



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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CHAPTER



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VOLUNTEERING  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN EUROPE

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# 1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

## CONCEPT DEFINITION

In Hungary, there is no definition of the concept of volunteering infrastructure as such. For most people it may even sound bizarre to refer to volunteering support mechanisms as 'infrastructure'. However we may define it, infrastructure is essential for the development of volunteering and combines efforts from different stakeholders that are necessary.

There are a small number of organisations at the governmental level which deal with volunteering infrastructure development. Volunteering is more and more a horizontal issue in Hungary, it appears as an element in different programmes, but speaking about volunteering as a professional sector is difficult. Few organisations and professionals are purely dedicated to volunteer development or volunteer management; it is rather the case that part of their core business is connected to volunteering.

The Hungarian Act on volunteering<sup>1</sup> defines the activity, what type of voluntary action is subject of the law, and what a volunteer is. The concept of volunteering infrastructure, as understood by the Hungarian National Volunteer Centre – Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (ÖKA) includes all elements, software and hardware, that help develop volunteering in Hungary, it can include legislation, the network of volunteer centres, specific programmes, publications, knowledge and everything related.

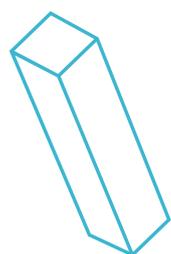
In terms of importance and relevance, ÖKA considers that some of the key elements of volunteering infrastructure are the legal and the programme framework that may foster and enable volunteering. The most important however are considered to be the volunteer centres and specialists working there. As strange as it may sound to include people in the definition of infrastructure, usually understood as physical structures/premises, these professionals are the ones on which the development of the organisations and structures relies, they are the engines and fuel in these efforts.

A number of other organisations support volunteering in Hungary. This has become increasingly visible in 2011, when governmental organisations, public institutions and the business sector started to engage more actively.

The overall function of the volunteering infrastructure in Hungary is volunteering development. From this perspective, ÖKA plays a major role in the development of this infrastructure and is in fact one of the key aims of the organisation. Fortunately ÖKA's efforts are coupled by the work of other civil society organisations and the more and more active part that the government is taking in the sector.

Proper infrastructure is necessary, as it channels information on volunteering, whether it is on volunteering opportunities or management, and brings together different actors, volunteers, organisations and institutions. This linkage should not be taken for granted, it is not easy to bring interested parties together, and from that perspective, the catalyst role of volunteering infrastructure is indispensable. Big steps have been made in terms of partnership building, and organisations are working increasingly together. A practice in that sense has been starting

1. Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Voluntary Activities in the Public Interest.



pilot projects, so that different actors, which usually do not closely cooperate, are brought together, have greater achievements and thus experience the benefits of working in partnership. Volunteering infrastructure is the convener for cross-sector collaboration.

Extra motivation of specialists working in volunteer centres is necessary. Most of the activities carried out are not 'profitable'; it is not an area of work with large financial support for activities, or significant material benefits to the employees, so specialists working in the volunteering sector in Hungary truly need to be engaged in their work with their heart and mind. It is impressive how much volunteer centres achieve in terms of activities carried out compared to the resources used, how much they manage to deliver from insignificant budgets. Their social entrepreneurship is key, or else these innovations would not happen, with the little funding that is made available. It is often the case that volunteer centres need to invest a lot of effort in starting up a service, and only in the best-case scenario can this become self-sustained through income making.

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Local authorities do not see the human resource and knowledge cost behind these efforts and often take volunteering as something that happens naturally. They even propose initiatives, such as starting new programmes, not understanding the costs that this supposes. The situation has been getting better and better in recent years; there is more communication and collaboration between sectors which enhances the understanding of each others' work. A challenge that remains is the fact that volunteer development organisations are far away from having a business approach when it comes to activity planning and ensuring financial sustainability. For instance, a volunteer centre might assist a business with setting-up an employee volunteering scheme, but most likely would not make a demand forecast to see if this could be developed into a service that the volunteer centre could deliver, at cost, to businesses.

## 2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Volunteering in Hungary is defined through the Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Voluntary Activities in the Public Interest. According to it, volunteering is defined by principles or cumulative conditions that need to be met by an activity; namely *to be based on free will, carried out outside of one's family or circle of close friends, without remuneration or financial gain and to serve the public interest, done for a community cause and not for individual interest*. The law does not specify that volunteering has to happen in a formal setting, in connection to an organisation or through programmes of an organisation.

An interesting aspect is the fact that organisations may chose to officially register their volunteering programmes or carry out their work outside of the scope of the law on volunteering. Any nongovernmental organisation (NGO) can register if they consider it useful to do so. Registration however means that organisations may benefit from the positive aspects of the law. For instance, one of the main advantages is that all costs incurred in relation to the volunteer activity are tax-exempt. Previously, only structures that were considered to be public benefit organisations were allowed to register, but this has been changed by the recent amendment to the law.

The registration is at the Ministry of National Resources and does not put a huge administrative burden on organisations. The process is simple

and merely supposes fill in a form and submitting it to the ministry. As a result of registering one's organisation, there is the obligation to register information on volunteers (at the organisation), in terms of number of volunteers, what type of activity they carry out and when. There is also the obligation to sign a contract with the volunteer, if applicable, depending on the type and length of the activity. Generally for activities that occur irregularly and do not suppose any reimbursement of expenses, a volunteer contract is not required, whereas volunteering regularly for an activity for which expenses are reimbursed makes signing a contract obligatory. The Hungarian Labour Inspectorate can check these volunteer contracts.

There is little consistency in terms of facts and figures on volunteering in Hungary. Data is gathered differently and that naturally leads to differences in figures obtained. The highest percentage was identified in representative research carried out by ÖKA in 2005, using the broadest understanding of the concept of volunteering and including everyone who performs any voluntary activity carried out in a formal or informal setting, ranging from long term voluntary engagement to preparing food for school children's activities, and taking the last year as time reference. The result of this survey was that about 40% of the adult population in Hungary is engaged in some kind of volunteering activity.

At the opposite pole is a survey carried out by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal), which each year looks at NGOs that work with volunteers. According to this survey only 5% of the adult population is engaged in volunteering.

According to the European Value Study, an initiative of the University of Tilburg and the GESIS Leibniz-Institute for Social Sciences, about 10.8% of Hungarian adults volunteer, with slightly more males than females volunteering. The average volunteer is married, has children, lives in an urban area, has a medium financial income and has been volunteering for a few years. This study also looked primarily at volunteering done in connection to activities of volunteer organisations.

The European Year of Volunteering 2011 (EYV2011), coinciding with the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first part of the year, represented a breakthrough for Hungary in terms of volunteering data collection. The internationally adopted methodology for volunteering measurement, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work has been rolled-out and a module on voluntary work was included in the Labour Force Survey, making Hungary one of the first European countries to implement this Manual. The final results of this survey are yet to be published and so far the Hungarian Central Statistical Office has not officially released information on the preliminary results, which are forecast to be much higher than the 5% obtained in the previous survey.

The common ground of the surveys on volunteering paints the profile of the average Hungarian volunteer. People aged between 30 and 40 seem



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to be the most active, and people who have already started a family and have a stable income are more prone to engage in volunteering. Young people start volunteering after the age of 14 and the percentage of people who volunteer increases along with the age up to a certain point; it then decreases drastically after the age of 60. This clearly indicates that there is a lot to be done to foster senior volunteering in Hungary. In terms of gender, engagement is balanced, with slightly more males than females volunteering. Females are more visible in day-to-day volunteering activities, but the balance is tipped by the fact that more males volunteer in areas of civil protection on boards of directors. The fields that gather the highest number of volunteers are social and health care, environmental protection, religion, sport and leisure activities and culture. The choice for these fields is in line with the findings of the *Hungarian Volunteer Motivation Inventory*<sup>2</sup>, which identifies values, recognition, social interaction, environment, understanding and culture as the primary motivating factors behind one's decision to volunteer.



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The perception of volunteering has changed a lot for the better in the last ten years. Moreover, the EYV2011 enhanced this opinion change and overall had a tremendous impact in Hungary.

For many years, volunteering carried the burden of a negative image, influenced by the determination of the concept under communism, when voluntary work was obligatory, leaving question marks after the fall of communism as to why anyone would engage if it is not requested. The perception has changed a lot, not entirely or completely, but significantly. People understand what volunteering is, understand that doing voluntary work is good for them and no longer see it as a sacrifice. Moreover, even people who do not do voluntary work see the added value in it and consider it useful to society. A large part of the population is passive, neither negative about volunteering, nor getting actively involved.

Surveys also show that people having undergone higher education are more likely to participate in volunteer activities. This raises another challenge for the volunteering sector, namely that of reaching out to underprivileged groups, and enhancing the opportunities to volunteer for groups at risk of social exclusion.

Volunteers are no longer just seen as people who are naive enough to work for free, and people in Hungary are now more and more eager to do voluntary work and it has got the necessary prestige. For some groups it is still considered a privilege; but it is becoming more and more accessible for all. The actual trend in Hungary is that there are more people willing to engage than well-managed volunteer programmes available. This is because alongside changing public attitudes, many NGOs do not have the necessary capacity to work with higher numbers of volunteers and very often state-financed care institutions remain closed to volunteer programs. To help good programmes emerge is one of the present key challenges of volunteer development agencies. This limited volunteering management capacity is likely to become an issue on the long run.

Throughout 2011, there was wide media coverage for the volunteering sector and on average, more Hungarians who access means of mass-information have heard about EYV2011 or volunteer stories. The year was a success in Hungary; there was a lot of positive reflection in the media and as a result of it many people can now relate to what volunteering is.

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2. Bartal, Anna Mária and Kmetty, Zoltán, 2010 – "A magyar önkéntesek motivációjának vizsgálata és a Magyar Önkéntesmotivációs Kérdőív (MÖMK) sztenderdizálásának eredményei" "The examination of the motivations of volunteers in Hungary and the Hungarian Volunteer Motivation Inventory", page12

## 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Hungarian Parliament adopted the Act LXXXVIII on Voluntary Activities in the Public Interest in 2005. The process of developing the law was a lengthy one, starting in 2000, under the initiative of civil society organisations and in connection to the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

The National Volunteer Centre ÖKA coordinated the efforts which put together the first draft of a law on volunteering, having worked together with a group of experts. The initial approach was to identify laws that impact on volunteering and modify them to frame volunteering and to become enabling for the volunteering sector. The strategy eventually changed, in line with emerging needs from the sector, and it was decided that efforts were to be concentrated on developing a special, dedicated law, which would better recognise the importance of volunteering.



In 2002, following intense lobbying from ÖKA, the Hungarian government agreed to include volunteering in their civil society strategy, having the development of a law on volunteering as a concrete action. The government gave the green light for the preparation of the law and requested civil society to coordinate, develop and submit a draft law in 2004. There was even a small budget allocated to ensure that the consultation for a law on volunteering reached out to different regions. As such, consultation meetings and debates on various aspects were held country-wide and the conclusions were fed into what became a final draft law. Civil society valued the result of this process, considered the draft to be very good, and presented it to the Government.

To the surprise of civil society organisations, the Ministry of Social Affairs had, in parallel, instructed their legal department to develop a law on volunteering. Given the in-house development process, the draft prepared by the department was less in line with the needs of the volunteering sector and negatively perceived. A debate on the changes to be made to the draft law then followed, with the legal department of the then Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment as actors. Negotiations that continued with political parties in Parliament resulted in a final draft law which was satisfactory for all parties. Civil society felt ownership over the law and was proud of the achievement, having been one of the few laws initiated by NGOs in Hungary.

The impact of the law was tremendous. It was the moment when the government started to take volunteering seriously. Volunteering essentially passed from being a nice idea to being a topic on the Hungarian policy agenda only after this law was adopted.

Following the development of the law on volunteering, the contact between governmental and nongovernmental counterparts has continued to be fluent ever since. At the moment, in Hungary there are two ministries that deal with volunteering, namely within the Ministry of National Resources, the State Secretariat for Social Affairs, Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities, which has a few personnel dealing directly with volunteering, and indirectly

within the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, State Secretariat for the Church, Minorities, Non-Governmental Relations and Civil Society. The coordination of activities during EYV2011 was the task of the Civil Society Department. However, after the conclusion of the European Year, it no longer deals with volunteering.

The fact that there is no single entry point for volunteering policy in the Hungarian government at times poses difficulties. However the National Volunteer Centre is in contact with both government representative bodies. Recently in Hungary, a new legislative provision has been adopted, having the aim of regulating the strategic cooperation between NGOs and ministries. According to this law, governments may propose and sign a cooperation contract/agreement with the NGOs concerned, in the policy area of interest. These contracts define operating procedures for how to keep in touch, how quickly to answer each others' queries, and when to keep each other informed (e.g. the ministry is obliged to inform the NGO on legislative initiatives that influence the NGO's area of work). ÖKA was recently sent such an agreement.

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As previously explained, organisations that wish to be considered under the law and benefit from its stipulations, must officially register their volunteering programmes. Registration is therefore not mandatory if the organisation decides that working under the law does not add value to their activity, but becomes obligatory if organisation wishes to be exempt from taxes for reimbursements of the costs incurred by the volunteers.

According to the law in Hungary, a volunteer may be a person with legal capacity, a person with restricted legal capacity or a minor older than 10 years of age (and therefore without legal capacity), with a note that the latter, may not carry out volunteer activities between 8 pm and 6 am. Unlike in other European countries, refugees or persons in a refugee-like situation may carry out volunteer activities in an organised framework if a number of conditions are met by the host organisation, such as liability and health insurance coverage. The law has specific provisions to ensure that there are no restrictions in terms of engaging in volunteer activities for people receiving social benefits, in the sense that carrying out volunteer activities does not lead to the loss of social service benefits, such as unemployment, disability allowance or pensions.

The law also describes what secure relationships between a volunteer and a host organisation should look like and gives basic guidance to organisations on how to run their volunteer programmes well. Being far from sufficient volunteer management, the guidance given is useful and encourages organisations to respect principles that ultimately contribute to the quality of their volunteer programmes.

The Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Public Interest Volunteer Activities does not concern volunteer blood donations, volunteering in fire brigades, in civil or wildlife protection. These activities are subject to other, specific legislation.

## 4. STRUCTURE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR INVOLVED IN VOLUNTEERING

The Hungarian National Volunteer Centre, Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (ÖKA) was set up in 2002 in the capital city of Budapest, as an independent, non-governmental organisation. ÖKA is currently managing a growing, country-wide network of regional volunteer centres. Hungary has 19 counties and regional volunteer centres have been set up in all of them, with

the exception of one, where there is no volunteer centre per se, but an organisation that fulfils the function of a volunteer centre. The network coordinated by ÖKA express the long term commitment of working together. At the moment it only includes 10 of the regional volunteer centres, but good cooperation characterises the relationship between all of them.

ÖKA has started to provide capacity building programmes for organisations in cities outside the capital. Centres on the other hand have a more complex activity, fulfilling additional functions. They are veritable regional hubs for volunteering, having as functions: providing information on volunteering, consultancy, matching volunteer supply and demand, training and capacity building, advocacy and lobbying with authorities, promotion and recognition of volunteering.

The collaboration between volunteer centres in Hungary was further reinforced through the framework given by the *Önindító (Self Starter) Programme*. This two year programme, running between 2009 and 2011, funded by the European Union, provided great support to set-up and strengthen volunteer centres with the coordination of ÖKA. A new phase of this grant was published at the beginning of 2012 with particular attention given to the development of volunteer points and volunteer centres in the smaller cities, towns and rural areas. The role of volunteer points is to organise volunteer activities and manage the supply of and demand of volunteers.

The fact that the *Önindító Programme* funding stream has ended<sup>3</sup> raises concerns in the volunteering sector. However the second phase of the programme is aimed to support volunteer points and should have as an overall outcome, the strengthening of volunteer infrastructure in Hungary. Its framework has raised a big debate because organisations previously funded (Volunteer Centres) are not eligible to apply for a grant in the second phase of the programme. Newcomer organisations may apply, so many new volunteer programmes can start up, but Volunteer Centres will probably not have the necessary capacity to deal with them.

ÖKA acts as countrywide coordinator, the organisation that gathers people, organisations and institutions with interest in volunteering, and that together with its network and collaborators carries out consultations, surveys and research, provides the platform for experience sharing, is the volunteering knowledge catalyst and works directly on strengthening volunteer infrastructure in Hungary.

In addition to the network of volunteer centres, there are national, sector specific networks that promote volunteering. An example is a national network of youth service, coordinated by the Foundation for Democratic Youth, *Demokratikus Ifjúságért Alapítvány (DIA)*. There is also the intention of developing a national network of volunteering in hospitals and health care programmes.

Non-profit sector research<sup>4</sup> published recently after the fall of communism in Hungary reflects the fact that 'early examples of non-profit organisations in Hungary employed very few staff and were mostly run by volunteers'. Most of the NGOs in Hungary still rely greatly on volunteers. A more recent study<sup>5</sup> shows that the proportion of volunteers in the total human resources in the non-profit sector is 81% in the case of advocacy organisations and of 92% in classic civil organisations, associations and foundations.

3. There are six projects still running under this programme in 2012, because there were administrative delays in initiating them.

4. Kuti, Éva, 1993 – "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Hungary", page 2

5. Nagy, Renáta and Sebestény, István, 2009 – "Methodological Practice and Practical Methodology: Fifteen Years in Nonprofit Statistics." Hungarian Statistical Review, Special Number 12, page 130



The biggest volunteer involving organisations in the country are most likely relief organisations; Hungarian branches of well reputed international organisations such as the Red Cross or Maltesers International, which are present nation-wide. For instance, *Magyar Vöröskereszt*, the Hungarian Red Cross<sup>6</sup> counts 30,000 local volunteers; another big volunteer-involving organisation is the Hungarian Malteser Charity Service (*Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat*).

6. <http://www.redcross-eu.net/en/Red-Cross-EU-Office/EU-NATIONAL-RED-CROSS-SOCIETIES/Hungarian-Red-Cross/>

## 5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Cross-sector cooperation is an increasingly prominent feature of the Hungarian volunteering landscape. The lead in conceptualism programmes and policy still lies within civil society; however the government has taken an active part in supporting and developing volunteer programmes.

Between 2005 and 2010 there was a state-financed programme for long term unemployed youth, developed in coordination of the National Volunteer Centre, called *ÖTLET Programme*. Within the framework of this programme, young people who had been unemployed for extended periods of time, had the opportunity to do up to 10 months of voluntary service with a NGO, local authority or institution. Despite the criticism against the scheme, seen as a kind of alternative to employment, *ÖTLET* provided young people with an excellent opportunity to gain experience. The evaluation of this programme showed that it contributed to the employability of the young people who participated in it, as most of them eventually got employed. As part of this programme, *ÖKA* provided training to both the young volunteers and to the volunteer involving organisations.

An organisation previously mentioned, *DIA*, has set up a National Youth Service Network Programme called *KözöD!*<sup>7</sup>, an initiative aimed at providing young people aged 14 to 25 the opportunity to organise community based volunteer activities, offering them a small grant scheme and technical support to develop the activity.

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**Through *ÖTLET* Programme, young unemployed people had the opportunity to carry out voluntary service with a NGO, local authority or institution in order to gain skills and experience.**

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Companies are becoming increasingly interested in collaborating with the voluntary sector and in engaging their employees in volunteer activities. In fact, it is usually companies that initiate contact with volunteer centres. Their approach and motivation is different to the volunteer organisations', being very interested in promoting their brands, enhancing their visibility and keeping their employees happy and loyal to the company. There are therefore grounds for cooperation both for the development of employee volunteering programmes and for specific volunteer projects, as part of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of companies. The increased volunteering awareness, brought about by the EYV2011, lead certain

companies and banks to make calls for small grants for community volunteer programmes. Although these grants were used by businesses primarily for promotion purposes, tapping into the popularity of volunteering, they were of value added as unlike large European grant schemes, they reached small, community-based initiatives.

Political parties in Hungary do not have volunteering as such on their agenda; they place

7. <http://english-dia.blogspot.com/p/dias-programmes.html>

voluntary activity under larger frameworks such as community participation, engagement or democracy. For some political parties volunteers are a possible resource. In fact some political parties are launching calls for volunteers to support their activities, being a matter of choice and a reflection of their political positioning whether they call for 'volunteers' or for 'activists'.

According to a recently adopted National Public Education regulation, each and every secondary school student will have to do at least 50 hours of community service before concluding secondary school. No secondary school graduation certificate will be issued without proof that the community service was carried out. Given its obligatory character, despite being done for public benefit, this service is not called volunteering. However, the voluntary sector will be asked to step in and assist with the management of the community service and with identifying work that can be done by the students. The extent of volunteer centre involvement will be determined by the closeness of the collaboration thus far between schools and the volunteer centre in respective communities. Generally there is still resistance from formal education structures to approaching volunteer centres for extra-curricular activities and it is usually NGOs who try to break the barriers and propose models of cooperation.

Universities are also, slowly but surely, opening up to collaborating with volunteer centres. University students are not amongst the most active population group, most likely due to the absence of a suitable framework; however changes are starting to happen. Budapest based students, such as those attending the University of Technology and Economics are becoming more engaged and some university departments are starting to recognise volunteer activity as eligible for receiving credits<sup>8</sup>. Voluntary activity is starting to be mentioned in curricula vitae, being considered as a sign of social commitment and additional skills.

8. Under the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

## 6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



Government and European Union programmes are the larger sources of funding for volunteering in Hungary. One of the positives of these funding frameworks is that their programmatic, conceptual design is done in full awareness of the concept of volunteering. Moreover, not only does funding for volunteering get directed through dedicated streams, but it is also the case that a volunteering element is included in other, more generic programmes aimed at strengthening civil society or developing different social services. Volunteering development has become a cross-cutting element of different programmes, not as prominent as environmental impact or equal opportunities, but as a clearly defined horizontal necessity. In some programmes for instance, volunteering promotion and engaging volunteers are not required, but constitute advantages in the evaluation of project grant proposals.

Funding opportunities present themselves mainly through calls for proposals on concrete projects. There is the opportunity for organisations to request operational support grants through the National Civil Fund<sup>9</sup>, established through Law No. 50 on the National Civil Fund of 2003, with the aim of strengthening the operation of civil society organisations and the development of the third sector through grant supports. The voluntary sector is not specifically singled out, but volunteer organisations are eligible to apply and there is also provision for covering direct costs incurred by volunteers on activities, such as travel expenses.

9. [http://www.nca.hu/?page=webtext/show&wte\\_code=english](http://www.nca.hu/?page=webtext/show&wte_code=english) From 2012 on it functions as National Cooperation Fund.

The negative aspect in the nature of the source of funding is the fact that, particularly in the context of the budgetary cuts, these sources are not stable. An enhanced partnership with the business sector could be one of the pathways to financial stability. However outside of the capital city of Budapest, businesses are often not community oriented enough to engage easily with voluntary sector projects. Reaching out to the business sector is not easy. Nor is it easy for companies to pick and chose organisations to partner. From this point of view, the National Volunteer Centre is privileged; because of its visibility companies do approach it. Partnership with the business sector is however a continuous investment of energy. There is the pressure of needing to identify new types of innovative cooperation.

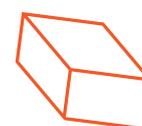
Volunteer organisations try to maintain their funding sources by writing project grant applications and lobbying for volunteering to be mainstreamed and included in other programmes. The set-up of the Önindító Volunteer Centre Development Programme is a concrete example of these lobbying efforts.

## 7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

As mentioned above in the ‘Volunteering landscape’ section, in Hungary there have been different surveys using different methodologies and reflecting different realities. Volunteering and non-profit sector research has been carried out by the National Volunteer Centre, by other civil society organisations, as well as by the Central Statistical Office.

The most promising aspect is the implementation of the ILO Manual for the Measurement of Volunteer Work during EYV2011. Following the methodology of this Manual, a volunteer work module was added to the labour force survey in the third quarter of 2011. The aim of the survey was to capture the frequency, rate and characteristics of volunteer work in Hungary. Its target population was aged 15 to 74 and the reference period was the previous 12 months. The results of the survey are to be released by the Central Statistical Office in the course of 2012. The breakthrough with this survey is that it will likely mean that volunteering in Hungary will be surveyed regularly. There is the proposal to implement a volunteering survey every second year, and the data obtained in Hungary, by having followed internationally agreed methodology, will be comparable with statistics on volunteering in other countries.

Data on volunteering will be an efficient way to both design programmes that better address the reality in the sector, and to raise policy makers’ awareness and public opinion on the value that volunteering brings to our societies and economies.



## 8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

At the moment there is no specific volunteering quality framework in Hungary. This however does not prevent organisations that involve volunteers to seek to always improve their programmes. Volunteer management training and capacity building is one of the core functions of volunteer centres.

The Government has taken initiative to work on developing an ethical code for volunteering and through pilot projects, to initiate the development of quality standards for volunteering. The result of these efforts might prove useful in the future. Yet it has to be stressed that the absence of these instruments does not significantly hamper the development of volunteering in Hungary. The absence of such standards does not mean that quality is not a feature of many volunteer programmes.

In fact by the assessment of ÖKA, through training the quality of programmes is constantly increasing; continuous work will lead to even further improvement and having formalised standards could, in principle, not add value but instead suppose a significant time, financial and human resources cost. The need for such standards is more likely to come up in specific activity sectors. For instance, organisations that manage hospital medical care volunteer programmes, by the nature of their work, are keener to have volunteering quality standards put in place. The Volunteer Centre Network developed an internal quality standard system for volunteer centres, invested a lot of resources in it and faces challenges in meeting the needed capacity to run this system.

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*The absence of an ethical code does not mean that quality is not a feature of many volunteer programmes.*

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## 9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Awareness is created through a nation-wide database of volunteers and volunteer opportunities. This database is hosted on a Web Portal on volunteering ([www.onkentes.hu](http://www.onkentes.hu)) administered by the National Volunteer Centre, with administration shared with the regional volunteer centres. Each regional volunteer centre has administrator rights for data in its area of responsibility, in order to properly manage and keep up to date the information on organisations and volunteer opportunities in the county. Volunteers may search for opportunities, create a profile and develop a filter for notifications on volunteer opportunities to be emailed to them based on availability and interest criteria selected. A smart search engine is used to support the portal, to which thousands of people and organisations have signed up.

Information on volunteer opportunities is also disseminated by volunteer centres and volunteer points through information campaigns or individual consultations. Practice has shown that the decision to volunteer for an organisation in particular is also made based on recommendations and information passed by word of mouth.

Volunteering is also promoted through high visibility events, usually organised to mark the Hungarian Volunteer Day, celebrated on the 1st Saturday of June or International Volunteer Day on the 5th December. On the occasion of the former, Volunteer Awards are given in a ceremony that is aimed at publicly recognising the contributions of volunteers in Hungary.

Media coverage during the EYV2011 featured volunteer stories and related information throughout the year. The wide coverage was not easy to maintain, for the media is always interested in sensational stories, in reports that represent news or that have a unique element. In 2012 there might be a saturation of public information on the theme; however thus far, the connection with the media continues to be good.

Additional channels of volunteer promotion and information dissemination are schools, organisations and companies, either through specific campaigns or through targeted, tailored information, upon request.

Volunteering promotion is achieving results. As previously mentioned more and more people are interested in volunteering. The challenge comes from the limited capacity to place volunteers who express interest in volunteering and to effectively manage volunteers.

## 10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

One of the strengths in the Hungarian law on volunteering lies in its provisions that specifically look at ensuring that volunteering is compatible with the receipt of social benefits such as unemployment. Other laws have taken this aspect further however, into a greyer area. If a person is unemployed for a long time, the state considers that they must return something to the community and show their readiness to contribute to the community and prove their readiness to work. As such, long term unemployed people need to serve for 30 days a year in the community, and failing to do so will have as a consequence the loss of their social benefit entitlements. Whereas the state expectation for community work from people under its social benefit scheme is not unnatural, the fact that this mandatory service in particular is wrongly referred to as volunteering runs the risk of causing confusion on the concept in the public opinion. This concern was raised by the volunteering sector. However the government still calls it volunteering in the absence of another term. Moreover, because of the nature of the service (community work for public benefit) volunteer centres are expected to work with local governments and employment agencies on this programme and identify placements for the 30 days of community work. At the same time it is a great opportunity for the Centres to build connections locally and for the unemployed to gain work experience, the feeling of team work, belonging and responsibility next to many indirect advantages.

There is also a plan to change the Criminal Act to give the possibility to offer community work as an alternative to time spent in prison, in the case of minor offences, with the aim of building stronger communities through service and contributing to the integration of people in conflict with the law. This community work will not be called volunteering, and rightfully so. However the conceptual and practical set-up of this scheme is of interest to the voluntary sector.

Hungary is one of the countries in Europe where a Volunteer Passport system has been developed and implemented. The Volunteer Passport is an instrument that allows people to keep a record of their volunteer experience, as well as document the skills they gained through volunteer work, as a pathway to the recognition of these skills. Moreover, a handbook on skills recognition was developed in 2005. The volunteer passports are not yet widely used -the implementation of such a system is usually slow. However, importantly volunteer work and qualifications or skills gained through volunteering are more and more frequently reflected by people in their CV and highly regarded by employers.

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*Hungary is one of the countries where a Volunteer Passport system has been implemented. The Volunteer Passport is an instrument that allows people to keep a record of and capitalise on their volunteer experience, a tool for the recognition of these skills.*

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A National Strategy for Volunteering is underway in Hungary, and this is a policy milestone for the voluntary sector, as it reflects the commitment of the government to work together with stakeholders on volunteering development. Civil society representatives, including for instance ÖKA and Talentum Foundation, businesses, religious groups and the government, have developed the draft National Strategy for Volunteering jointly. On the 5th of December 2011, the International Day of Volunteering, the final draft of the strategy was sent for public debate, to give all interested parties the opportunity to comment on it or propose amendments. The strategy is now in the phase of reviewing and its adoption is envisaged in 2012. The National Strategy for Volunteering will cover the period of time from its adoption to 2020 and volunteering infrastructure is part of this strategy.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

An enabling volunteering infrastructure in Hungary is impossible to achieve without an appropriate policy framework and funding support. Programmes designed by policy makers should concentrate on volunteering development, training, knowledge and capacity building, with particular attention given to host organisations, to enable them to manage good quality volunteering programmes. These programmatic priorities need to also be translated into an increase in the financial involvement of the government in the support of volunteer development organisations. More is still to be done also in the partnership between volunteer organisations and businesses, for quality employee volunteering and projects funded under the corporate social responsibility policy of companies.

Identifying recommendations relevant for the European level is a challenging endeavour when working at the local, regional and national level. Except for the involvement in the work of the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), Hungarian volunteer organisations are situated outside of the European policy discussion. Recommendations should come as a result of a structured framework, evenly involving stakeholders at different levels and in all countries. In that sense, we recommend the European Commission to develop a White Paper on Volunteering in Europe.

There are currently European programmes, such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS), that foster volunteering; they are invaluable and should be maintained and if possible reinforced. European programmes should regard more quality guidance, volunteering programmes and partnerships. A similar programme to EVS should be developed for Adult and Senior Volunteers, beyond what the Grundtvig programme is currently providing.

Monitoring quality volunteering development in different member states should also be a concern at the European level. Such an assessment would help EU member states to understand the needs and particularities of the sector at different levels and foster the exchange of good practices. In that sense, an online platform such as the CEV managed Online Community, can provide the space for the knowledge sharing.



Research in the field of volunteering should be carried out at the European level. Thematic analysis and specific studies on different policy developments should be done in all EU countries and at the European level. At the moment there is hardly any reliable, comparable data on volunteering at the European level. Internationally approved methodology<sup>10</sup> for volunteering data collection exists, there is interest from the voluntary sector to support the process, and Eurostat should call on all EU member states to produce statistics on volunteering. Research on volunteering will bridge the gap between the voluntary sector needs and policy design. It will give clear information on the contribution of volunteering to society and the economy and overall recognise the value of volunteering.

Volunteering should also more clearly form part of the European Union policy agenda, rather than be merely integrated as feature in different policy areas.

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10. International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2011. *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*

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## Resources

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Democratic Youth Foundation (Demokratikus Ifjúságért Alapítvány) <http://www.i-dia.org>

European Volunteer Measurement Project [www.evmp.eu](http://www.evmp.eu)

Hungarian Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal [www.ksh.hu](http://www.ksh.hu))

Hungarian National Development Agency [www.nfu.hu](http://www.nfu.hu)

Hungarian Red Cross Magyar Vöröskereszt [www.voroskereszt.hu](http://www.voroskereszt.hu)

Hungarian Malteser Charity Service Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat [www.maltai.hu](http://www.maltai.hu)

National Volunteer Centre (Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány) [www.oka.hu](http://www.oka.hu), <http://www.oka.hu/cikkek/letoeltheto-tanulmanyok>