2005 by the ĪUMSILS, but it was not completed.

Furthermore, the NVO Institute's study<sup>40</sup> shows that a convincing majority (71%) of surveyed NGOs both in Riga and in Latvia's regions admit that there are no clear regulations between the organisations and their volunteers. Both the management of these organisations and the experts interviewed indicated that most volunteers' engagement in NGOs and their work specifications are agreed on verbally and the termination of the involvement is usually unforeseen and based on the volunteer's personal reasons.

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

The literature review and the interviews undertaken during consultation did not identify any information on self-regulation or on codes of conduct existing among volunteers.

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

There is no information available on this kind of legal framework.

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

Unemployment benefits in Latvia are paid to individuals that have paid social contributions for a minimum of 9 months, and within 12 months prior to obtaining their status as a job

<sup>37</sup> Seminar entitled "Brīvprātīgo darbības tiesiskie aspekti – problēmas un risinājumi"

<sup>38</sup> Likumprojekts "Brīvprātīgo darbības likums" [http://www.politika.lv/temas/pilsoniska\\_sabiedriba/5809/](http://www.politika.lv/temas/pilsoniska_sabiedriba/5809/)

<sup>39</sup> Brīvprātīgo darbības likumam ir nākotne <http://www.odinvita.lv/news/a-69.html>

<sup>40</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. NVO Instituta petījums "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?" 2007.

seeker. The law on Unemployment Insurance<sup>41</sup> determines the amount and the length of the support period. These are depending on the average amount of social contributions that had been made and the length of the period for which these contributions were paid<sup>42</sup>. If a person chooses to volunteer abroad for any length of time they automatically lose their right to benefits<sup>43</sup>.

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

In Latvia families are entitled to a State Family Support allowance of 8 Lats (~€11). This allowance is paid to one of the parents for each child in the family until they reach the age of 15 or until the age of 19, if the child continued his/her studies (and is not married). According to the "Legal Status of Volunteers: Country Report Latvia" if a young person (under 19) participates in the European Voluntary Service (EVS) programme, their parents are still eligible to receive the family allowance as it is considered an educational experience. The principle would also apply, if a young person volunteered within the country.

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

There are currently no specific legal provisions concerning the reimbursement of expenses to volunteers. The Associations and Foundations Law only states that such expenses may be claimed by a volunteer.

The NVO Institute's study<sup>44</sup> indicates that 50% of the NGOs in Latvia cover the expenses of their volunteers. For the other 50% these expenses are covered by the volunteer or a third party. More NGOs in Latvia's regions (53%) than in Riga (46%) cover such expenses.

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

There is no information available with regard to the taxation rules on rewards.

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

A very broad legal framework is laid down in the Associations and Foundations Law. Please see Section 3.1.

## **3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations**

There is no legal act establishing the legal framework for voluntary activities in profit making organisations. The very nature of how volunteering is at the present time defined (please see Section 1.1.2) excludes volunteering in profit making organisations.

## **3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers**

Volunteers do not have a special legal status under Latvian law. At the present time there are no requirements for organisations engaging people in volunteering to provide insurance coverage. Indeed if an organisation does take out private insurance for a volunteer, it is

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<sup>41</sup> "Par apdrošināšanu bezdarba gadījumam" <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=14595> Eng. "On Unemployment Insurance": [http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/On\\_Unemployment\\_Insurance\\_.doc](http://www.ttc.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Likumi/On_Unemployment_Insurance_.doc)

<sup>42</sup> "On Unemployment Insurance", Sections 5 and 7.

<sup>43</sup> The Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and the European Volunteer Centre (CEV) "Legal Status of Volunteers: Country Report Latvia", 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. NVO Instituta petijums "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?" 2007.

considered as a benefit and is therefore, subject to taxation<sup>45</sup>. Then it also requires that the two parties enter into an employment contract<sup>46</sup>.

In the absence of a specific regulation with regard to the protection of volunteers, other than that provided by the Article 8 of the Associations and Foundations Law<sup>47</sup>, the general framework for receiving health care, unemployment benefits and family allowance applies to volunteers. The healthcare system in Latvia is based on the principle of residence. Minimum healthcare services are provided to Latvian citizens and permanent residents as well as to nationals of another country that have a temporary residence permit. People performing long-term voluntary service in Latvia must obtain a residency permit and are then entitled to the same level of healthcare<sup>48</sup>. Some of the more common emergency services listed in the Cabinet of Minister's regulation are free<sup>49</sup>, while others are provided subject to the prices set by the involved health care institution.

## 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

### 4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

The literature review and the expert interviews indicate that most voluntary activities that take place are promoted by the third sector and to a lesser degree they take place with the support of municipalities and a few state institutions.

Presently there is no centralized scheme for financing voluntary activities and their promotion. The financial resources for the projects undertaken with the help of volunteers are mainly raised by NGOs from different national and international sources and foundations.

On a governmental level some financing for promoting voluntary activities and the sector in general was previewed in the State Programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society 2008-2012 (please see Section 2.3)<sup>50</sup>, but the execution of this programme is unknown due to the liquidation of ĪUMSILS (the main institution allocating the funding) at the end of 2008. Figure two provides an overview of the financing that is planned for the development of volunteering, charity and donation culture by the 2008-2012 Programme.

**Figure 2: 2008-2012 Programme financing**

Activity year	2008 <sup>51</sup>	2009	2010	2011	2012
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<sup>45</sup> The EVS is the exception to this rule, as volunteers are each provided with private insurance coverage organised by the sending organisation.

<sup>46</sup> Legal Status of Volunteers: Country Report Latvia

<sup>47</sup> An association or foundation shall be liable for any harm caused to a person while performing volunteer work if such duty has been undertaken or also the harm was caused due to the fault of the association or foundation.

<sup>48</sup> Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities: Latvia, 2005

<sup>49</sup> Ministru kabineta noteikumi. Nr.1046 Rīgā 2006.gada 19.decembrī. (prot. Nr.68 60.§) Veselības aprūpes organizēšanas un finansēšanas kārtība. Izdoti saskaņā ar Ārstniecības likuma 4.panta pirmo daļu. <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=150766&from=off>

<sup>50</sup> ĪUMSILS Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšanas programma 2008.-2012.gadam Rīgā, 2008

<sup>51</sup> Provisional calculation at the time the programme was published

<b>Planned financing (in thousands of Lats<sup>52</sup>)</b>	6,73 <sup>53</sup>	54,5	114,5	98,0	99,5
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### ***National budget allocated to volunteering***

There is no national budget allocated to volunteering.

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

According to the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy's report<sup>54</sup> volunteering in Latvia has been supported by such foreign foundations as the Soros Foundation, Baltic-American Partnership Program, European Youth Program, etc. The report also mentions the Social Integration Fund established by the Latvian government and local authorities as one of the sources of funding. Finally, some ad hoc voluntary activities have been partly supported by local entrepreneurs.

## **4.2 Economic value of volunteering**

There is no data on any of the issues related to the assessment of the economic value of volunteering or the value of volunteering work as a share of GDP.

# **5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING**

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

Around 40% of NGOs consulted in the framework of the NVO Institute's study indicated that they could not have achieved what they are doing without the help of volunteers. This percentage is slightly higher in Riga (44%) than in Latvia's regions (38%). Around 19% of NGOs have described the volunteer contributions as very useful. This means that almost 60% of NGOs have judged the contribution of volunteers as valuable or even crucial. Only 1% indicated that they do not notice any benefits from their volunteers' contributions. A further 13% of NGOs have noted that volunteers help them to promote their organisation and 16% that they help in making the organisation more effective<sup>55</sup>.

## **5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer**

There is no specific information on the factors that motivate volunteers. With regard to the third sector, the study undertaken by the NVO Institutes<sup>56</sup> states that the most important motivation for volunteers to engage in NGOs is their desire to help society in some way. The NGOs and experts consulted by the researchers indicated that by helping others volunteers also gain a sense of fulfilment, are able to make new social contacts, and are able to develop knowledge and skills.

Some 30% of NGOs also point out that a significant motivating factor for volunteers becoming involved is the influence of other volunteers. For example, a volunteer may persuade family members to become involved in an organisation. It is perceived that a

<sup>52</sup> EUR/LVL = 0,709000 (InforEuro 01/11/09-31/12/09)

<sup>53</sup> It was planned that the implementation of the Programme in 2008 for the involved institutions will be ensured from the allocated State budget sources.

<sup>54</sup> Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities: Latvia, 2005

<sup>55</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?", NVO Instituts, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?", NVO Instituts, 2007.



further 20% of volunteers maybe motivated by being able to add it to their CV and another 8% maybe motivated by a family tradition of volunteering.

## 6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

There have been no formal instruments or practices identified for the recognition of volunteers' skills within the national education and training systems. There are some indications of voluntary activities taking place at the local level in schools, and this is often supported by municipalities. However, there is no information as to whether these activities have a spill over effect into the formal education and training system.

### 6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

In the absence of a centralised body to promote volunteering, there is no overview available to provide information on education opportunities and training activities for volunteers in Latvia. The interviews with experts in the field and the literature review indicate that ad hoc training opportunities are offered to volunteers by individual NGOs and State agencies. For the most part, however, the participation in the events or projects in itself is regarded as the principal training available for volunteers.

The conclusions of the study undertaken by the NVO Institutes also notes that the current situation of low voluntary involvement in the country is the result of a lack of organisation or the absence of an institution that could promote volunteering, train its co-ordinators and methodologically guide this process. In the time period between 1998 and 2004 this work was undertaken by the Latvian Volunteer Centre, and that no longer exists. This work of this organisation was primarily financed by foreign funds and programmes<sup>57</sup>.

## 7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

There has been no information identified or gathered on a systematic basis with regard to the impact of the various EU policies on the volunteering landscape in Latvia.

However, the literature review shows that the ĪUMSILS work group responsible for the development of the draft Volunteering Activity Law reviewed the relevant international practices in the field, including the EU legislation. According to the representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Guidelines for Youth Policy in Sport that are currently being developed by the Ministry, are to include a brief mention of volunteering and will refer to the relevant EU documents.

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<sup>57</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. "Ka trukst brīvprātīgo kustības izaugsmei Latvijā?", NVO Instituts, 2007.

## 8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

### 8.1 Challenges for volunteering

The development of volunteering in Latvia is facing numerous challenges. Perhaps the biggest one of all, endorsed by a number of studies<sup>58, 59</sup> is the lack of a co-ordinated system for the promotion and development of the voluntary sector in the country. Such a system would ensure a wide availability of information on the possibilities to engage in volunteering and could promote the benefits of volunteering in general. Other challenges identified by these reports are the lack of training for persons involved in organising and co-ordinating voluntary activities as well as a lack of general information and awareness about volunteering that results in relatively low public awareness and little value being awarded to the voluntary sector.

While a definition of volunteering exists and is included in a number of official documents<sup>60</sup>, these documents do not specifically regulate the rights and responsibilities of either volunteers or the organisations engaging them. Although, the Associations and Foundations Law lays down volunteers' right for a work contract, expense reimbursements as well as stating employing organisations' responsibility for the health and safety of volunteers, these clauses are so general that they are more of a recommendation than of a prescriptive nature. In short the current challenges for the voluntary sector in Latvia are as follows:

- There is no institutional framework or NGOs that are able to plan a methodological development and promotion of the sector;
- There is no organisation to regularly and methodologically gather and analyse data on volunteering in Latvia. The legal rights and protection of people undertaking volunteering are not regulated nor are the rights and responsibilities of organisations employing volunteers specifically determined. The expenses of volunteers are not recorded in the bookkeeping of NGOs, State foundations and municipalities. Volunteering is not developed in the institutions overseen by the State and the municipalities (hospitals, retirement homes, orphanages, etc.); The Latvian society does not have a sufficient understanding about volunteering and their possibilities for involvement in a volunteering programme<sup>61</sup>

The study undertaken by the NVO Institutes in 2007, entitled "What is missing for the growth of volunteering movement in Latvia?"<sup>62</sup> lists a number of challenges for the development of volunteering in the Latvian third sector specifically. To a certain extent these mirror the challenges outlined above for the country in general. The main conclusions of this study could be summarised as follows:

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<sup>58</sup> Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities: LATVIA, 2005

<sup>59</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. NVO Instituta petijums "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?" 2007.

<sup>60</sup> This is for example used in the Associations and Foundations Law and in the State programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society

<sup>61</sup> Informatīvais ziņojums par valsts programmas „Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšana.2005.-2009.gads” īstenošanu

<sup>62</sup> Ruta Dimanta, Mareks Indriksons. NVO Instituta petijums "Ka trukst brivpratigo kustibas izaugsmei Latvija?" 2007.

- Only just over 50% of NGOs in Latvia engage volunteers in their work. According to the study this is due to ill defined needs that could if defined be addressed by volunteering.
- The Latvian NGOs view volunteers more as technical workers rather than qualified staff able to contribute to the organisation's development and achievement of its aims. This in return, results in low volunteer motivation to engage.
- Volunteering lacks prestige and few volunteers are proud of their contributions. This is probably due to the fact that the positive image and importance of voluntary contributions is not promoted enough in the Latvian society.
- The lack of information and availability of information on volunteering demand and supply is mentioned as an important challenge. People are not sufficiently informed about the need for volunteers and the opportunities that are available for them to contribute.
- The NGOs that involve volunteers lack resources to do this well. Only one in three organisations has an employee that is responsible for the management of volunteering. If an organisation does not have such person, volunteers can become a burden, rather than an asset. Joining an unprofessional NGO can also be a negative experience for a volunteer.
- According to the experts interviewed during this study, the role of volunteers in the Latvian NGOs will grow in the coming years. Volunteering will offer expertise and added value for the organisation similar to that of financial or goods donations. Therefore those NGOs that succeed in attracting volunteers that are willing to contribute in the long term will gain considerably from the volunteers' knowledge and the time they invest.
- Finally, the study notes that the legal framework is not a significant obstacle in the development of the volunteer movement in Latvia. However, a law on volunteering would help the movement by clearly defining the rules of the game.

More specifically, according to the study, 19% of NGOs agree that the non-governmental sectors are not open or inviting enough for volunteers, 36% point out the lack of information from organisations engaging volunteers, 45% point out the lack of prestige in volunteering and 51% point out the lack of information available to society and these all act as barriers. Interestingly 63% of NGOs in Riga have pointed out lack of time as a barrier for involvement in volunteering. This is indicated as a hindrance by only 37% of NGOs in Latvia's regions. Furthermore, 86% of the NGOs surveyed indicated that the society is not sufficiently informed on volunteering and its opportunities.

## 8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

The "State Programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society 2008-2012" already defines a number of actions that could considerably contribute to the promotion of volunteering in Latvia. This programme has the promotion of volunteering as one of its sub-priorities. However, with the liquidation of ĪUMSILS, the principal organisation responsible for the management and financing of this programme, its future status is at the present time uncertain.

The programme allocates funds and sets the following aims for the promotion of volunteering in Latvia:

- Introduction of the possibility of choosing volunteering in the project week of education institutions. In the framework of project week school children will be provided with the possibility of volunteering, thus establishing this as a tradition.

- Inform the society about the possibilities of working in public organisations.
- Implement a campaign on the promotion of volunteering in NGOs among entrepreneurs, and State and municipality institutions plus organise a forum on voluntary activity. The campaign and the forum will inform society about the possibilities of being able to undertake volunteering and the gains that can be obtained from this work. Entrepreneurs and State and municipality institutions will be informed about the legal regulations regarding volunteering and about the possible ways to attract volunteers.
- Ensure a constant offer of consultations to the actors maintaining voluntary activity and volunteers.
- Promote the practice that higher education institutions include volunteering that contributes to the public good as one of the admission factors.

The “State programme for the Strengthening of the Civil Society 2008-2012” also defines association and volunteering. It also states that a law will be developed to encourage volunteering by creating a separate work group under ĪUMSILS to deal with this issue<sup>63</sup>.

The draft Voluntary Activity Law also suggested the basic requirements for the development and implementation of voluntary activities in Latvia. It also specified the responsibilities of voluntary organisations and those who volunteer. Unfortunately the work on this law was interrupted in 2005 and it never passed through the legislative procedure.

To illustrate the potential value of such law, the list below presents the list of Sections that the draft Voluntary Activity Law included:

- Aim of the Voluntary Activity Law;
- Definition of the concept of volunteer;
- Definition of volunteering;
- Definition of voluntary organisation;
- Definition of beneficiary;
- Non-discrimination clause;
- Age limitations for volunteering;
- Contract on volunteering to be completed;
- Written contract form;
- Documents needed to conclude the contract and health check;
- Work responsibilities of volunteers;
- Civil and legal responsibilities of volunteers;
- Work condition of volunteers;
- Rights and responsibilities of voluntary organisations;
- Reimbursement of volunteers’ expenses;
- Work protection of volunteers;
- Insurance obligation<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Valsts programma. “Pilsoniskās sabiedrības stiprināšana. 2005. – 2009. gads”  
<http://www.politika.lv/index.php?f=659>

The re-establishment of the institutional and NGO framework for the promotion of volunteering and establishing the legal basis for undertaking volunteering (that would resolve the uncertainty concerning volunteers' expenses, work conditions and insurance) would present considerable opportunities for developing the voluntary sector in Latvia. These issues i.e. the efforts to promote volunteering in the country and the need to secure the legal basis for volunteering seem to go hand in hand, as a greater number of volunteers would entail the need for better regulation in the field, and a better legal framework could attract more volunteers (e.g. if they no longer needed to pay for their expenses while volunteering).

With regard to the third sector a manual has been produced<sup>65</sup> to facilitate and improve the organisation of volunteering. This document includes guidance for the most important aspects of the organisation of volunteering in NGOs, such as the need for organisational change and a framework to accommodate volunteers that includes the following; selection or introduction of volunteer co-ordinator in the NGO to facilitate volunteering; preparation of volunteer policy; budget for voluntary activities, documentation of volunteering; volunteer engagement activities as well as a system that encourages volunteers to feel recognised and fulfilled.

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<sup>64</sup> Draft Volunteering Activity Law ("Brīvprātīgo darbības likums"). Announced at the State Secretaries' meeting of 08.12.2005. <http://www.politika.lv/print.php?id=5809>

<sup>65</sup> The manual was developed by Mareks Indriksons in the framework of the project "Brivpratigo darbiba nevalstiskaja organizacija: Metodiskais materials darbam ar brivpratigajiem" promoting volunteering, supported by the ĪUMSILS in 2007.

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