

NATIONAL REPORT – SLOVAKIA

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN SLOVAKIA

1.1 History and contextual background

According to a report published by the European Volunteer Centre¹, the history of volunteering in Slovakia has its origins in the middle ages representing a time when the Church was associated with philanthropy and aid. This was stimulated with the arrival of capitalism and industrialisation, which brought with it a whole range of new and complex social problems such as large scale unemployment, poverty and crime. These problems increased the demand for social activities that essentially involved voluntary work carried out by organisations that were connected to the Church.

From 1918 to the late thirties, the third sector enjoyed significant growth during the democratisation and market-liberalisation of Czechoslovakia. Throughout the time voluntary organisations were seen as an important pillar of support for pre-war Czechoslovakia². However from 1939 to 1945, Slovakia became a client state of Nazi Germany, where it is noted that the less democratic the regime became, the more the third sector declined.

To understand the problematic connotations volunteering has in contemporary Slovakia, it has to be noted that the post-1948 Communist rule had a strong impact on the civil society, both administratively and ideologically. In order to prove this one only has to remember the 1951 Law (68) that made all voluntary organisations answerable to the state. The charities and religious organisations that were out of the control of the state were systematically dissolved.

During this period of communist rule the nature and ethos of the voluntary organisations was drastically changed, and the term voluntary lost its original meaning. The word “voluntary” became synonymous with “mandatory”. These negative connotations make it much more difficult for people to see volunteering in a positive light.

From 1989, the third sector experienced a growth in both size and the effect it had on Slovak society. In 1993 there were 6,000 NGOs registered in Slovakia and the number doubled in the next three years so that by 1996 there were approximately 12,000 registered NGOs and by 2002 there were over 26,000 registered NGOs³. However, the size and state of the sector remains modest and it is dependent on the agenda of the ruling governments. This situation is discussed in more detail below.

1.2 Definitions

There is no legal or working definition of volunteering in Slovakia. As a result there are inherent limitations in the quality, availability, and consistency of the data on the number and profile of volunteers in Slovakia. Use of data is further complicated and compromised by the use of different and confusing terminology.

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Based on the data available, the figures show the following trends:

- In 1998, 46% of the total population participated in volunteering, (this amounts to 2,474,500 volunteers)
- In 2003, 39% of the total population participated in volunteering, (this amounts to 2,098,000 volunteers)

¹ Nikodemová K. « Volunteering in Slovakia: Facts and Figures Report », CEV Brussels, 2009.

² Nikodemová, 2009

³ Nikodemová, 2009

- In 2004, 13% of the total population participated in volunteering, (this amounts to 699,000) volunteers⁴.

Trend

The data shows that from 1998 to 2004 there was a considerable decrease in the total number of volunteers. The decline is due to a lack of commitment and investment by the national government in financing or otherwise supporting the third sector in general. Evidence from the reports by Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková (2008) and Nikodemová (2009) suggests that the third sector as a whole has received limited attention from the State⁵.

Gender

The results of a 2003 survey showed that the gender structure of volunteers was as follows: 52%⁶ women, 41% men. 7% of surveyed volunteers did not specify their gender⁷.

Age groups

Young people below the age of 30 represent about 70% of the volunteers in Slovakia, whilst 30% is comprised of middle aged or older people⁸.

Geographical spread of volunteering (by region)

The survey by the CARDO organisation (based on questionnaires sent to the network of volunteer engaging organisations) shows that 29 organisations were dispersed throughout the major counties ("Kraj") of Slovakia. The list below shows the number of organisations in each county:

- Bratislavský : 18 organisations
- Nitriansky : 2 organisations
- Trenčiansky : 2 organisations
- Žilinský : 1 organisation
- Prešovský : 3 organisations
- Košický: 2 organisations⁹.

Education levels

The research has not revealed any information regarding the education levels of volunteers.

Volunteer involvement by sectors

This research had encountered two sets of data regarding the number of volunteers per sector. The first set of data is based on information provided by Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková (2008) and the second set of data is based on information provided by Nikodemová (2009).

- Religious and Church-based activities: 13%
- Community development: 12%

⁴ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

⁵ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008; Nikodemová, 2009

⁶ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008; Nikodemová, 2009

⁷ Nikodemová, 2009

⁸ Nikodemová, 2009

⁹ CARDO, 2007, this data comes from a representative survey that was based on the number of organisations in bracket

- Recreation and sport: 9%
- Education, tuition and science: 9%
- Culture and art: 7%
- Social services to people in need: 7%
- Environment: 7%
- Health: 7%¹⁰

- Education, training 39.3%
- Social care and service 32.3%
- Leisure time activities 29.6%
- Art and culture 18.9%
- Advocacy of civil rights 17.2%
- Environment 13.3%
- Charity 11.7%
- Health care and services 9.5%
- Regional development and housing 9.0%
- Foundations and funds 9.0%
- Sports 7.4%
- Research, analysis, expertise 7.3%
- Exchange of volunteers 6.4%
- Recreation 5.6%
- Other sectors of activity 6.9%¹¹

Profile of volunteers by employment status

Research carried out by the CARDO¹² in 2003 and 2004 showed that participation in volunteering increases in relation to increased household income. It should however be noted that research and data on this particular issue remains limited.

Time dedicated to volunteering

In 2007 there were 25,133 volunteers, actively involved in regular or temporary activities in the organisations that responded to the 2007 CARDO survey. These volunteers volunteered for 2,115,572 hours¹³. Based on this figure it is estimated that a single volunteer spends 84 hours volunteering per year.

1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

Definition of voluntary organisations in Slovakia

Officially there is no definition for voluntary organisations in Slovakia.

¹⁰ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008 (p.2)

¹¹ Nikodemová, 2009

¹² Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008 (p.2)

¹³ Nikodemová, 2009; C.A.R.D.O., 2007

Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector

The survey carried out by CARDO showed the percentage of the various activities that were carried out by the 29 organisations that were included in the survey: Social activities 45%; Health 7%; Youth development 38%; Environment 3%; Education 7%¹⁴.

Trend

Given the limitations in data, it is not possible to determine trends.

Types of organisations engaging volunteers

The types of organisations engaging volunteers include NGOs 25%; Public administration and local government 17%; Churches 14%; unidentified networks and social bodies 23%; Private sector related activities 5%¹⁵.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

Although there is no official data on the main voluntary activities, the networking centres that are seeking to facilitate the work of the voluntary sector are mainly occupied with programmes on promoting volunteering, campaigning, networking and managing their own projects¹⁶.

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

As stated above, volunteering is not on the political agenda in Slovakia. As such the institutional framework for volunteering is relatively weak.

Main public body responsible for volunteering

Responsibility for issues concerning volunteering fall under the regulatory competences of the Ministry of Education, Department of Sports and Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs¹⁷.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

Important features of the institutional framework include CARDO¹⁸ and other non-governmental and non-profit bodies such as the regional volunteering centres (in Prešov and Banská Bystrica). In addition, there are other organisations that are partly concerned with volunteering (such as the IUVENTA centre that is mostly focused on youth integration and activities).

CARDO was established with the support of the Ministry of Education and operates at the national level. Its role is mostly concerned with monitoring organisations that are involved with volunteering¹⁹. As part of its duties, volunteering is within the scope of its work. The other body is the IUVENTA centre, which was established to support youth integration.

In recent years, the local (especially in urban areas) administration has been growing in importance by funding and supporting schemes for local services. However, an article by

¹⁴ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

¹⁵ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

¹⁶ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

¹⁷ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

¹⁸ Nikodemová, 2009

¹⁹ Nikodemová, 2009

Mráčková and Vlašicová argued that the system is not sufficiently transparent and lacks structure and sufficient managerial capabilities²⁰.

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

There are a number of organisations that serve to promote volunteering, facilitate co-operation and exchange information. These include CARDO, IUVENTA, Prešovské dobrovoľnícke centrum (Prešov Voluntary Centre), Centrum dobrovoľníctva v Banskej Bystrici (Centre of volunteering in Banská Bystrica). These organisations are involved in campaigning, networking, supporting volunteers and managing projects that are related to volunteering²¹.

Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks

Slovakia is a member of the European Union and the United Nations, therefore it is affiliated with the programmes of these organisations that are concerned with volunteering. As far as the non-regulatory bodies are concerned, CARDO (which is also linked to regional centres and NGOs affiliated with volunteering) is networked with the Center European du Volontariat (CEV).

2.2 Policies

National strategy/framework for volunteering

Volunteering is not on the political agenda in Slovakia. According to the interviewees there are currently no plans for establishing a formal framework, or for establishing volunteering on the political agenda. For example, though the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic gathers data on the public sector it does not carry out any specific research on volunteering.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

Although CARDO is a public body no arrangements for monitoring it or reporting on it have been established.

International policies

Some international granting programmes, especially the European Social Fund, are a key financing mechanisms for the support of the third sector in Slovakia²² and they also partially reach out to the public services. This does not directly stimulate volunteering, but according to the CEV and CARDO surveys, there is a strong belief that the growth of the Third sector will lead to a growth in the number of volunteers.

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

There are no national programmes that have been developed to stimulate volunteering at the national level. However it is of interest to note that within the Labour Law (5/2005) there is a particular reference to volunteering, which allows unemployed persons to volunteer for the local administration as an “integrational activity”. This means that while they are receiving unemployment benefits, they are allowed to volunteer without being registered as 'labouring' (and thus losing the right to unemployment benefits). This is governed by Law

²⁰ Mráčková & Vlašicová, 2007

²¹ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

²² Nikodemová, 2009

no. 5/2004, and the policy falls under the administration of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs²³.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level

There are no general frameworks with regard to volunteering at regional and local levels. As previously noted, there are two regional centres for volunteering that manage their own projects (often with the support of the European Social Fund). Local NGOs also manage their own projects.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level

As the Slovak Republic is a member of the European Union, volunteering in Europe is a possibility for individuals. However, there are no particular programmes in Slovakia that stimulate such mobility at a transnational level. Individuals interested in volunteering abroad must cover their own expenses such as social insurance charges (this is to ensure that time spent abroad counts towards the volunteer's pension)²⁴.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 General legal framework

Current Slovak legislation does not clearly define volunteering, despite occasionally employing related terms. A basic definition of volunteering and a legal framework addressing the topic of volunteering have not yet been created. This sends mixed messages to society and complicates the development of volunteering. The only law addressing volunteering is the Law on Services (Law no. 5/2004). In 2008, a new law (Law no. 282/2008) on the support for working with youths was adopted in Slovak Parliament (National Council of the Slovak Republic). Amongst other things it identified youth volunteering²⁵ in accordance with the European Voluntary Service²⁶.

Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering

A survey carried out by the Open Society Foundation found 36 legal records employing the terms volunteer / volunteering. Relevant legal acts are as follows:

- Law n. 617/2007 NC SR on Forms of development aid, (works as an addition to Law 575/2001) - includes sending experts and volunteers as part of development aid;
- Law 460/2007 NC SR on Slovak Red Cross and protection of the Red Cross sign - includes protection of associated voluntary health organisations;
- Law 388/2007 NC SR serving as an addition to Law 291/1994 on the Leisure time centres - includes formulation of 'youth voluntary activities';
- Law 389/2006 NC SR serving as an addition to Law 5/2004 on Employment Services and change and addition to certain laws. It identifies volunteering with non-profit/support organisations, social services institutions, the Church, Slovak Red Cross and many more organisations.
- Law 599/2003 NC SR on support in material need and changes and addition to certain other laws - defines (financial) activational support for volunteering unemployed²⁷.

²³ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

²⁴ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

²⁵ Nikodemová, 2009

²⁶ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

²⁷ Marček, 2008

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

No information has been located.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

Provisions for specific categories

Volunteering is specifically identified just for activities of unemployed persons receiving unemployment benefits.

Support schemes and incentives

As discussed by the Open Society Foundation's survey, there are no clear incentives or support for individuals to volunteer or for both profit and non-profit organisations to engage volunteers. Instead, these organisations are over burdened with the costs of insurance and are limited in being able to set up agreements without the problem of coming into potential conflict with other labour-related laws.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers

Since no particular provisions for volunteering are identified, this results in no tax exemptions/benefits being given for the reimbursement of expenses.²⁸ The Open Society Foundation's report states that persons volunteering while unemployed do not lose their unemployment support and provisions.

Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

There are no special rules, and this will be the case as long as there is no particular legislative/regulatory agenda for increasing the number of volunteers or promoting volunteering.

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

There are no specific provisions in this regard, and the whole issue comes under general non-profit organisations law.

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

No specific provisions or legislation exists for the profit-making organisations engaging volunteers.

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

Insurance for volunteers is mandatory only for the unemployed that are engaged in volunteering, and it is intended to be covered by the organisation that is engaging the volunteers. This is further specified by the individual labour agreement between the organisation and the volunteer²⁹.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

National budget allocated to volunteering

There is no national budget allocated to volunteering. However, a certain degree of State support is given to sports associations.

²⁸ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

²⁹ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

The main sources of funding voluntary organisations are listed as EU funds and international grants³⁰. In addition, 2% of taxes of private persons may be given to an NGO of their choosing (for corporate persons, it was reduced to 0.5% after the 2006 elections). State support is said to be limited and dependent on the government in place³¹.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

As far as the present research has found, there were no conflicts between the voluntary and non-voluntary providers of services. This is because volunteering remains secondary to the non-voluntary arrangements and therefore is involved with local or communal issues rather than challenging the systems that provide social services.

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

Income generated through volunteering

According to the CEV report, in 2007 income generated through volunteering was estimated as 8,726,000,00 Euros. This is based on the number of hours spent volunteering and the average salary.

Economic value of volunteering

There are no particular statistical measurements confirming the economic value of volunteering.

Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP

In 2007, the estimated value of volunteering as a share of GDP accounts for approximately 0.008% of the country's total GDP³².

Issues of service substitution and job substitution

According to the research findings, there have been no known cases of voluntary services being privatised or taken over by the government. Furthermore, there have been no known cases where volunteering has come into conflict with employment issues.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

No research available.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

There is little information available in relation to factors that motivate volunteering. Main motivating factors include the desire to help family, friends or people in the neighbourhood, and the chance to be involved in new experiences. A key motivating factor for young people is the opportunity to integrate with other people³³.

³⁰ Nikodemová, 2009

³¹ Nikodemová, 2009

³² Nikodemová, 2009

³³ Mráčková, A. E-mail interview 2009

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

Recognition of volunteers' skills largely depends on the status of the organisation engaging volunteers, for example accredited organisations recognised by the Ministry of Education tend to recognise the skills and competences of volunteers. Outside accredited organisations, recognition of volunteers' skills and competences is limited and is largely dependent on the organisation. The extent to which this recognition carries wider value is unclear.

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

Within the governance of the Ministry of Education, a legal entity can apply for accreditation to provide education or training. It is then a matter for the accredited organisation to decide how it provides education and training opportunities for volunteers. For example, the Slovak Red Cross is accredited by the Ministry of Education to teach basic first aid and health assistance. The Red Cross may assign any individual to the task of providing these courses, but as an organisation it remains legally responsible for the performance of the assigned volunteers.

7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

The CEV report states that the 'European Union funds represent a very important source of financial support. Between 1993 and 2003, the PHARE programme provided more than 11 million Euros in the NGO field'. After the country's accession to the EU, the funding of non-profit / non-governmental sector is partly financed through implementation of European Social Fund grants; European volunteering service also produces networks of organisations accredited to sending volunteers abroad³⁴.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

According to Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, there is a need to:

- Increase the public awareness about volunteering,
- Increase the infrastructure of volunteering,
- Professionalise volunteering organisations,
- Integrate children and seniors,
- Improve the level of volunteering research,
- Set up of a more robust legal framework.³⁵

In addition to this, the CEV report claims the greatest obstacle is the absence of targeted and reliable financial support³⁶.

³⁴ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

³⁵ Brozmanová Gregorová & Mráčková, 2008

³⁶ Nikodemová, 2009

According to the Open Society Foundation's analysis at national level the challenge is;

1. To provide a legal definition of volunteering;
2. Define measures and limitations to volunteering contracts, (highlighted: defining legal status of a volunteer); define labour rights / duties [insurance, allowing non-adults to participate, anti-discrimination], define responsibility for fulfilling the contract,
3. Determine the extent of state support (defining legal status of a volunteer; defining labour rights; to support social security; non-taxation; support international volunteers exchange)³⁷.

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

The opportunities for the development of volunteering remain limited. Despite the government promoting the NGO sector, most of these policies are not formed well enough to have a direct impact on promoting and governing volunteering.

as the historical tradition is complicated, interest in promoting volunteering policies remains relatively poor. Reliable sources state that the third sector remains underfinanced, and this has had a negative effect on volunteering. Increased opportunities for volunteering depend on the establishment of a long term policy on volunteering.

³⁷ Marček, 2008

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Interviewees

Bútorová, Zora (fellow at Institute of Public Affairs "Institút pre verejné otázky") ,

Gallo, Ondrej (employee of Slovak Youth Council "Rada Mladeže Slovenska")

Inex company

Iuventa (centre for youth),

Mráčková, Alžbeta (fellow at CARDO). E-mail interview, August 2009 (by Lukáš Makovický)

Slovak Humanitarian Council ("Slovenska humanitarna rada")