

## NATIONAL REPORT – THE NETHERLANDS

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN THE NETHERLANDS

## 1.1 History and contextual background

Volunteering in the Netherlands has gone through historical developments that are similar to other western European countries; it originated along the transition from family (private) care to community (communal) care. Care for orphans, the sick, and mental patients, began in the Middle Ages first by Christian organisations (convents, parishes) and later by private individuals (Christian entrepreneurs) and public bodies (local councils). All of these groups involved volunteers. Volunteering has taken place for a long time under the umbrella of “pillarisation”<sup>1</sup> which gave an enormous impetus to associations. The strongest growth in associations took place in the second half of the 19th C and the first decade of the 20th C.

As far as the government was concerned, its involvement increased at the beginning of the 20th century, and social security measures were rooted in legislation and regulations. This led to a general improvement of many people’s standard of living and consequently many people got involved in voluntary activities. From then on, being a volunteer was no longer dependent on the social class into which someone was born. Instead, involvement was based on a voluntary commitment to a principle. Between the years 1945 and 1966 a welfare state was developed in the Netherlands bringing all sorts of amenities to the social front. The government embedded the initiative that originated in the private sector in legislation and regulations, and subsidised or regulated it through national insurance schemes. Care providers became experts through special training. This trend towards professionalisation had major implications for the traditional role of volunteer. Many of the tasks originally carried out by volunteers were taken over by paid workers. The health care system became more professional and comprehensive.

Since 1965 new types of voluntary work have emerged. This trend is linked to the advent of new social movements and criticism of the performance of, for example institutionalised welfare work (e.g. volunteering at women’s refuge centres). The growth of this “anti” movement encouraged more people to look critically at the performance of paid workers. People also wanted a greater say in matters that concerned them personally. The creation of parents’ associations in schools, environmental focus groups and neighbourhood committees are examples of this trend. The last decades of the 20th century were characterised by individualisation. This had an impact on the willingness of the public to do voluntary work.

The tight labour market and equal opportunities have been the major factors affecting the availability of volunteers. During the nineteen-eighties more people who were on unemployment benefits started volunteering. However, the later improved state of the economy reduced their availability because many people, who were able to find paid work, gave up volunteering. The demand for labour has also resulted in older people, secondary school children and students giving priority to paid work. Moreover, more women have jobs and therefore have less time for voluntary work. Increased prosperity means that there are competing alternatives on how one can spend free time, for example television, surfing the Internet and vacations.

Furthermore, secularisation, a trend visible since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> C, has also had a significant impact on volunteering since the church used to be a stimulus for prompting people to volunteer.

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<sup>1</sup> The old social divisions along class and religion lines.

Other trends in the community have tended to both threaten and create opportunities for volunteering. Demographic trends, such as ageing and immigration, are facilitating participation by new groups of volunteers. A new trend is that companies are increasingly prepared to make facilities available for voluntary work and to encourage their employees to do voluntary work, during working hours or in their own time. Employee volunteering is becoming more and more popular in Dutch companies. The demand for voluntary work is also subject to change as a result, for example, the increased professionalism and a growing awareness in relation to nature conservation and the environment. However, the expansion in the health care sector has also resulted in sick, elderly and handicapped people asking for support at home. They are therefore calling for informal help, some of which is provided by volunteers<sup>2</sup>.

### **Recent developments**

In recent policy documents and the discussions around the Social Support Act<sup>3</sup> there is a general tendency to aim for decentralisation and to stimulate personal responsibility and self-help. The government's aim is to achieve progress on the basis of initiatives deployed by citizens and their organisations within the Dutch civil society. Therefore, the idea is to create a new balance between the government and civil society, in which the focus is at the local level, led by the municipalities and supported by a local infrastructure. One of the important pillars for this policy is volunteering, which is viewed as the way forward for citizens to take responsibility instead of expecting everything to be done for them by others or the government. Here the intrinsic value for the volunteer is an important factor<sup>4</sup>.

## **1.2 Definitions**

The Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (MVWS) considers volunteering as "**work done in any organised context that is carried out without obligation and without pay for other people or the community whereby the person doing the work is not dependent on it for his or her livelihood**". This definition was established in 1973 and is still valid today.

In some statistical surveys on volunteering the definition used is "a person who freely carries out a chosen unpaid activity within certain formal organisations, for the good of other individuals or society"

According to the Association of Dutch Organisations Voluntary Effort (NOV), volunteering activities must not compete with paid work and must be additional, meaning that when a volunteer decides to stop giving his/her time, it will not cause any organisational problem.

Furthermore, there are different expressions used to describe volunteering in Dutch: the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport uses the term "voluntary work, or "voluntary action". Organisations promoting volunteering however prefer to use the term "vrijwillige inzet" which translates into English as volunteering contribution /input or just volunteering.

MOVISIE<sup>5</sup> identified a number of shortcomings in the current definition:

1. "Volunteering": means that it is non-compulsory and unpaid. The problem is that some volunteers get some kind of payment (i.e. expenses up to 1,500 euro a year that do not

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<sup>2</sup> European Volunteer Centre, "Volunteering in the Netherlands. Facts and Figures report", 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning from 2007. More explanation on this act in section 2.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Dekker, Joep de Hart, Laila Faulk, "Toekomstverkenning vrijwillige inzet 2015", SCP, Den Haag, Juni 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the interview held with MOVISIE, the Dutch knowledge and advice centre on social development.

have to be justified, free access to festivals, etc.) and that some groups of volunteers are obliged to do volunteering such as ex-prisoners who are on an reintegration programme, youngsters within the social traineeships and employees doing volunteering.

2. "for another person or society": but another important dimension of volunteering is that you do it also for yourself.

3. "in an organised setting": a lot of volunteering is being performed outside officially recognised organised settings.

Considering the issues regarding the definition, municipalities sometimes encounter problems especially when it comes to for example getting insurance for volunteers because these voluntary positions are not clearly defined or fall outside the definition.

### 1.3 Number and profile of volunteers<sup>6</sup>

#### *Total number of volunteers*

It is estimated that in 2008, 5.3 million people worked as volunteers compared to 5.6 million in 2007.

This translates to 42% of the Dutch population being a volunteer in 2008 and 44% in 2007. Furthermore in 2008, 30.2% gave informal support to sick people, neighbours, family, friends and acquaintances. In 2007, 28.1% (or about 3.5 million people) gave this kind of informal support<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Trends in the number of volunteers in the current decade and the reasons for the trend*

According to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the trend in the number of volunteers in the current decade seems to be fairly stable, with slight fluctuations over time. Increasingly one hears of a shortage of volunteers, but the judgement is out whether this is based on perception, reality, or failure to adapt to changing conditions in society that require other forms of recruiting.

According to the Social and Cultural Institute, apart from the increase in voluntary work for 'other organisations' between 2004 and 2007, probably due to a change in the survey questions, the dominant picture based on the POLS survey figures over a period of more than ten years is one of stability, i.e. 42% performed voluntary work in 1997, 44% in 2007 and 42% again in 2008. Other surveys often show substantially bigger fluctuations than the POLS survey, but even these showed no strong trends emerging. There are also no signs of major shifts between fields of activity. There is no sign of a substantial downward trend in the participation in voluntary work.

There does not appear to be a growing shortage across the board as a result of a declining willingness to perform voluntary work. Rather, the shortages of volunteers appear to be due to increased quantitative and qualitative demand and problems in matching supply and

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<sup>6</sup> Statistical data provided in this section are those used officially by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and are based on the following two main sources:

- The Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) POLS survey (Periodic Life Situation Statistics Survey)
- The Social and Cultural Institute (SCP – Social Cultureel Planbureau) TBO survey (Time use) - which produces slightly different quantitative results because of a different definition of volunteering

<sup>7</sup> Marieke van Herten, Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) "Plausibiliteit POLS-module (Periodic Life Situation Statistics Survey). Vrijwillige Inzet 2007", 23 July 2008, Voorburg/Heerlen and Marieke van Herten, CBS, "Plausibiliteit POLS-module. Vrijwillige inzet 2008", 29 April 2009, Den Haag/Heerlen.

demand. Representatives of civil-society organisations have the impression that the emphasis in voluntary work is shifting more towards short-term projects with well-defined tasks and objectives. Time-intensive forms of engagement are giving way to more capital-intensive forms; that is those who find the available 24 hours per day to be a severe limitation often do still have the scope to spend money. In these situations people prefer to donate to a worthy cause or professional organisation rather than to commit themselves to having to turn up to meetings or to carry out a variety of odd jobs<sup>8</sup>.

According to a recent press article, the demand for volunteers keeps on increasing as a result of the economic crisis. Around six months ago, 25% of voluntary centres felt a clear increase in the demand for volunteers whereas now this is 44% (based on survey data from Movisie of 220 voluntary centres). The current demand comes from the bank and insurance world, information technology, the transport sector and the industry which seems to correspond with the areas of employment where there has been increasing levels of unemployment. On the other hand, there seems to be hardly any demand for more volunteers from the cultural sector, the government or science sector<sup>9</sup>.

### ***Forecast for the number of volunteers for 2015***

The Social and Cultural Institute (SCP) has analysed a large body of survey material in mapping out the trend in participation in voluntary work in recent decades. The outcome however, reveals sometimes unusual fluctuations and mutually conflicting trends. Based on what are probably the most reliable measurements, the trends have been extrapolated to 2015. The percentage of volunteers in that year has been predicted on the basis of three sources. The first one is diary data from the TBO (Time Use Survey) for the period 1975-2005. Two other forecasts have been added to this, based on surveys with a more frequent data collection over a shorter period: the Cultural Changes in the Netherlands survey (CV 1993-2006) and the Periodic Life Situation Statistics Survey (POLS 1992-2004). Based on this analysis, and therefore without taking into account changed social factors virtually no changes are expected in respect of this picture.

According to the TBO however, there would be a further decrease in the number of volunteers after 2005, resulting in 25% by 2015, which is the same figure as in 2000 and 2005. On the basis of the POLS a small increase is to be expected (from 43% in 2004 to 46% in 2015) and on the basis of the CV data a small decrease, i.e. 25% in 2015 (same as in 2004 and 2006). These forecasts are made without taking into account new policy and changing social factors.

It is expected that the following social developments will influence the number and the profile of volunteers in the future: increase in the level of education, professionalisation, ageing, the Social Support Act, successful emancipation of social groups, secularisation, "depillarisation"<sup>10</sup>, immigration, change from secondary to tertiary organisations, internet (NIT), popularity issues, individualisation, and less free time<sup>11</sup>.

### ***New developments in the profile/type of volunteers***

It was mentioned by several sources that for a few years now there has been a new type of volunteer: the motivation to do volunteering has changed from a collective duty to an individual motivation, in which a personal interest now plays an equally important role. This

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Dekker, Joep de Hart, "Vrijwilligerswerk in meervoud", SCP, Den Haag, May 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Christelijk betrokken Nederlands Dagblad, "Vraag naar vrijwilligerswerk blijft groeien", 13 July 2009.

<sup>10</sup> The falling apart of the old social divisions along class and religion lines.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Dekker, Joep de Hart, Laila Faulk, "Toekomstverkenning vrijwillige inzet 2015", SCP, Den Haag, Juni 2007.

change is visible in the growth of volunteering in the leisure sector and in schools. This new type of volunteer is also not really ideologically orientated as used to be the case previously.

### **Gender**

There are about as many female as male voluntary workers for the whole of the period 2000 to 2008, but they are active in different organisations. Men, for instance, are frequently active in sports clubs, churches or mosques, whereas women tend to opt for voluntary work in schools or welfare services.

In 2007<sup>12</sup>, men and women almost did an equal amount of volunteering (the difference is statistically insignificant). 45.9% of men volunteered whereas 43% of women did. The top 3 sectors for men were: sports, religion and other areas. For women the sectors included education, care-giving and religion.

In 2008<sup>13</sup> the difference became even smaller: 42.9% of men volunteer compared to 41.1% of women. The top 3 sectors that men and women were voluntary engaged in remained the same as in 2007.

### **Age**

There are volunteers of all ages (above 18 years old) with the highest percentage amongst the 35-44 years old group and the lowest percentage in the 75+ years old group. CBS figures for 2008 show the following age distribution:

- 18-24: 41.9%
- 25-34: 37.2%
- 35-44: 48.8%
- 45-54: 45.7%
- 55-64: 43.4%
- 65-74: 40.8%
- 75+: 23.8%

A few observations need to be made with regard to the age distribution of volunteers.

People in the 35-44 years old age category tend to have children of school age and thus 75% of them do volunteering in education.

Over the period 2000-2008 there was a substantial decrease in the number of volunteers among the 18 to 24 year-olds (from 47.6% in 2000 to 34.4 in 2002 and 41.9% in 2008). It was said that at the same time as the percentage of young people working in paid jobs increased, their time devoted to voluntary work decreased. Furthermore, voluntary work had a "dusty image" amongst youngsters. Recently however, there is a revival in the number of young volunteers mainly due to two factors: first of all the growing tendency in firms to encourage, within the CSR spirit, their employees to volunteer and therefore young people working in these firms are motivated to volunteer. Secondly, because of the social traineeships which are now compulsory in secondary education, young people are obliged to do some voluntary work as part of the school curriculum.

The average time spent on voluntary work by people of 65 and over decreased from 2.2 to 1.8 hours a week between 2000 and 2005. In this age group engagement in volunteering is

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<sup>12</sup> Source CBS 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Source CBS 2009.

increasingly in competition with continued paid employment, caring for grandchildren or family care-giving, use of the media, social contacts and solitary pastimes.

Senior citizens with a higher level of education, a higher income, a higher professional status and better health, and senior citizens who go to church regularly often do more voluntary work than senior citizens who do not show these characteristics. Also elderly people who were already volunteering in an earlier phase of their life volunteer more often than senior citizens who did not experience this until after their retirement. The number of hours of voluntary work offered by the elderly in Dutch society is expected to show a marked increase between 2005 and 2015. Within the older age group the percentage of volunteers in 2005 is higher than in the younger age groups. Moreover, senior citizens volunteers spend more hours a week volunteering than younger volunteers. However, the expected increase among elderly is largely due to the fact that the number of senior citizens is growing whereas the younger age groups are becoming smaller. On average, the elderly do not do that much more; there are simply more of them<sup>14</sup>.

In sports, the 55-69 age group is almost as active in volunteering as the younger age group with 15% participation. One in ten members of the 55-69 age group is active in some organised hobby. Three percent of the 55-69 age group is active in politics; this is the highest percentage among all the age groups. Similarly, a relatively large proportion of the 55-69 age group is active in organisations with social objectives (i.e. human rights) and residents' associations. Also religious and ideological organisations score well: 13% of the 55-69 age group are active in these. In addition help to neighbours, old-age pensioners and disabled people really stands out: no less than 24% of the 55-69 age group is active in this area. A high number of senior citizens are active as volunteers in care- and nursing institutions. In 2002, a total of 100,000 volunteers were active in these, as well as some 140,000 professionals. This large number of volunteers mainly consists of senior citizens<sup>15</sup>.

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

No systematic and comparable data is available on the geographical spread of volunteering in the Netherlands. It can be said however that the proportion of volunteers is higher in rural areas than in urbanised areas. CBS figures for 2007 and 2008 reveal the following percentage of volunteers according to the urbanisation degree.

**Table 1.1: Volunteers according to urbanisation degree for 2007 and 2008**

	2007	2008
Fully urbanised	38.6%	37.3%
Strongly urbanised	40.5%	37.2%
Partly urbanised	45.6%	44.2%
Low urbanisation	48.8%	46.8%
Non-urban	53.1%	48.2%

<sup>14</sup> MOVISIE and SCP, "The value of silver in figures – Senior engagement of senior citizens – a fact sheet", 2009.

<sup>15</sup> MOVISIE and SCP, "The value of silver in figures – Senior engagement of senior citizens – a fact sheet", 2009.



In the countryside, conditions for civic engagement are better, with the elderly participating very actively in village society.

The most important factor in the geographical spread of volunteering in the country is the demography of the region<sup>16</sup>. Differences can be found across the country but it is not exactly clear what the reasons (besides demography) are for these differences. Apparently, seven municipalities of Limburg are in the top 20 for having the smallest number of volunteers whereas most of the volunteers are found in Friesland.

### **Education levels**

The link between the levels of education and engagement in volunteering is a significant and a stable factor. According to the SCP, the higher educated Dutch do approximately twice as much voluntary work as their lower educated compatriots. The education level of the Dutch society is expected to remain stable in the coming years.

CBS POLS 2008 shows the following figures with regard to the highest level of education obtained compared to the percentage engaged in voluntary work:

**Table 1.2: Level of education obtained and percentage engaged in voluntary work for 2008**

Primary education	Preparatory vocational education (LBO)	Secondary education; pre-university education (MAVO, VWO-3)	General and vocational secondary education (HAVO, VWO)	Tertiary/higher education
23.8%	35.5%	42.3%	44.9%	53.9%

### **Volunteer involvement by sectors**

The CBS POLS 2008 shows the following breakdown with regard to the percentage of the population per sector of voluntary work:

- Sport: 12.4%
- Ideology: 8.8%
- Education: 7.5%
- Care: 6.5%
- Other: 6.5%
- Culture: 4.5%
- Hobby: 4.1%
- Youth work: 3.8%
- Neighbourhood: 3.8%
- Trade unions: 1.9%
- Housing: 1.8%
- Political associations: 1.2%
- Social justice: 0.9%

<sup>16</sup> Interview with MOVISIE.

Voluntary work in the Sport sector is the most popular (12.4%).

The CBS POLS 2008 figures furthermore reveal that on average 63.3% of volunteers does voluntary work in one sector whereas 36.7% do so in several sectors.

In terms of trends it seems that voluntary work as support to care-givers seems to be increasing.

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

Of the working population 42.5% do volunteer work. The non-working population however tends to often do more voluntary work than the employed population: 47.6% of the unemployed, 57.1% of those completing education and 48.7% of retired people (58-64 years old) volunteer. Furthermore, 54.5% of people staying at home and caring for children do volunteer work.<sup>17</sup>

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

On average, volunteers spent 3.7 hours per week on volunteering in 2008<sup>18</sup>.

When looking at the number of hours invested by volunteers per sector per volunteering job over the period 1997-2007, the following observations can be made (see graph 1.3 below):<sup>19</sup>

- Overall, the highest number of hours is spent on youth work whereas the lowest number of hours is spent on volunteering in education.
- Over the period 1997-2007, the number of hours invested increased in the following sectors: youth, sport, leisure, culture, religion, trade unions and politics.
- In the education sector the number of hours remained stable whereas the number of hours decreased slightly in the voluntary care sector.

Furthermore, in terms of specific voluntary activities undertaken, the Dutch population spent in 2007 on average 0.5 hours per week to management functions in volunteering for one or more voluntary organisations compared to 1.2 hours on operational roles in volunteering. If only volunteers are taken into account then it is calculated that 1.1 hour a week was spent on management functions and 2.6 hours a week on operational roles<sup>20</sup>.

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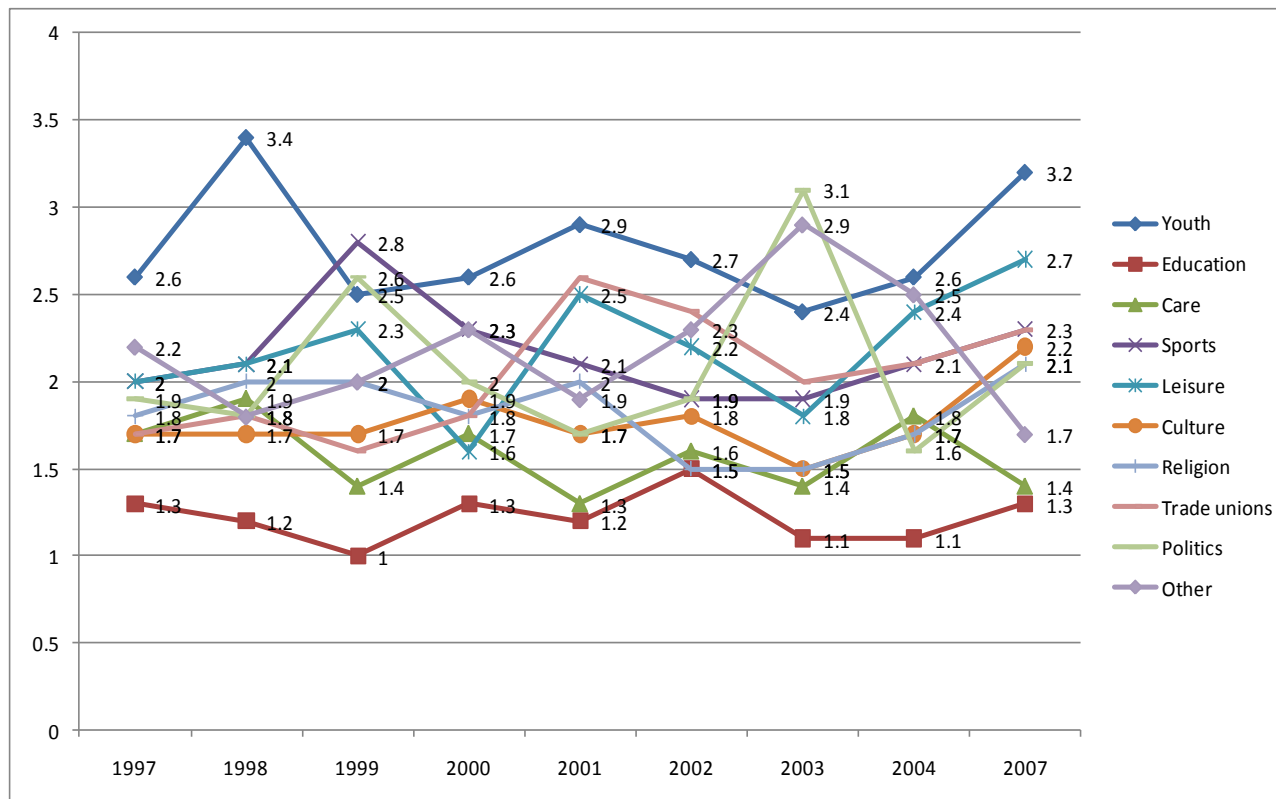
<sup>17</sup> Source CBS 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Source CBS 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Source CBS 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Source CBS 2007.

**Graph 1.3: Number of hours invested by volunteers per sector per volunteering job for the period 1997-2007**



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

##### ***Definition of voluntary organisations in the Netherlands***

By voluntary organisations it is meant those organisations which entirely consist of volunteers or which work with volunteers and request funding. There is no official definition of such organisations at national level but municipalities tend to set certain criteria especially with regard to how far the paid workforce is involved in the organisation.

Municipalities are currently working on defining such organisations in terms of improving the funding mechanisms. It is at the local level that funding for such organisations is decided.

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

There are around 250,000 voluntary organisations. Furthermore, there are other active volunteers who provide services to the community which are unaccounted for given the legal status of the organisations in which they operate.

However, there is no data available on the number of voluntary organisations per field/sector. It can be said though that most voluntary organisations can be found in the sport sector.

Voluntary organisations in the *care sector* are nationally organised (they are all members of the NOV) and are often active in regional and local departments. Besides these, there are

local initiatives and religious initiated activities. Voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross and UVV (Union of Institute of Volunteers) sign contracts with care organisations to provide a supply of volunteers. Some of the organisations in the care sector work exclusively with volunteers (especially mutual support and campaigning and are often local departments of larger organisations). Other organisations work mainly with paid staff but have volunteers do the tasks in the field. Examples of this are nursing and care homes.

### ***Trend***

There has been a very low, negligible decrease in the number of voluntary organisations linked to the overall, slight decrease of time investment in volunteering.

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

There are no official figures on the nature of the organisations that host volunteers but several interviews as well as literature revealed that voluntary activity is especially low in the public and private sector (i.e. commercial private sector). Most voluntary activities take place in the civil society and non-profit sector with a growing tendency of voluntary organisations wanting to support the care sector.

The following four types of organisations of volunteer activity/entities within the non-profit sector can be singled out<sup>21</sup>:

#### 1. Voluntary work in the welfare sector

The main characteristic of organisations included in this type is that they use volunteers to achieve the goals of the organisations. Other characteristics are that it involves unpaid work and it has an exclusive character, i.e. not every person can perform this type of voluntary activity. The following activities can be classified within this type: volunteering in service provision; volunteering in public services such as for example the police and the fire brigade (this is rather low in the Netherlands); associations and NGOs (public services commission NGOs to provide public services).

#### 2. Voluntary work within the democratic sphere

The main characteristic for this type of voluntary organisation is the fact that volunteers work to be part of policy making and want to be heard. This type has an inclusive character, i.e. everybody who has something to say can participate. Examples of this type of organisation are action groups, interest groups and political parties.

#### 3. Voluntary work in the community

The main characteristic of voluntary work in the community is mutual support. The volunteers are there “with and for each other”. This type has an inclusive character. Examples are self-help groups and associations and clubs in sport and culture. With the secularisation and individualisation in society there is a growing need for social cohesion and therefore the need for this type of organisations is increasing. The aims of this type of voluntary organisations are to avoid loneliness and to create social networks.

#### 4. Voluntary work related to the economic sphere

Within this type of voluntary organisation the citizen uses voluntary work to contribute to his or her personal development. It originated around 30 years ago in a climate of unemployment. Important characteristics are integration and the experience of volunteering. Furthermore there is a strong link to the labour market and it provides structure to an individual's life.

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<sup>21</sup> Interview Cees van den Bos, director at the volunteer support centre of the city of Arnhem and also project leader of the comparative research on the infrastructure of voluntary work in eight European countries and the US.

## 1.5 Main volunteer activities

In 2008 28.3% of volunteering jobs concerned **management functions**. The highest percentage of management tasks could be found in the housing sector (64.9) and the lowest percentage in care-giving (10.7%). Management tasks took on average around 2.7 hours a week. **Operational roles** (such as shopping for older people) formed 74.8% of volunteering activities and took on average 2.1 hours per week. The highest share was in youth work (85.4%) and the lowest share in housing (53.7%).<sup>22</sup>

Although there is an overall equal gender distribution in the profile of volunteers, more women tend to do the operational roles whereas more men tend to do the managing roles within volunteering.

A specific example of Amnesty International can illustrate the variety of volunteer activities. Amnesty International has volunteers at national, regional and local levels. Volunteers take up a significant share of the work done by Amnesty. At the national Secretariat 70 out of approximately 230 workers are volunteers. Of these 70 there are not only administrators but also judicial experts and country researchers. Since 2006 Amnesty has had a national flexi-volunteers pool for one-off short tasks at the headquarters or for national and local activities which require a time investment of one hour to a whole day. This pool is considered to be a success. So far 300 people have subscribed to this type of "ad-hoc" volunteering. At the regional level there are about 130 volunteers who have specific knowledge and skills in the field of media and campaigning, recruitment of members or in the organisation of actions. At the end of 2007 Amnesty had around 292 local groups which are involved with the large spectrum of activities. They perform tasks such as local actions, campaigning, administration, etc. Out of the 18,000 local activists there are around 170 local flexi-volunteers<sup>23</sup>.

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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

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

The Directorate for Social Policy of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is the main public body responsible for volunteering. Insofar as policy relating specifically to voluntary work aimed at young people, it falls under the responsibility of that Ministry Directorate for Youth Policy.

All government departments are responsible for volunteering within their own sector whereas the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport has the co-ordinating and overall responsibility. Furthermore, within the Social Support Act since 2007, it sets out, what the tasks are for the municipalities, i.e. the basic functions. At national level a direction-giving framework has been created via the Social Support Act and it is at the local level that the implementation and responsibility are more specifically expected from the, municipalities. At national level basic functions for the supply of support to volunteering have been defined. This created the frame in which municipalities can operate.

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<sup>22</sup> Source CBS 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Esther van den Berg, Joep de Hart, "Maatschappelijke organisaties in beeld", SCP, September 2008.

A joint social agenda makes it possible to agree about voluntary sector policy between the different levels of government and other parties. The elaboration and harmonisation of the actions in the voluntary sector are carried out in a number of ways, including through consultation between central government, the Association of the Dutch Municipalities and the Association of Provincial Authorities.

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

#### *National level*

At national level the two most important bodies are the NOV (Association of Dutch Organisations Voluntary Effort) and MOVISIE.

#### **NOV<sup>24</sup>**

NOV is the organisation that defends the different needs of the voluntary organisations. In 1994 NOV was appointed as one of two support institutions for volunteering. The other organisation was the Stichting Vrijwilligersmanagement (Foundation Volunteers Management - SVM). Its role consisted in renewing and professionalising volunteering.

In 2003 the Dutch foundation that dealt with the management of volunteering, SVM and the NOV joined forces and formed CIVIQ. NOV has historically sustained and represented the interests of more than 4 million volunteers while the objective of SVM was to modernise voluntary work and make it more professional. Over the years, the differences between the two organisations became less evident, to the point that in 2003 they merged. NOV continued its activities under the name of Organisation to Foster Volunteering (NOV Association). In 2007, CIVIQ became part of MOVISIE.

NOV is the leading organisation within the voluntary effort sector of the Netherlands. NOV has 350 member organisations that work with or for volunteers. NOV is unique because it is the only organisation in the Netherlands geared to strengthening voluntary work. It has two kinds of members: organisations that perform voluntary work and those that fulfil a supporting or coordinating role.

NOV has three main tasks:

1. To serve the interests of the voluntary effort sector. NOV is the spokesperson and lobbyist for Dutch voluntary work and as such is a serious partner in discussions with politicians, government officials and other policy-influencing parties.
2. To act as an intermediary for its members. As a network actor, NOV gives its members the possibility to exchange knowledge and experiences, and to develop collaborative projects. Through these networks member organisations mutually strengthen each other.
3. To provide a major stimulus to the voluntary effort. NOV works towards more public recognition of voluntary effort, and its name is also used in innovative initiatives.

The NOV Association is geared towards the voluntary effort sector as a whole. Member organisations of the NOV Association receive preferential treatment. Together these member organisations determine the Association's future policies, and they are invited to make maximal use of its networking role. As of 2003, the NOV Association no longer has a working organisation at its disposal. In terms of facilities, communication and expertise, the NOV Association collaborates closely with MOVISIE. Each year, both parties articulate the specific arrangements of their collaboration in a formal contract.

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<sup>24</sup> Source NOV website, [www.nov.nl](http://www.nov.nl)

## **MOVISIE<sup>25</sup>**

MOVISIE concentrates on the infrastructure and provision of knowledge and advice to volunteering in the Netherlands. It is the institution which covers the whole of social support and welfare. It implements the programme commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

MOVISIE is the national organisation funded to gather and disseminate knowledge about all aspects of volunteering to organisations and councils. They develop tools, offer advice, support and training, as well as carrying out promotional work, research and product development.

### *Regional and local level*

At *regional level* there are the volunteering centres, the centres for social development (CMOs) and the volunteering support points (around 200). Volunteering support points are non-profit structures in which funding depends on local and regional government institutions and the services offered to beneficiaries are free of charge. Towards the mid 1970s the government helped the establishment of 30 volunteering support points at local level and contributed to financing their activities. Currently there are about 200 registered centres. At a regional level there are regional volunteer support points which are bodies that support organisations involved in sports activities, scouts and caring for the elderly.

The twelve Dutch provinces play an important part. They support the paid support staff at the local level. They also disseminate knowledge and information that is produced at different levels, including national organisations.

At *local level* there are the municipalities, volunteering centres/support points giving advice, helping with vacancies and promotion.

The local level is the most important one at which members of the public are active, for example in shelter for the homeless, neighbourhood and club houses and care-giving. Local authorities are responsible for the executive level of welfare activities. They subsidise local organisations and provide facilities, such as sports centres. In some cases local authorities involve the voluntary sector platforms. Local authorities have the lead in supporting change processes at the local level. They receive support from the provinces.

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

Voluntary work is supported at local, provincial and national level by an infrastructure of support organisations which are not affiliated to any particular type of work or economic sector. At the local or regional level, this infrastructure consists of about 130 agencies for voluntary activities throughout the whole country ([www.vrijwilligerscentrale.nl](http://www.vrijwilligerscentrale.nl)). The agencies mediate between supply and demand, and promote voluntary work in general. Although these agencies target all volunteers, there is often specific attention for young people.

A large number of voluntary organisations benefit from the support offered by volunteer and promotion service entities particularly in terms of training, information and communication, legal and tax advice, logistical services, participation in events and seeking volunteers.

It is not only the local and regional volunteer support points or volunteering centres that support voluntary effort. The national and regional associations and departments support

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<sup>25</sup> Based on interviews with MOVISIE and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

volunteers. Businesses are increasingly helping volunteers as well. Overall though, it is the support points that are commissioned by the municipalities to implement volunteering policy. The support points offer the support to local and regional policy by means of knowledge development, brokerage service, supply of information and increasingly providing advice and project development.

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

Most of the active voluntary organisations are members of a European network (e.g. European Volunteer Centre) or umbrella organisation, and therefore have partners in other countries. At the national level, the Dutch Youth Council is a member of the European Youth Forum, while at local level some organisations are members of European networks exchanging young volunteers in European Voluntary Services, e.g. SVR (Foundation Voluntary Work) and Foundation Richter in Den Helder, [www.richtereu.com](http://www.richtereu.com)<sup>26</sup>.

## **2.2 Policies**

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

In the current decade, voluntary effort and voluntary policy have been very important issues on the political agenda. With the UN International Year on Volunteering in 2001 the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport gave an important impetus to this policy area. A national Commission on Volunteering Policy was set up. This Commission had to help local and regional governments develop an effective volunteering policy. Besides the creation of this Commission, funding was provided to municipalities via the "Tijdelijke Stimuleringsregeling Vrijwilligerswerk" (TSV - Temporary Activating Measure Voluntary Effort) to encourage municipalities to invest in voluntary work. The TSV allowed municipalities in the period 2002-2005 to develop innovative activities in the area of volunteering<sup>27</sup>.

In the four-year policy paper on volunteering entitled "Voor Elkaar" ("for each other") it was asked to follow up the impetus in 2006 and 2007.

In 2007 the national government has drastically decentralised to the municipal level both its funding and its policy involvement in the voluntary effort. This is expressed in particular in the Social Support Act (WMO). In the policy paper, the responsibility for support and expertise enhancement was in particular put into the hands of local government, which receives the resources needed through the Municipal Fund (gemeentefonds). Furthermore, it has become clear that many cumbersome regulations originate from municipal ordinances, while the coalition agreement calls upon municipalities to cut the burden of paperwork for citizens (and organisations) by 25%. As a result, public affairs' activities have to be geared more towards local level government as well. This is why the NOV Association has actively pursued contacts with the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG). At the managerial and policy level, the NOV Association has also conferred more often with other parties that serve the voluntary effort sector's interests, such as Mezzo, the national organisation for informal care-giving, and NOC\*NSF, the umbrella organisation for the sport sector<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> YouthPartnership, "Questionnaire "Voluntary activities" The Netherlands".

<sup>27</sup> Matthijs Terpstra, Eric Lagendijk, Paul Duijvestein, MOVISIE, "AVI 130: 2 jaar, 114 adviezen, 158 gemeenten en vrijwilligerscentrales verder," April 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, "'For each other". Policy statement charity and volunteering 2008-2011", 30 March 2009 and NOV, Annual Report 2007.



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

With regard to national targets, the aim at the Ministry level is that 75% of municipalities (400 in total) will have implemented the basic/core functions set out in the policy communication on the Social Support Act.

In terms of reporting arrangements for volunteering, the SCP conducts volunteering research commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the CBS carries out every two years the POLS module for volunteering. Furthermore, qualitative monitoring is being carried out regularly by means of thematic research and the results provide feedback for policy and practice.

### ***International policies***

Volunteering in the Netherlands has been granted remarkable political support over recent years, in terms of infrastructure and the stimulation of new volunteers' activities. Indeed, it was given a huge boost by the UN International Year on Volunteering 2001, as Amsterdam hosted the XVI IAVE World Volunteer Conference, which marked the official inauguration of the International Year. This served to consolidate political interest in, and support for, volunteerism in the Netherlands<sup>29</sup>.

With the UN International Year on Volunteering (IYV) the national interest and support organisations became much more visible than in previous years. These are the NOV, the NIZW (the Dutch Institute for Care and Welfare), the SVM (Association Volunteering Management) and the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG). Within the survey undertaken it seems that for 42% of municipalities, the IYV has had an important influence. It can be said that the IYV seemed to have been a catalyst for putting voluntary policy high on the agenda<sup>30</sup>.

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport supported the programme "Stap Twee" ("Step Two") which started with the IYV and ran up to 2005. It aimed at increasing diversity in the voluntary sector and was implemented by the National Volunteer Centre, CIVIQ (now MOVISIE) and the Institute for Multicultural Development FORUM.

Furthermore, the Netherlands participated in the INVOLVE project, launched in 2006 by the European Volunteer Centre (CEV). CEV initiated the project with the view of answering the question "How can volunteering be better used in order to facilitate integration needed as a consequence of migration". The aim of the project was to explore innovative solutions of social integration and active participation. The seven participating countries included in the project, set up a national expert group in the field which collected the research data feeding into INVOLVE national data.

The Netherlands contributed to the INVOLVE project, by providing the action research on the link between integration and volunteering, producing a national report, and some of the main findings of the different reports<sup>31</sup>.

In the light of the EU 2006 consultation on voluntary activities of youth, the Dutch Ministry Department of Youth began to integrate information on the European dimension of youth policy in communications to other government levels<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> European Volunteer Centre, Association of Voluntary Service Organisations, "Legal position of volunteers in the Netherlands".

<sup>30</sup> Ton van der Pennen, "Ontwikkeling in het lokaal vrijwilligersbeleid", 2003.

<sup>31</sup> European Volunteer Centre, "Volunteering in the Netherlands. Fact and figures report", 2007.

<sup>32</sup> European Youth Forum, "Shadow report on the implementation of the third priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field, Voluntary Activities," 2005.

## 2.3 Programmes

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

A number of national programmes have stimulated volunteering in the Netherlands in the past decade. The following ones are the most important ones:

#### **The Temporary Stimulation Voluntary Work Programme<sup>33</sup>**

The Temporary Stimulation Voluntary Work Programme “Tijdelijke Stimuleringsregeling Vrijwilligerswerk” 2001-2005 was an initiative of the Dutch government, which allowed local authorities to embark on projects to support volunteers and volunteer involving organisations. Fifty per cent of the costs were met by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. Varying according to the number of inhabitants in each municipality, and the characteristics of each project, the programme aimed at:

- Improving volunteers’ skills;
- Recruiting new volunteers, especially from under-represented groups, such as young people or ethnic minorities;
- Supporting the administrative work of non-profit organisations;
- The programme was developed until January 2005, in line with other local policies.

#### **The Social Support Act of 2007**

It sets out the legal framework for municipalities to take action on volunteering. It is the first time volunteering is mentioned explicitly in a policy paper.

In order to support the municipalities in their volunteering policy, core functions have been formulated for care and volunteering. These core functions have been developed by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the VNG (association of Dutch municipalities), the NOV and Mezzo (national association of caregivers and care-giving by volunteers).

Under the Social Support Act municipalities have the task of deciding on their own volunteering policy based on the five core functions as defined by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

The five core functions are the following: translating social developments, creating connections, strengthening, expanding and anchoring.

1. Translating social developments: i.e. It is predicted that the new volunteer is a critical consumer who will demand much more from the organisation he/she volunteers for, ageing of the population, increased participation of private organisations, etc.
2. Creating connections: i.e. Through platforms and networks, connections between schools and volunteering organisations or private sector and volunteering organisations.
3. Strengthening: giving the support infrastructure information about new regulations, advice, expertise and funding possibilities.
4. Expanding: through i.e. Promotion (“inspiring, seducing, expanding and valuing).
5. Anchoring: Acquired knowledge and experience needs to be available via an information point or by means of developed training programmes.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> CEV and Association of Voluntary Service Organisations, “Legal position of volunteers in the Netherlands”.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, “Core functions. Local support volunteering and carers”, March 2009.

### **Voluntary effort Advisors**

The aim of 'AVI 130', implemented in the period 2006-2007 was to strengthen the local infrastructure of volunteering work and of the volunteering policy of municipalities.<sup>35</sup> The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports commissioned MOVISIE in collaboration with the DS group (organisation doing research, advice and management) to set up a project organisation launching advisors and ambassadors. They had to deliver tailored work to provinces, municipalities and local support points.

The goal was to support 130 municipalities with their policy and infrastructure for volunteering. AVI 130 therefore means: Voluntary effort Advisors in 130 municipalities.

Under the programme, 25 advisors have implemented 114 advisory pathways in 158 municipalities. In 60% of the advisory pathways work has been done on the improvement of the support infrastructure for voluntary effort such as setting up a new support point or changing the structure of an existing one. In 33% of the pathways, the local volunteering policy has been reformulated or adapted often accompanied by a needs assessment. Furthermore, some pathways focused on specific themes such as the involvement of youngsters or older people as volunteers, the development of CRS or removing existing obstacles in the local legal and regulatory framework.

Overall, a great deal of attention was given within the programme to the exchange of knowledge.

Research was conducted in 496 municipalities concerning the influence of voluntary policy at national and international level on local voluntary policy. Outcomes:

- Overall, 75% of the municipalities have in one way or another (re)formulated their voluntary policy. In 55% of municipalities a separate note has been written on local voluntary policy whereas in 30% this is being worked on.
- The majority of municipalities do not conduct a specific voluntary policy. In larger municipalities prioritising occurs more often. When prioritising the following figures were found in terms of sectors: sport and leisure (74%), health and care (68%) and activities for children (71%).
- More specific policy is conducted with regard to target groups (44% of municipalities). The most important target groups are: young people, older people, immigrants and job seekers.

### **Temporary regulation voluntary work by and for youth 2007-2008**

Concerning the development of voluntary activities for young people, a stimulation regulation does exist. The Ministry of Youth and Families subsidises 23 projects with the 'temporary regulation voluntary work by and for youth 2007-2008'. Due to a successful similar regulation in 2006, the government decided to continue this regulation. 16,300 young volunteers are being reached by the current regulation. The projects cover a broad social field; from youth, care-giving, handicapped people, sport, environment and nature to development cooperation. The regulation has 2 targets:

- Expanding knowledge and skills within the scope of the organisation;
- Increasing the number of young volunteers.

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<sup>35</sup> Matthijs Terpstra, Eric Lagendijk, Paul Duijvestein, MOVISIE, "AVI 130: 2 jaar, 114 adviezen, 158 gemeenten en vrijwilligerscentrales verder", April 2008.

With this regulation, the government stimulates the local voluntary work with a total amount of 4.7 million euro over 2 years. NUSO Playground Netherlands, YMCA Netherlands and the Dutch Red Cross are some examples of organisations which get a subsidy in 2007 and 2008. The new projects aim at increasing the organisations' strength on the local level. The support is given to the organisations to help them to develop new methods to work more effectively with volunteers and to learn how to cooperate with young people at risk (vulnerable youngsters in voluntary work associations)<sup>36</sup>.

### **'&joy' project**

MOVISIE had set up the '&joy' project, which was specifically aimed at involving youngsters in voluntary work. The programme ended in December 2008. The targets had been summarised in 3 clusters:

1. Knowledge of working with youngsters within the Social Support Act.
2. Stimulating networks, knowledge exchanges and research concerning voluntary activities by youth.
3. Attractiveness and accessibility of voluntary activities by youth.

A number of programmes have started to 'modernise' voluntary work in order to meet the needs of young people. This means for instance short, flexible, changing organisations to become more open, lowering the age of the boards of organisations.

Also, some general activities have been set up in order to involve youth more in voluntary work. For instance, the 'MADD' (Make A Difference Day) is being organised each year. MADD offers people the possibility to get to know voluntary activities within their neighbourhood. For a lot of voluntary organisations, MADD can offer considerable of publicity, and they can search for new volunteers. The MADD is being financed by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. Although this activity doesn't specifically aim at youngsters, young people will probably feel addressed as it is a big, sparkling campaign. Another good example might be the 'National Compliments Day', which is being organised every year.

The National Compliments Day 2008 was specifically aimed at (young) volunteers, as volunteers don't often get the appreciation and recognition they should get. On this day, people get the opportunity to thank 'their' volunteer, by giving him or her a national compliment award. Some examples on local level are for instance the 'For Free Magazine' ([www.forfreemagazine.nl](http://www.forfreemagazine.nl)), magazine for young volunteers in Amsterdam, and the website [www.vrijwilligersgevraagd.nl](http://www.vrijwilligersgevraagd.nl), which is more or less specifically aimed at youngsters who would like to do some kind of voluntary work. A lot of special websites for youth (i.e. Youth Information Point) provide general information about the possibilities concerning voluntary work for youth<sup>37</sup>.

There are also particular programmes for stimulating volunteering involving migrants and migrant women, called "1000 and one strength".

At national level there is the promotion of expertise which in 2006 has developed a new model in the area of volunteering. Municipalities are responsible for this promotion of expertise at the local level. In 2007 an amount of 2.5 million euro and 5 million in 2008 were added to the local budget<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Youth Partnership, "Questionnaire "Voluntary activities" The Netherlands"

<sup>37</sup> Youth Partnership, "Questionnaire "Voluntary activities" The Netherlands"

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, "For each other", Policy statement charity and volunteering 2008-2011, 30 March 2009.

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

Almost all (bigger) municipalities finance support of centres that support voluntary activities.

In order to encourage voluntary work, some local authorities give yearly awards to volunteers and volunteer organisations or publish brochures on volunteering. Local authorities are also concerned with encouraging the long-term unemployed to have a greater role in society by reintegrating them into civil life. This is done by for example the "reintegration programme" where the unemployed are engaged in the voluntary sector<sup>39</sup>.

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

There is the European Voluntary Service programme as part of Youth in Action. It took a long time for this action to take off in the Netherlands, since there was no tradition of voluntary service. But at this moment around 80 Dutch youngsters per year engage in voluntary service activities abroad through EVS<sup>40</sup>.

MOVISIE has an international programme supporting volunteering across borders. Some youth organisations have their own international (exchange) programmes.

## **3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 General Legal framework**

There is no general legal framework for volunteering in the Netherlands.

However, the municipalities have the legal task of supporting volunteers. The Social Support Act provides the context for the municipalities to, focused at local level, conduct an integral policy, in which connections are made between the need for support for volunteers on the one hand and other policy areas such as child care, housing, employment, etc. on the other hand<sup>41</sup>.

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

The growing professionalisation within the voluntary effort sector calls for specific competencies among voluntary organisations. One of the initiatives of the NOV is the establishment of a national quality award. In this way the NOV seeks to stimulate voluntary organisations to work on achieving a high standard and also give them public recognition for it. This demonstrates that organisations that receive awards have organised their voluntary effort in a successful and effective way. Furthermore, it contributes to internal appreciation and a sense of pride. MOVISIE was put in charge of the quality award evaluations, including communications, publicity and the organisation of a nation-wide network of thirty advisors/ evaluators. In 2007 fourteen new awards were presented. The year 2007 was also devoted in part to the progress and further development of 'Well Arranged' (Goed Geregeld).

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<sup>39</sup> Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio SPES, "Volunteering across Europe. The Netherlands", 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Youth Partnership, "Questionnaire Voluntary Activities, the Netherlands".

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, "'For each other". Policy statement charity and volunteering 2008-2011", 30 March 2009 and NOV, Annual Report 2007.

The “Well Arranged” quality award has been used since 2005 as part of the value certificate project (given by the NOV) when a voluntary organisation has a good volunteering policy. It is increasing in popularity (so far 38 organisations have received it based on self-evaluation and with the support of advisors from volunteering support points). The aim is to improve the policy on volunteering with this project. More specifically, the tool allows organisations to get a basic picture of how successful they are at working with volunteers and how attractive they are to volunteers. In addition, voluntary organisations may use this self-evaluation tool to improve the quality of their output<sup>42</sup>.

In recent years the number of quality awards applications and re-applications seems to be lower than foreseen. This appears to be influenced by the introduction of other quality systems and quality certificates. Notably a similar system in use for the welfare sector negatively influences the interest among centres which are a part of broader welfare foundations. In 2008 the quality award system was being reconsidered in combination with the system of the welfare foundations.

Furthermore, organisations seem to demonstrate a limited appreciation for external validation and their recognition as a successful voluntary organisation. According to advisors in the network, local voluntary organisations are geared in particular to tackling issues such as the Social Support Act implementation, the introduction of social traineeships and other demands put on by the government onto the voluntary effort sector, such as the issues of re-integration and civic integration.

### 3.2 Legal framework for individuals

In the Netherlands there is no specific legal status or legal framework for volunteers. However, volunteering and volunteers are highly acknowledged by the government and the vision on volunteering is expressed in a political note as well as by the Social Support Act.

However, some aspects of volunteering are partially covered by regulations on taxes and social welfare benefits.

#### *Provisions for specific categories*

Volunteers are subject as individuals to the general rules concerning entitlement to state social welfare benefits. Their entitlement will depend on whether or not the voluntary activity undertaken affects any parallel recognised legal status that they may be entitled to such as being a student, unemployed, unfit to work or any other status which entitles them to some form of social protection.

Generally, the time a person spends on volunteering activities affects his/her entitlement to subsistence benefits. However, welfare policies may vary from one municipality to another and social benefits are usually considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, steps have been taken by several municipalities to allow people on unemployment benefits to volunteer without restriction and without losing their entitlements.

Those receiving unemployment benefits first have to ask permission of the local authority granting the benefits. Some local authorities though do not grant permission to do volunteering whilst receiving unemployment benefits. For those choosing to volunteer abroad, unemployment benefits are usually suspended until the volunteer returns. On returning to the Netherlands, regaining entitlement to unemployment benefits takes some months. Until that happens, the volunteer is entitled to receive the minimum social welfare support “bijstand”, which is about 454 euro per month.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview MOVISIE.

The Act on Subsistence Benefit, “Algemene Bijstandswet” (ABW), limits the time that persons in receipt of subsistence benefits can dedicate to volunteering. Because they are obliged under this law to dedicate their time to job hunting, volunteering is only permitted outside regular working hours, i.e. evenings and weekends.

According to Articles 65 and 115 of the ABW, those who receive subsistence benefits must inform the local authorities about his or her voluntary activity. The local authorities will then check:

- Whether the voluntary activity improves the volunteer’s chances of accessing the labour market, and if it does, the authorities may in some cases agree to allow a person to volunteer during office hours without losing the right to receive these benefits;
- Whether the volunteer activity is replacing a paid job. If so, the local authorities may not allow the specific voluntary activity to take place.

The Disablement Insurance Act, “wet op de arbeidsongeschiktheidsverzekering” (WAO), affects volunteers that are entitled to disability benefits. It provides for a more flexible approach: volunteers in receipt of this benefit need only to inform the competent authorities of their volunteering in cases where:

- Volunteers are already involved in programmes for integration into society;
- The voluntary activity could somehow have negative effects on the general health of the volunteer.

According to the general rules provided for by the General Child Benefit Act, “Algemene Kinderbijslagwet” (AKW), beneficiaries of child benefits may retain their entitlement to this allowance provided the child or young person lives in an E.U. or E.E.A. country (or in another country with which the Netherlands has a social security agreement). This condition may facilitate engagement in some voluntary service programmes abroad.

The key issues determining entitlement in these cases would be whether the child or young person is supported financially by the beneficiary or not. In cases where children or young people are engaged in full-time voluntary service programmes and receive subsistence support from the host organisation, for example the “European Voluntary Service” (EVS) Programme of the European Commission, they will lose the right to this entitlement<sup>43</sup>.

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

An overall policy aim with regard to people receiving benefits and their involvement in volunteering is that municipalities use budgets under spent for unemployment benefits to stimulate employment and social participation. The city of Rotterdam for example will create yearly 4,500 volunteering jobs for people with poor chances on the labour market. They will largely be placed in schools, care homes and community services. Furthermore, they will receive individual coaching and training. Through this initiative people will be taken out of their social isolation and they can develop new knowledge and competences which can increase their self-esteem and subsequently their chances on the labour market<sup>44</sup>.

It is interesting to note that single women with children can receive free childcare whilst volunteering.

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<sup>43</sup> European Volunteer Centre and Association of Voluntary Service Organisations, “Legal position of volunteers in the Netherlands”.

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, ““For each other”. Policy statement charity and volunteering 2008-2011”, 30 March 2009 and NOV, Annual Report 2007.

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

The Co-ordination Law on Social Insurance, approved in 1987 and amended over the years, regulates taxation of volunteer-related expenses. As of October 2002, according to this law:

- The tax authorities permit volunteers to receive an expense allowance tax free up to a maximum amount 1,500 euro per year (and not more than 150 euro per month). Up to this amount volunteers do not need to account for expenses;
- Over that amount, real volunteer expenses, for example phone calls, stamps and travel expenses etc. will generally be compensated tax-free as well. However, in these cases, the tax department will ask for the costs to be itemised. In cases of unjustified expenses, reimbursements will be considered as income and taxed as such. In such cases, organisations involving volunteers will have to report all the costs reimbursed to their volunteers to the tax authorities and prove that their relationship is not an employee-employer relationship. If the amounts reported exceed the maximum allowed and the organisation cannot justify them, the organisation will in principle have to pay taxes and social security contributions;
- When a voluntary organisation cannot afford the volunteer's expenses, the volunteer can mention them in his/her annual tax declaration and can, under certain conditions, obtain a tax reduction for this amount at the end of the fiscal year<sup>45</sup>.

According to a survey carried out by the CBS, 6.7% into the compensation awarded to volunteering activities: management functions got some kind of compensation (money (75.3%), gift (14.4%), money and gift (10.3%)) compared to 6.5% of operational volunteering roles (money (65.9%), gift (22.5%), money and gift (11.2%))<sup>46</sup>.

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

There are no legal provisions on the rights and responsibilities of organisations engaging volunteers. Voluntary organisations in the Netherlands however, have joined the International Association of Volunteer Effort (IAVE) "Universal Declaration on Volunteering", which addresses the fundamental value of volunteering to society, as well as the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. This declaration was approved by the Board of Directors of IAVE at its 16th World Volunteer Conference, in Amsterdam in January 2001.

#### ***VAT exemptions / privileges for voluntary organisations***

A special tax rule exists for voluntary organisations which received the CBWF label (charity quality label issued by the Central Bureau for Funding): only 8% tax has to be paid on donations which is a support measure from the government.

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

There is no legal framework concerning the involvement of private organisations in volunteering. If it concerns private companies then they choose themselves how they deal with volunteering but they cannot force employees to do volunteering within or outside working hours.

In the POLS survey 2007, 11.9% of respondents indicated that their employer allows them to do one or more days of volunteering a year whilst being compensated. These figures

<sup>45</sup> European Volunteer Centre and Association of Voluntary Service Organisations, "Legal position of volunteers in the Netherlands".

<sup>46</sup> Source CBS 2009.



correspond to around 352,000 people. The same survey repeated in 2008 revealed this percentage to have slightly decreased to 10.6%<sup>47</sup>.

CSR is becoming increasingly important and so far there are several initiatives coming from the private sector and from MVO Nederland<sup>48</sup> aimed at voluntary effort as part of CSR. Also municipalities try to support private companies' CSR policy by organising activities which put the companies in contact with the organisations needing volunteers. For example the "Market Place Day", which originated in the city of Arnhem, has now been held in 70 municipalities. On these days, organisations explain the need they have for volunteers and private companies get to find out how they and their employees could contribute. At these organised events, voluntary support points and volunteering centres are also present.

In response to the interest shown by the business sector, the NOV project "Partners in Participation" supports the profit sector participants who actively try to involve their workers in projects. It is a project of CSR promotion, aiming to strengthen the link between the market and the civil society, offering mutual benefits to both partners<sup>49</sup>.

### 3.5 Insurance and Protection

Organisations working with volunteers do not have to comply with the Dutch Health and Safety Act, although volunteers are legally protected against risks which could be dangerous for their health. There are some rules for vulnerable groups too, which are underage people and pregnant women<sup>50</sup>.

Although there are no legal provisions protecting volunteers at work, it is general practice among volunteer involving organisations to insure their volunteers against the risks of accident, illness or third party liability related to their volunteer activities. As there are no legal regulations on the liability of board members of non-profit organisations, they shall insure themselves under what is called a "liability insurance for companies" ("aansprakelijkheidsverzekering voor bedrijven")<sup>51</sup>.

The government is trying to help municipalities to get insurance for local volunteering by making 4 million euro available for collective volunteering insurance from 1 January 2009 onwards. It is clear that the added value of this is recognised since already 387 of the 441 municipalities have taken out such a collective volunteering insurance. With this action local policy is stressing the importance of volunteering and trying to make the role of volunteer more attractive.

Research has shown that liability issues are seen as major obstacles for voluntary organisations especially because the rules are not clear. So this new initiative should remove this obstacle. The insurance is for volunteers who work unpaid with a social interest within or for an organisation (association, institution, church, etc.)<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Marieke van Herten, Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) "Plausibiliteit POLS-module (Periodic Life Situation Statistics Survey). Vrijwillige Inzet 2007", 23 July 2008, Voorburg/Heerlen and Marieke van Herten, CBS, "Plausibiliteit POLS-module. Vrijwillige inzet 2008", 29 April 2009, Den Haag/Heerlen.

<sup>48</sup> This is an initiative in the Netherlands advising private companies how to implement CSR. The website is [www.mvonderland.nl](http://www.mvonderland.nl)

<sup>49</sup> Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio SPES, "Volunteering across Europe. The Netherlands", 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Youth Partnership "Questionnaire "Voluntary activities", The Netherlands.

<sup>51</sup> CEV and Association of Voluntary Service Organisations, "Legal position of volunteers in the Netherlands".

<sup>52</sup> "Agreeing on a local volunteering insurance" ([www.vngverzekerling.nl](http://www.vngverzekerling.nl)).

## 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

### 4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

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

In the Netherlands voluntary work is mainly the responsibility of local governments. At national level there is only a supportive role.

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport spends directly in total 4 million euro a year to both care and volunteering (2 million is spent on volunteering). The rest goes via the municipality budget to municipalities and other funds go via the collective insurance for volunteers as well as funds for the brokerage function for social traineeships and volunteering<sup>53</sup>.

In the period since 2000 the total available municipality budget for volunteering and community care increased from 7.6 million euro to 32 million euro in 2007<sup>54</sup>.

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

The results of a survey of 15 voluntary organisations carried out in the Netherlands in 2004 showed that the main source of funding of voluntary organisations was private funding: 26% of funds are derived from donations, and contributions from businesses and banks; only 12% came from the sale of goods and services; whilst 23% came from contributions from public bodies; 24% from members and 15% from project income. The amount of income a year exceeded 151,000 euro in the case of 8 organisations, ranged between 26,000 euro and 50,000 euro for one organisation, and was under 5,000 euro for 2 organisations<sup>55</sup>.

#### ***Funding arrangements***

In the Netherlands, organisations receiving funding can apply for the CBWF<sup>56</sup> quality label which means they are recognised by the government in terms of how they receive and spend funding.

#### ***Public procurement and provision of social services***

Non-profit organisations tender for public contracts but often feel compelled to reduce the quality of delivery as part of commercial competition (i.e. by reducing costs). Currently, there is a lot of discussion in the Netherlands on the topic of public procurement. There is a sense from many non-profit organisations that their 'way of working' is being put under pressure as a result of the EU public procurement rules. They believe there should be more continuity in the provision of services (e.g. using existing networks), which is difficult to achieve when there are regularly new service providers.

Several public participants as well as representatives from voluntary organisations explained that public procurement rules make it very difficult to provide the services contracted only to volunteers. Public procurement requires accountability that is difficult to

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with representatives of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, "'For each other". Policy statement charity and volunteering 2008-2011", 30 March 2009 and NOV, Annual Report 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio SPES, "Volunteering across Europe. The Netherlands", 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Central Bureau for Fundraising.

provide through an entirely volunteer set-up. Therefore voluntary organisations involved in public procurement contracts tend to do so largely with paid staff for such contracts.

However, voluntary organisations in the Netherlands have relatively little experience in this area to date. This is partly due to the complexity of these contracts, but it often also relates to a lack of capacity / manpower and, indeed, to a lack of experience in this type of engagement.

## 4.2 Economic value of volunteering

### *Economic value of the voluntary sector workforce*

According to TBO research, 25 % of the population aged 16-74 years , spent in 2005 approximately 4.5 hours per week on voluntary work. This would correspond to 421.000 full time jobs. This means that the contribution of voluntary work to GDP (in 2005) amounted to 1.5 %<sup>57</sup>.

### *Risks of service substitution*

According to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, service substitution is not seen as a risk but as part of their policy. Making use of the long term care service was so considerable in the Netherlands that it was becoming unaffordable (based on the ABW law). Part of this service has now been taken over by the Social Support Act and it is possible, that in some cases, certain activities are not being paid for anymore but have been taken over by volunteers.

Because of this current policy context, there is a growing need for volunteers. These developments raise questions on how the co-operation between volunteers and professionals can be improved and which demands municipalities and professional organisations can make on volunteers. This does not only affect the co-operation between people but it also affects the co-operation between organisations such as care homes and other care institutions, voluntary organisations, municipalities, welfare organisations, etc. There is an increased pressure on care-giving in regard to the role of volunteers.

The following points are considered to be specific challenges/threats:

- There is a danger in that local authorities have an instrumental vision on volunteering to soften the effects of budget cuts and that they do not recognise the value of their volunteers.
- Another threat concerns the unrealistic expectations of the government with regard to the predicted potential of the growing number of volunteers.
- Local authorities and care institutions make very high demands on volunteers and voluntary organisations (forced professionalisation).
- Care and welfare institutions are more dependent on the effort of volunteers. This can lead to tensions with professionals because of the task divisions being unclear or unrealistic expectations of the capabilities of volunteers.

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<sup>57</sup> The calculation is based on the following: the minimum pay for adults for one full time job costs € 20.000 (including employer contribution). This amounts to an economic value of 8.4 billion euro. If this sum was added to the GDP, the GDP would increase from 505.6 billion euro up to 514 billion euro. Source: European Volunteer Centre, "Volunteering in the Netherlands. Facts and figures report", 2007.

- Volunteers are crucial to improving social cohesion in the neighbourhood. In some areas there is still a lack of a social support structure. Volunteers and voluntary organisations can bring changes in this regard<sup>58</sup>.

#### ***Risks of job substitution***

This tends to be a risk in the area of advice and client services involving volunteers.

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

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

For volunteers, depending on their situation and from which perspective they engage in volunteering, the following benefits have been named:

- Offering meaningful leisure time;
- avoiding social isolation;
- making new contacts;
- gaining work experience;
- gaining work rhythm;
- discovering and making use of hidden talents;
- stimulating social interest;
- increasing social skills.

For the community, both actors on the ground and actors at policy making level, are convinced of the following benefits of volunteering:

- Promoting social cohesion and solidarity;
- increasing social engagement;
- contributing to social inclusion;
- increasing the quality of care and welfare provisions;
- encouraging active citizenship;
- improving the physical environment;
- benefiting the local community;
- stimulating the intercultural and intergenerational dialogue;
- stability in society.

For the direct beneficiaries the benefits are highly dependent on the target group but the following ones have been raised by several interviewees: increasing independency, preventing loneliness, participation in social events and thus social integration, making new contacts, and discovering new interests.

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<sup>58</sup> Oudenampsen, e.a., "Samenwerking vrijwilligers en beroepskrachten by maatschappelijke ondersteuning", September 2006.

### ***Contribution to economic and social policy goals at national level***

According to the representatives of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport volunteering policy is certainly aligned with the current social policy objectives as well as contributing considerably to the economy (see section 4). Central government policy has the goal of equipping the voluntary sector sufficiently in order to enable it to respond to the challenges that changes in society generate. The most recent policy document on voluntary action gives priority to the need to support migrant volunteering, especially in mainstream voluntary organisations.

The Ministry defines “participation” of all citizens as the major goal of its policy on volunteering. As such, it plays an important role for attaining social inclusion goals.

Furthermore, the Dutch volunteering policy complements the goals formulated with regard to education and training policy. More specifically, the social traineeships, now compulsory at secondary level education, contribute to the experience and competences volunteers acquire in general whilst volunteering.

Finally, volunteering also contributes to goals in the following policy areas: sustainable development and environmental protection; human rights, human capital, intercultural dialogue (for example the Project 1001 Power) and intergenerational dialogue; active ageing and the adaptability of workers as well as humanitarian aid.

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

Research in the Netherlands has revealed that the following factors are considered to be important in the decision to volunteer: meeting people and making new friends; preventing loneliness; creating the opportunity to do tasks and fulfil roles that you have not been trained for; adding value to one’s career (increasingly employers are looking at this); and doing worthwhile and purposeful activities.

# **6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

## **6.1 Recognition/ accreditation of volunteers’ skills and competences within the national educational and training system**

So far there is no formal recognition or accreditation of volunteers’ skills and competences within the national educational and training system. Existing procedures for the certification of skills and competences are rarely used in the field of volunteering due to high costs and simply a lack of information on the existing possibilities. However, some organisations award certificates to their volunteers, while there are also experiments involving portfolios.

It is within the government’s aims to develop a formal recognition system considering that there are many volunteers in the labour market and that such a system might be a means to getting them employed. MOVISIE currently receives funding to develop such a formal recognition system. The system will include the use of the instrument of prior acquired competences (EVC – “Eerder Verworven Competencies”) by applying it to volunteers.

Volunteers will then be able to recognise their acquired competences and will subsequently be able to demonstrate more effectively their skills to potential employers<sup>59</sup>.

### ***Recognition of the role of volunteering in the different levels of education***

The introduction of the so-called “Maatschappelijke Stages” (social traineeships) as part of the secondary school curriculum from 2005 onwards has been a much discussed issue in recent years. Through the social traineeships, if implemented in the way the young debaters suggested at the time, pupils are given the opportunity to experience the benefits of voluntary activities within their school programme. The social traineeships offer great opportunities to overcome the initial hesitation of young people who are not yet involved in the voluntary field. The traineeships have of course also been a great step in the acknowledgement of non-formal learning and the value of voluntary work. The social traineeship for pupils in secondary school will also be recognised by the EVC procedure discussed above. From 2011 onwards, the social traineeship will be mentioned on a qualification obtained or on a list of marks. As a consequence, it will be more or less a formal recognition of the voluntary activities of young people. Young people who participate in activities supported by the Youth in Action programme receive the Youth Pass, which now also ‘counts’ for performing their obliged social traineeship as part of their school curriculum.

There are some concerns however that current developments in the implementation of the traineeships are undermining their value for the promotion of voluntary activities of youth. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences finances the traineeships for the greater part, and implementation is mainly a matter for the educational system. A large majority of the schools have now made the traineeships a compulsory element of the curriculum, and a number of politicians are pushing to make the traineeships mandatory on a national base. This of course seriously undermines the concept of “voluntary” work<sup>60</sup>.

Young people are expected to volunteer for three months during their time at secondary school in order to make them familiar with society. Youngsters could for instance work at a home for elderly people, at a hospital or at a children’s farm.

The traineeships are largely organised in co-operation with the traditional institutions for voluntary work; therefore these traineeships will have a serious impact on these institutions since the voluntary organisations will have to make time to support these youngsters and to make tasks available for them<sup>61</sup>.

About 481 secondary schools and 7 AOC’s (Agrarian Training Centre) have already started some kind of social traineeship for their pupils. Also, more and more vocational training centres offer students the possibility of carrying out a social traineeship, mainly in the first year’s course. Quite often, students have to search for a placement which does have a certain connection to their future profession. The concept of social traineeship should be finalised by 2011, and will be part of a pupil’s curriculum. The first research results show however that these traineeships have a positive effect on youngsters’ attitude towards volunteering.

The social traineeship was not only designed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, but also by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. This Ministry seeks placements which allow youngsters without an agrarian background to get

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<sup>59</sup> Based on interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and MOVISIE.

<sup>60</sup> European Youth Forum, “Shadow report on the implementation of the third priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field, Voluntary Activities”, 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Dekker, Joep de Hart, Laila Faulk, “Toekomstverkenning vrijwillige inzet 2015”, SCP, Den Haag, Juni 2007.

acquainted with animals and nature. For the coming school year, the Dutch State Secretary from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will distribute about 15 million euro among schools, which they can use for social traineeships. With this regulation, each school can get 28 euro per pupil whom is carrying out a social traineeship. In 2008, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will examine the possibilities for placements in different fields. The Ministry will do this together with schools, voluntary organisations, municipalities and placement providers.

Finally, some schools and colleges award study points or an exemption from certain course requirements to those students undertaking voluntary work, whether within the school setting or beyond<sup>62</sup>.

## 6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

Depending on the voluntary organisation, several forms of training are possible.

Large voluntary organisations tend to provide a lot of the training themselves. For example, the organisation Scouting has developed their own toolkit (EVC). Sometimes trainers from education and training institutes are used

In terms of courses, the following ones are given to volunteers at the NGO Humanitas: getting to know the organisation; basic courses for specific tasks; active training for volunteering, training for co-ordination and management of volunteering and master classes relevant to all volunteers.

An existing national regulation that was of great significance for the infrastructure of youth volunteering through youth-run activities, the VTA<sup>63</sup>, has been abolished recently. Under the VTA, a number of renowned training institutes received government subsidies to train volunteers at a very low cost. The VTA-institutes supported training facilities for tens of thousands of volunteers, in order to improve the quality of their activities and enhance their personal skills. Youth participation constituted one of the thematic pillars of the VTA, allowing for the training of young volunteers in multiple positions within youth organisations. The facilitation of training for volunteers, including young volunteers, has now become a competence within the responsibility of local authorities<sup>64</sup>.

# 7 IMPACT OF EU POLICIES

## *EU policies and national policies in the field of volunteering*

Volunteering policy in the Netherlands is very much a local matter. Several actors in the field as well as from the government indicated that policy making in the area of volunteering is not really influenced by EU policy (except for where Community rules have to be implemented). MOVISIE keeps track of all the developments at EU level in this field and thus the provision of information to the national level is ensured. It was expressed however that the value the EU attaches to volunteering helps recognition on the ground (such as for example the European Year of Volunteering in 2011).

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<sup>62</sup> Youth Partnership “Questionnaire “Voluntary activities”, The Netherlands.

<sup>63</sup> These are institutes giving education, training and advice to volunteers.

<sup>64</sup> European Youth Forum, “Shadow report on the implementation of the third priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field, Voluntary Activities”, 2005.

## 8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

### 8.1 Challenges for volunteering

Overall, the following specific challenges are being perceived by stakeholders interviewed:

- *At national level:* it is crucial to see potential obstacles in time and subsequently to take appropriate action to address these obstacles. Furthermore, innovation in the current volunteering landscape is a key factor (or crucial).
- *At regional and local levels:* the right infrastructure for volunteering has to be ensured with the aid of the regional and local authorities (such as for example supporting the volunteer centres/brokers).
- *At the organisational level:* recruitment, coaching and retention of volunteers. A specific challenge in this regard lies in the fact that organisations will have to adapt to the “flexible volunteer”, i.e. volunteers now tend to only work for a few weeks a year rather than on a regular basis.
- *At the individual volunteer level:* finding the time for volunteering between the demands of leisure and paid work.

Other challenges faced in the current Dutch volunteering landscape include:

#### *To maintain a sufficient number of the “right” volunteers*

As the figures have indicated in section 1, there is not so much a serious concern of not having enough volunteers as so far, the trend in the number of volunteers has been fairly stable over the past decade. Rather the specific problems lie in the lower number of hours volunteers will commit to do (due to the current modern hectic life style and the demands of a full-time job); and in the length of their commitment (i.e. volunteers tend to engage for only a limited period) and in the need for specific skills performed by volunteers.

The fact that people are less inclined to make a long-term commitment as volunteers with organisations is being addressed by for example the SVM's Free Flex project. The goal of this project is to encourage organisations to recruit volunteers for short-term projects with a clearly pre-defined target<sup>65</sup>.

There currently seems to be a mismatch between the supply of and demand for volunteers. Overall, there are enough volunteers to perform the operational tasks compared to the number of volunteers available to manage the organisation itself. As a consequence, some organisations employ people for the supporting roles but there is a risk that they start taking control away from the volunteers.

#### *Administrative and legislative issues*

Considering that a volunteer's time is rather restricted in terms of the hours of work he or she can devote to volunteering, it is felt by a high number of stakeholders in the field that there is too much red tape and that this needs to be cut down. The administrative burden as a consequence of complicated legislation is a real barrier to making the most out of a volunteer's time.

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<sup>65</sup> Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio SPES, “Volunteering across Europe. The Netherlands”, 2006.



Furthermore, the tendency of giving more responsibility to the volunteering organisations together with the growth in rules makes it difficult for some organisations to function properly. The complexity of the legislation and regulations makes it unclear as to how to apply and implement the rules. For example, allowing giving compensation to volunteers means that voluntary organisations have higher administrative burdens. Another example is that in those areas where professionals and volunteers work together, certain rules and legislation can sometimes make it impossible for the volunteer to perform his/her tasks<sup>66</sup>.

#### *Perceptions among young people*

Volunteering tends to have a “dusty” image amongst young people and currently only a low number of youngsters engage in volunteering. Especially young people aged 18 to 25 years seem to be less interested in voluntary work. An explanation is that young people nowadays find ‘having fun’ and financial comfort more important than doing voluntary work. A lot of them have a job after school and during weekends, and therefore less time is available for voluntary activities. On the other hand, more young people are involved in ‘informal’ care, helping friends and relatives. This has also become clear recently by a small scale (online) research carried out by the National Youth Council. The research showed that young people don’t want to do voluntary work, but would still like to do something unpaid for somebody else. Apparently, young people do not like the word ‘voluntary work’. Young people in the Netherlands tend to misrepresent voluntary work, and consider voluntary work as working for a charity or within social care-giving. Also, voluntary work is often linked to a sense of duty and to caring for others. Although youngsters think it is a good initiative, they do not want to participate.

Besides youngsters themselves, there are also some obstacles within organisations working with young volunteers. Many organisations working with young volunteers are not adequately equipped to address the requirements of this target group. The organisations do indeed wish to procure the services of young volunteers, but are often unwilling to amend their existing policy whereby the young people themselves do not feel comfortable with the organisation. Moreover, the organisations are often not in a position to offer the type of activity which may be seen as relevant to the interests and experience of young people, or may not be sufficiently flexible. In order to change this and to stimulate youth, the National Youth Council tries to make youngsters aware of the positive sides of voluntary work. Therefore, the Council has launched the ‘I Am Great’ campaign (“Ik ben geweldig”). Local, regional and international voluntary organisations are participating in this campaign. Young people can test themselves on the campaign’s website [www.ikbengeweldig.nl](http://www.ikbengeweldig.nl). The result will provide information about the type of voluntary work one will probably be suitable for.

It is expected that through the compulsory social traineeships young people will change the image they have of volunteering, see the benefits of it and continue to volunteer once they have left school; while on the other hand, it is expected that organisations will learn how to deal better with this specific target group<sup>67</sup>.

#### *Recognition of volunteers*

Many stakeholders interviewed feel that volunteers are not praised often enough and that more effort should be put in recognising the work they do such as for example through the Make a Difference Day (MADD national volunteering days), awards such as the Mas Sensation en MADD awards as well as by the EVC certificate.

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<sup>66</sup> Paul Dekker, Joep de Hart, Laila Faulk, “Toekomstverkenning vrijwillige inzet 2015”, SCP, Den Haag, Juni 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Youth Partnership, “Questionnaire “Voluntary activities”, the Netherlands.

## 8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

The role of volunteering is increasingly being recognised by the government and there are good opportunities to further strengthen support to volunteers and voluntary organisations. Furthermore, innovative forms of volunteering are emerging which fit in better with the contemporary spirit of the times and lifestyle especially in regard to the increasing demands of both paid work and leisure time.

The government is working on removing existing practical obstacles in the field of volunteering. Regulations on allowances for volunteers have been broadened. These revised, broader regulations enable non-governmental organisations to provide the financial compensation that is required to allow people to be active in voluntary functions that imply a large time investment. Fiscal restrictions on financial rewards for voluntary activities have been relaxed considerably. There have also been helpful changes in regulations on working conditions. Government taxations on so-called “good initiatives” have furthermore been reduced. Since these initiatives are often activities of non-governmental organisations, run by volunteers, the measures have had a positive impact on voluntary work<sup>68</sup>.

There is a certain professionalisation underway in volunteering and subsequently higher demands are increasingly being made on volunteers. Besides the government, voluntary organisations are also expecting more and more that volunteers operate in a professional way. The positive aspect of this development is that there is quality improvement and continuity in the services provided. Furthermore, the work is much more effective because of better education, which goes hand in hand with the professionalisation process. However there is a negative side to this too and that is the increasing work pressure and a decrease in the number of volunteers which again increases the pressure within the voluntary organisation<sup>69</sup>.

Other opportunities include:

- The use of service bureaus which could help with giving advice in technical, judicial and financial areas.
- The creation of facilities for voluntary organisations (i.e. expertise improvement, training courses, etc.)
- The encouragement of the set up of local volunteer brokers.
- Ensuring good information provision on the opportunities for funding.
- A high number of healthy and well educated older people.

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<sup>68</sup> European Youth Forum, “Shadow report on the implementation of the third priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field, Voluntary Activities”, 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Ton van der Pennen, “Ontwikkeling in het vrijwilligersbeleid”, Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2003.

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André Hudepohl, Head Research and Development, Humanitas (NGO).

Cees van den Bos, Director at the volunteer support centre of the city of Arnhem and also project leader of the comparative research on the infrastructure of voluntary work in eight European countries and the US.

Pieter Hovens and Christie Stiphout, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

Saskia Dura, Project leader Volunteering, MOVISIE (knowledge institute).