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EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE



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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

Dutch volunteer organisations and their volunteers are supported at three different levels: at the local level by volunteer centres, at the provincial level by support centres, and at the national level by MOVISIE, the Netherlands centre for social development. MOVISIE gathers and disseminates knowledge relating to volunteer work on all three levels¹.

Apart from this institutional support, organisations often receive specific support from national umbrella organisations. For example, local soccer clubs receive support from the national soccer league and local playground associations are sponsored by the national playground association. An organisation like Scouting has a council that determines its policy and regional support practices at the national level. Each region is in contact with the leaders and board members representing their area, who organise meetings between regions and activities for the Scouting groups².

Volunteering Infrastructure in the Netherlands is commonly understood to mean organisations that *“provide infrastructure to promote, stimulate, and develop volunteering in general and, in many cases locally, through volunteer support, management support and community support”*³.

In the Netherlands the VOS model⁴ has been developed to help volunteer centres focus their activities in three areas: support of individual volunteers (or volunteer support), support of organisations (or management support) and support of society (or community support). Activities around volunteer support include: contacting or matching individuals who want to volunteer with organisations that need volunteer effort. Management support activities include consulting and supporting organisations involving volunteers, in order to make their activities more attractive and inviting for prospective volunteers. Finally, community support means bringing about the conditions and supporting the initiatives that enhance (new forms of) volunteer effort or citizen involvement within the community in a general sense.

In the Netherlands, the national volunteering infrastructure includes the six core functions that are also used in research on a global level: brokerage, marketing volunteering, best practice development, developing volunteering opportunities, policy response and campaigning, and strategic development of volunteering. A seventh has been added in the last decade, which tackles practical logistical support of volunteer organisations⁵.

1. For more information on MOVISIE refer to: <http://www.movisie.nl/eCache/ENG/1/15/032.html>

2. For more information on Scouting Netherlands refer to: <https://www.scouting.nl/english/meet-scouting/organisation>

3. Cees van den Bos (2008) Using volunteer centres to build civil society. Paper presented at the annual Meeting of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Philadelphia, PA., November 19-22, 2008. Available at <http://www.movisie.nl/onderwerpen/english/docs/usingVCstobuild.pdf>

4. Stubbe, Berkelaar and Mateman (2008) Het V.O.S.-model. De maatschappelijke rol van vrijwilligerscentrales. MOVISIE Available at: http://www.movisie.nl/onderwerpen/vrijwillige_inzet/docs/V.O.S.-model%5B1%5D.pdf

5. Cees van den Bos (2008) Using volunteer centres to build civil society. Paper presented at the annual Meeting of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, Philadelphia, PA., November 19-22, 2008. Available at <http://www.movisie.nl/onderwerpen/english/docs/usingVCstobuild.pdf>

In the last few years the focus of volunteer centres has shifted from individual brokerage towards a greater focus on strategic development and the development of volunteering opportunities. This is in response to the introduction of the Social Support Act, which stimulates local government to develop policies that support volunteering. Volunteer centres have been re-establishing themselves within the environment of the support structure. Recent budget cuts and diminishing arrangements for people with limited opportunities have also created a changing target group: more people with disabilities and special needs, but also more (temporarily) unemployed people who are interested in participating in volunteering.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Definition

The Dutch Welfare Policy defines 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”. In general research, and also within the field of volunteering, this definition is still the most widely used and accepted. But it has been the subject of debate during the previous decade, because of the range of forms of volunteering that do not fit this description. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport has also used the term “voluntary effort” in its policies on volunteering, to include a much broader spectrum of activities carried out by citizens in Dutch society.

Over the past decade, we have seen an increase in the variety of forms of encouragement to individuals to start volunteering. A range of different ‘third party’ partners, such as local governments, schools and businesses have begun encouraging people to spend time volunteering. Within secondary schools, the concept of ‘service learning’ has been introduced. It is now obligatory for secondary school students to do 30 hours of volunteering as part of their curriculum. Immigrants are encouraged to learn the Dutch language by participating in volunteering organisations. People who are (temporarily) unemployed are encouraged to volunteer, to meet other people and participate in society. Meanwhile, businesses encourage their employees to spend some hours volunteering to develop communication and leadership skills. These practices often do not fit the definition of volunteering, as they entail either some form of obligation or non-monetary remuneration, but are generally accepted as “voluntary effort” in the public debate.

MOVISIE, as a national support institute, has followed this example in exploring the various forms and exceptions to the general definition. Volunteering is unpaid, carried out in an organised context, for the benefit of others and society. Volunteering activities must not compete with paid work and must be auxiliary. This last condition means that the decision of volunteers to quit should not pose undue hardship for organisations.

Facts and figures on volunteering in the Netherlands

There are around 5.6 million volunteers (45% of the total population) in the Netherlands. These volunteers put in an average amount of 3.7 volunteer hours a week, as indicated by longitudinal surveys conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)⁶.

In 2010, the largest proportion of volunteers was found in the 35-44 age group. Because of the

Volunteering activities must not compete with paid work and must be complementary. This last condition means that the decision of volunteers to leave should not pose undue hardship for organisations.

6. Houben- van Hertten, M. en te Riele, S. (2011) Vrijwillige inzet 2010. CBS. For more information see: http://www.movisie.nl/onderwerpen/nov/docs/Vrijwillige_inzet_2010.pdf

ageing population in the Netherlands, we see a growing percentage of elderly people engaged in volunteering. Age and education are two of the biggest indicators as to who is active as a volunteer. Elderly people, people with higher levels of education, and people with paid jobs do more volunteering. However, the contribution of young people is growing. The aforementioned introduction of service learning in high schools in 2007 has contributed to the highest level of volunteering amongst young people seen in years, up to 45% of young people between the ages of 15-18 in 2010 (CBS)⁷.

A desire to do good, preparation for future employment, a pastime or a means of integrating into Dutch society, caring for people or sharing enthusiasm for hobbies or passions are the motives people mention for becoming volunteers.

The Netherlands counts numerous volunteer organisations, active in the fields of sport, care, welfare, culture, or nature, whether focussing on local issues or on the national level. Out of the total of 5.6 million volunteers in the Netherlands, the highest proportion (around 12%) is involved in sports. The second biggest volunteer sector is the cultural sector, with the care sector in third place.

Perception

Volunteering in the Netherlands is widely perceived as a valuable way to engage with and within the community. Almost half of the population are involved with volunteering. The attitude towards volunteering is very positive. However, the concept of volunteering is often associated with care institutions and an activity that mostly older people would be involved in, thus overlooking the much wider variety of sectors and activities that volunteers are actually involved in.

Due to the economic crisis and current budget cuts, (local) governments are very interested and openly highlighting the contribution volunteers can make in the care of fellow citizens in need of assistance. The risk of this particular focus from the government is that volunteering could become an instrument used to fill gaps within the social welfare system. This runs the risk of damaging the intrinsic motivation of volunteers. Volunteer organisations do stress that the 'voluntary' aspect should come first and foremost for their volunteers, as a core reason to engage and invest time in their activities. Local governments should also take this into account when talking about the value and worth of volunteers.

However, most volunteer organisations agree with the social role and responsibilities governments attribute to them. Whether the growing need for more volunteers within the community will be met remains to be seen over the coming decade. Another barrier to an even greater involvement in volunteering lies in the perception that it requires a large and long-term commitment. Throughout the last decade, the volunteer sector has been searching for a way to involve people in a more flexible manner, through ad hoc or episodic volunteering.



7. Ibid

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

There is no national charter on the rights and responsibilities of volunteers or on the concept of volunteering in the Netherlands. However, since the 2007 introduction of the Social Support Act, local governments have been obliged to formulate policies on the support of volunteering.

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The Dutch Association for Volunteer Effort (NOV) is lobbying for one charter which would combine all the different regulations concerning volunteers.

Although there is no law on volunteering in the Netherlands, there is a lot of prudence at the national level with regards to the position of volunteers. In many situations, the same regulations that apply to paid staff are also applicable to volunteers. Volunteers and

volunteer organisations experience many problems navigating through the maze of laws and regulations, since there are no specific laws in the Netherlands that provide insurance or take on responsibility for accidents involving volunteers. The Netherlands does have an extensive social insurance system. In general, when something happens to you, you are insured. But as this usually works through paid employment, volunteers are not covered by this social insurance. However, there are several regulations within other legal frameworks that can sometimes apply to volunteer organisations, such as the Occupational Health and Safety legislation and tax legislation.

Also, a major discussion is still underway in the Netherlands about who is responsible when something happens to a volunteer or when a third party suffers damage as a result of volunteer activities. Should the volunteer (insurance) pay for this or should the organisation (insurance) pay? One recent development in this area was a provision made available by the national association for municipal governments (Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten, VNG), in cooperation with an insurance company. Since 2012, all local authorities have arranged insurance, using this provision or other means, as a fall back guarantee for their volunteering population.

All these points, apart from health insurance, are usually mentioned in a volunteer contract between the individual volunteer and the volunteering organisation. That is what MOVISIE recommends to volunteer organisations. However, it is not mandatory for organisations to have contracts with their volunteers. Many organisations do not offer contracts, but they do have volunteer policies in which these provisions are mentioned and arranged.

MOVISIE and NOV have placed the problems concerning rules and regulations that volunteer organisations face on the government's agenda. As a result, several projects have started that are designed to reduce the burden of rules placed on volunteer work. For example, MOVISIE developed, in collaboration with a municipality, a volunteers' test for municipal policy. This ultimately resulted in a publication containing suggestions for local authorities for reducing red tape for volunteers. As well as this, there is support for municipalities in mapping out and resolving the bottlenecks caused by local regulations. Recently the government has announced the possibility of volunteers working with minors to receive a free criminal screening check. Regulations around volunteers working with vulnerable groups are becoming more common.

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

Support for volunteering on national level

There are two national institutions for the support of volunteering in the Netherlands.

One is the *Association of Dutch Voluntary Effort Organisations (NOV)*⁸. 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, as such. It has two kinds of members: organisations that perform voluntary work and those that fulfil a supporting or coordinating role. The member organisations determine the Association's future policies, and they are invited to make maximum use of the networking role of the NOV.

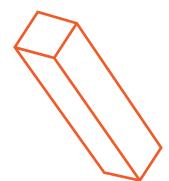
NOV has three main tasks:

1. *To serve the interests of the voluntary sector. NOV is the spokesperson and lobbyist of Dutch voluntary work and, as such, a serious discussion partner of politicians, government officials and other policy-making parties. NOV provides advice, both solicited and unsolicited.*
2. *To act as an intermediary for its members. NOV stimulates networks and offers member organisations the possibility of meeting as a group, where the focus is on the content of the work. As a network actor, NOV gives its members the possibility of exchanging knowledge and experiences and developing collaborative projects. Through these networks, member organisations mutually strengthen each other.*
3. *To provide a major stimulus to the scale of voluntary effort. NOV works towards more public recognition of voluntary effort, but its name is also used in innovative initiatives.*

The second institution is *MOVISIE*, the *Netherlands centre for social development*.

MOVISIE is the knowledge and consultancy centre for volunteer work in the Netherlands. Volunteers need good volunteer policies, education and training, acknowledgement and recognition and a serious relationship with (social care) professionals. Volunteer organisations, in turn, want to have appropriate self-management structures, methods to recruit and retain volunteers, less pressure from legislation and a positive image for volunteer effort.

MOVISIE collects and disseminates best practice, develops new methodologies, and provides advice, training, and support. One of the instruments used to collect and share working methods used in each of these domains is a database, which aims to promote evidence-based practice in the social and community work field. Projects are designed and implemented around various issues, often in collaboration with voluntary organisations or their infrastructure. These pilot projects enable MOVISIE to test new types of volunteer work. In other projects there is support for the Dutch infrastructure and volunteer organisations on various subjects. On a national level, MOVISIE provides support to a variety of target groups, such as support services and volunteer work databases. They help to distribute information and knowledge to the level where these belong: local level voluntary organisations and initiatives in the field of volunteer effort.



8. For more information on NOV see <http://www.nov.nl/eCache/DEF/1/22/793.html>

Social Support Act embeds the support on policy level

The Directorate for Social Policy of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is the main public body responsible for volunteering. Other departments also have policies concerning volunteers within their specific sector or area.

An important development has been the introduction of the *Social Support Act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning, Wmo)* in 2007. With this Act, it has become mandatory for Dutch municipalities to support volunteer work. The Dutch government commissioned the development of a manual for municipalities, to help them organise this support efficiently. This manual was compiled by the most important parties in the field of volunteer work: municipalities, volunteer organisations, local and regional support organisations and other parties concerned.

It describes five core functions:

1. **Translation:** Municipalities must translate new (and existing) social developments into a vision and a concrete policy.
2. **Merging and matching:** To interactively formulate this policy, it is essential to create a network or platform where different social parties can participate in the discussion. Connecting different parties is also a way to address social themes and establish collaboration. Through the mediation of a broker, parties can establish collaborations. Also, volunteers and students in social practical training programmes can be matched with volunteer work.
3. **Strengthening:** Optimal and efficient support and strengthening of volunteers and volunteer organisations requires a support structure which includes the practical training broker.
4. **Spreading:** Volunteer work cannot exist without the dedicated efforts of volunteers. Good practices can inspire (new) volunteers and possibly lead to more volunteers and volunteer work. In this light, it is crucial to highlight a broad range of volunteer work. Another subject that should also be thoroughly addressed is the appreciation of volunteers' effort.
5. **Anchoring:** All best practices, successes, expertise and experiences should be recorded to ensure that a solid execution of volunteer work is increasingly guaranteed. A guarantee should always come with an evaluation to make sure that new experiences lead to innovative methods that are able to answer to and translate (new) social developments.

Thus we are back at the start of the cycle: translation. If we keep following this cycle, volunteer work will keep growing and be better equipped to respond to social developments and themes.

Volunteer centres

Most of the implementation of these core functions is being carried out by local volunteer centres. There are about 250-300 local volunteer centres, which support volunteer organisations and individual volunteers with services such as mediation, information, advice, promotion, fostering expertise, promoting special interests and providing facilities. In general, these volunteer centres are mainly financed and supported by the local government. Relatively large volunteer centres can have up to twenty paid staff. Sometimes centres are small, run by a few volunteers or situated within the municipal structure.

NOVI, a national network of volunteer centres

The majority of local volunteer centres are members of NOV. In 2008, NOV launched a national network of volunteer centres, NOVI. The goals of this network are to exchange knowledge, and to formulate a common vision of volunteering and the volunteering infrastructure in the

The Social Support Act makes it mandatory for municipalities to support voluntary work - a manual was developed to help in the organisation of this support.

Netherlands. Volunteer centres also indicated the need to create a common identity and image to better profile volunteer centres in the Netherlands. The network is made up of representatives of regional or thematic networks that are formed by local volunteer centres. Four times a year, they get together to discuss relevant issues, like new developments, quality improvement of volunteering and the improvement of the image of volunteering in the Netherlands.



Provincial support centres (CMOs)

In the Netherlands, there are also provincial support centres. These centres, so-called Centra voor Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning (CMO), or centres for community support, advise local government and their local policy makers on exemplary municipalities to be found in their region. Their knowledge is gained through research, by compiling best practices of voluntary work in their regions.

Volunteer organisations

The biggest volunteer organisations, like the *Red Cross*, *Scouting*, *NOC*NSF (Olympic Sports and National Sports Federation)*, *Zonnebloem* (providing holidays or companionship for the sick and elderly), *Humanitas* (humanist provider of a wide variety of services), have national bureaus with paid staff and regional and local branches. Most of the bigger national volunteer organisations are a member of NOV, in order to have their common interests represented. Cooperation or communication between local branches of these national organisations and volunteer centres at the local level differs, according to the needs of local branches and the support provided at a regional level within their own organisations.

Some examples of big volunteer organisations in the Netherlands:

De Zonnebloem

The national association Zonnebloem has 1,365 local branches and around 43,000 volunteers. It is one of the biggest volunteer organisations in the Netherlands. Annually the volunteers visit over 1.3 million people who are sick, physically or mentally challenged or the elderly and those at risk of social isolation and loneliness. On top of this, Zonnebloem organises activities like boat trips, theatre visits and other daytrips for these target groups. They also organise holidays for people who are physically handicapped. Around 611,000 supporters and donators finance these activities⁹.



Scouting Nederland

Scouting Nederland is the largest youth organisation in the Netherlands and has 112,000 members. The 87,000 youth members and the 25,000 volunteers are spread over more than 1,100 Scout groups. The Scouting Nederland organisation consists of three levels: the National Council determines policy. Scouting Nederland is governed by a Board made up of Scouting members who are democratically elected by the National Council. The Chief Executive, who is responsible to the Board, leads the Headquarters which has a staff of around 40 professionals. The regions are in regular contact with the leaders and board members in their region and they organise meetings between and activities for the Scout groups. Leadership training is part of their responsibility. There are 47 regions in the Netherlands. At a local level, there are 1,100 Scout groups, all linked to the Scouting Nederland organisation. Volunteers provide the programme and management effort of the local groups¹⁰.

9. For more information on the Zonnebloem see <http://www.zonnebloem.nl>

10. or more information on Scouting Netherlands see <https://www.scouting.nl/english/meet-scouting/organisation>

Humanitas

The core of Humanitas' services is provided by volunteers. Some 11,000 well-trained volunteers are active in more than 600 projects. They are supported by a professional staff of just over 300 people. Annually Humanitas supports more than 40,000 people who are in need of a helping hand. Humanitas offers a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from buddy projects for immigrants to chat services addressing loneliness, from parenting support to support groups for people dealing with grief and loss. The Humanitas services are free of charge and available to anyone, irrespective of age, ethnicity, lifestyle and sexual orientation¹¹.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

In the Netherlands, as well as volunteer organisations, there are many public service providers that involve volunteers in the execution of their work. Volunteers are active in public services like the police, the coast guard and the fire brigade. In the cultural sector volunteers create broadcasting shows on both (local) television and radio, they are active in the cultural heritage sector, in museums, festivals and theatres shows. People are also active in care and welfare institutions that involve volunteers in the care of elderly and physically, mentally or psychologically challenged people, to organise daily activities or food distribution within the institution or in local communities. Schools involve parents in reading groups and other extracurricular activities.

One important development on the topic of the involvement of other "third parties" in volunteering is the growing need to make use of volunteering as a reaction to reduced financial resources. Public authorities provide civil society organisations in the Netherlands with fewer structural funds and force them to work on a project basis. These (sometimes drastic) government budget reductions force NGOs in the Netherlands to seek new or additional sources of financial support and new partners to cooperate with.

Business engagement in volunteering

One of these sources is the business sector. Businesses are also a source of new skills, professional advice on sales and marketing, manpower, IT facilities and materials. But relationships with businesses do not have to be one-sided: NGOs have something to offer in return. The unique selling point of NGOs is employee engagement: the authentic commitment of their members and volunteers to the goals and activities of their organisations, without receiving material or financial rewards in return. Businesses can learn from their experience to get people committed to their goals. Partnerships with NGOs help to enhance company pride, develop skills and knowledge and discover new market opportunities.

The business case for employee engagement is gaining ground. Experience and studies from several companies show that employee engagement supports business goals, especially when employee engagement programs are linked to Human Resource Management goals, such as the development of professional skills and competences. Studies show that employees who do volunteer work are happier, healthier, have a higher productivity rate and stay on longer with their companies¹².

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11. For more information on Humanitas see: <http://www.humanitas.nl/over-humanitas/about-humanitas>

12. For more information on CSR Netherlands see: <http://www.mvonederland.nl/english/content/pagina/what-is-mvo-nederland>

Service-learning in the Netherlands

In 2007 the Dutch government introduced a law to implement service-learning into the Dutch secondary school curriculum and this has been in effect since 2011. This service-learning programme aims to help young people to develop the (social) skills necessary to actively participate in society. Every pupil engages in (at least) 30 hours of community service. The pupils take part in the activities of the non-profit sector. The number of 30 hours is the result of a long discussion on the effect of these activities on young people. The initial proposal was a period of three months of community service. After negotiations the government decided on 30 hours; one day a week for a period of three months. The hours are obligatory, but unpaid.

Most of the money made available for the introduction of service-learning goes directly to the schools. Schools are responsible for implementing it into their curriculum. They are also responsible for the preparation, execution and evaluation of the community service hours for every student.

To encourage cooperation between secondary schools and volunteer organisations, the national government has financed the role of a 'matchmaker' for a period of three years in every municipality in the Netherlands. This is often a role executed by the local volunteer centre. This role is to raise awareness within volunteer organisations of the benefits of involving young people in their organisation through service learning projects. Matchmakers train and support volunteer organizations to create or adapt their activities to best fit the competencies and abilities of high school students. They also stimulate cooperation between the different secondary schools within the city or region and set up digital databases that contain the available volunteer positions, to help students find available positions.

The introduction of service-learning has other impacts on volunteer work: new partnerships are built, new projects are initiated and the interest for corporate social responsibility increases.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

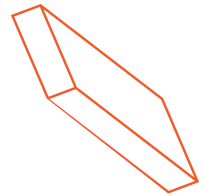
Most of the budget for volunteering in the Netherlands is spent on the support of volunteers and their organisations, both at the national and the local level. Volunteer organisations themselves often have very limited budgets for their activities.

They sometimes receive financial support from the (local) government, on a structural basis or on a project basis, but due to the economic crisis and budget cuts, both at local and national levels, these amounts are diminishing. More often than not, volunteer organisations depend on contributions from their members or gifts from donors. However, volunteer organisations often have a variety of ways to arrange extra budgets for their activities. They organise fundraising collections, small lotteries or arrange sponsorship deals with local businesses.

There are also various funding institutions that provide money for projects to volunteer organisations. On a national level, there are big national foundations, such as the "Oranje Fonds"¹³ and the VSB Fonds¹⁴. These foundations support cultural activities or manage government-initiated programmes. Such programmes are usually developed to subsidise innovative initiatives. There are also national funding institutions that provide money for

13. For more information on the Oranje Fonds see: <http://www.oranjefonds.nl/oranjefonds/English/>

14. Find more information on the VSB fonds on: <http://www.vsbfonds.nl>



activities in their own sectors, such as the Fonds voor Cultuurparticipatie, subsidising cultural activities or activities for special target groups; a special fund for elderly people (*Ouderenfonds*)¹⁵ or for handicapped people (*Fonds voor Verstandelijk Gehandicapten*). Large banks, such as the Rabobank and ABN AMRO have foundations that often provide funding for special projects as well, from a corporate social responsibility point of view.

A registry of all the funding institutions (about 650) is published in paper and digital form, “*Fondsenboek*” and *Fondsendisk*”¹⁶. Organisations that are looking for funding opportunities use these to find the most suitable source of funding for new projects and initiatives. There is also a special website with an overview of all the different institutions, www.fondsen.org.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

There are three longitudinal surveys on volunteering conducted in the Netherlands, one of which is executed by the Central Bureau for Statistics. Questions on volunteering engagement are also included in more general large surveys on household situations and economic status. The results related to volunteering are published every two years, the latest one being in September 2011, based on data from 2010¹⁷.

The Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Offices have published five different publications on volunteering in the last ten years, including a vision on the future development of volunteering until 2015.

Separate longitudinal research called *Giving in the Netherlands* (“*Geven in Nederland*”), conducted by the VU University of Amsterdam (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) shows how money and time is spent in the non-profit sector in the Netherlands. It focuses on the way individuals, households, grant-giving institutions and businesses spend money and time on philanthropy; on organisations and initiatives which work in the charity sector. 4.7 billion euro was donated to this sector in 2009¹⁸.

Several universities and the larger research institutions in the Netherlands research specific topics or themes linked to volunteering. The Erasmus University in Rotterdam has a department on Strategic Philanthropy that focuses more on the strategic management choices for business and non-profit organisations, in terms of giving time towards volunteering. Other universities and research institutions focus on the motivation of volunteers (the University of Leiden), the various ways that people engage within society and the changing engagement of active citizens within society (the University of Amsterdam, UVA) and the cooperation between paid staff and volunteers within non-profit organisations (Verwey Jonker Instituut).

The economic value of volunteering

The Erasmus Centre for Strategic Philanthropy calculated the total economic value of volunteers in the Netherlands. According to their research, the total amount of hours volunteers put in is equal to 560,000 full time jobs. The sum of volunteer hours equals a financial value of between 5 and 20 billion euro. This quite large difference is due to the difficulty in determining the hourly

Besides contributing time resources, individuals, households, institutions and businesses donated in 2009 a total of 4.7 billion euro to organisations and initiatives which work in the charity sector.

15. For more information see: <http://www.ouderenfonds.nl/>

16. <http://www.fondsenboek.nl/pagina's/fondsenboek/fondsboek.htm>

17. Houben- van Herten, M. en te Riele, S. (2011) *Vrijwillige inzet 2010*. CBS. For more information see: http://www.movisie.nl/onderwerpen/nov/docs/Vrijwillige_inzet_2010.pdf

18. For more information on the GIN research see: <http://www.gevenin nederland.nl/>

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The sum of volunteer hours equals a financial value of between 5 and 20 billion euro.

wage that one hour of volunteering would “cost”. Opponents argue that calculating the amount in this way is not correct, because a lot of voluntary work would not be done if society had to pay for it. Furthermore, volunteers themselves count their hours differently than their paid working hours and treat inefficiency as par for the course. Therefore, the actual economic value of all volunteers in the Netherlands is difficult to agree upon¹⁹. But all parties agree that the value of volunteering, both economic and social, is extremely important for Dutch society as a whole.

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

A number of international quality standards exist, such as the *International Standards for Businesses, Government and Society (ISO)*²⁰ and the standards set by the *Bureau of Funding organisations (CBF)*²¹, that some volunteer organisations follow to prove their professionalism towards funding institutions, clients or customers. The sector itself has developed two main quality labels that are recognised by actors within the sector, one for support organisations and volunteer centres and the other for volunteer-involving organisations.

Quality label for volunteer centres in the Netherlands

One tool to help volunteer centres improve the quality of their work is a quality label for volunteer centres “Keurmerk voor Steunpunten Vrijwilligerswerk”. The assessment and implementation of this standard is done by the Dutch Association for Volunteer Effort (NOV), as the main representative body for the sector.

Quality label for volunteer organisations

Commissioned by the NOV, MOVISIE has developed an instrument for volunteer organisations to work on the quality of volunteering within their organisation. MOVISIE works together with national and local volunteer organisations and guides them through the process of implementing a quality instrument to monitor their activities. They advise volunteer organisations in the following ways: quality assessments during the intake of a volunteer (profile and task description), regular ‘how are you doing’ talks with a volunteer coordinator, and by monitoring their policies concerning volunteers, in order to improve the quality of activities or services they provide.

Quality volunteering means, among other things: stimulating active participation and commitment of volunteers; having volunteers who feel appreciated and feel that their effort and contribution is being recognised within the organisation; having an organisational culture that allows and stimulates optimal recognition of volunteers, working collectively on organising the back office processes, procedures and quality standards. Entrepreneurship, leadership skills, communication skills, cooperation, efficiency and effectiveness are important keywords for the leadership of the organisation to realise quality volunteering.

19. For more information on the economic value debate see: http://www.movisie.nl/NOV/docs/nieuws/DNBMagazine_De_onbetaalbare_vrijwilliger.pdf

20. For more information on ISO see: <http://www.iso.org/iso/home.html>

21. For more information on the CBF certification see: https://www.cbf-certificeringsnet.nl/index_2.php

The quality method worked with aims to assess seven different elements: 1) the organisational administration and policy, 2) management, 3) finances and facilities, 4) communication, 5) volunteer management policies and practices (recruitment of volunteers, support, training and guidance, task flexibility, rewards and insight into exit motives), 6) innovation, building a learning organisation, 7) the services, products or activities of the organisation.

Within Safe Hands (In Veilige Handen)

A joint initiative of MOVISIE, NOV, NOC*NSF and Scouting has resulted in tools and working methods for organisations that work with minors, to help create a safer environment for children, and to tackle issues around unacceptable sexual behaviour. There are two strands: one side is prevention, the other is how to act in case of an incident. Organisations can find two separate manuals at www.inveiligehanden.nl: one for taking preventive steps and one to guide them through what should happen once an incident has occurred. A guide, or 'toolkit' is available to download free of charge, which shows various ways of raising the issue within an organisation, of assessing the situation through auditing and of setting priorities etc.

Furthermore, this joint initiative aims to set up a national list of people who have breached a common code of ethics. All volunteers who work directly with young people should sign the code. It is necessary to have a common law system in place to deal with those accused of violating the code.

Good governance and democratic associations

An emerging theme concerning quality and ethics is the topic of good governance of volunteer organisations, and the voice and participation of volunteers and members within organisations' policy processes. The transparency of decision-making processes and the behaviour of boards and directors has become a very important issue in terms of promotion for public perception and donations.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

A national website for volunteers

On a national level, there is a dedicated website for anyone who is interested in the topic (www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl). This website offers useful information on volunteering: news, knowledge dossiers, and also some national databases with volunteering opportunities, where interested people can see available positions. There is also a special magazine on volunteering, "Vakwerk", with stories of local volunteer activities and general information on various topics, from research to administrative regulations.

A national campaign: NL DOET (The Netherlands acts)

There is an annual national campaign called "The Netherlands acts", NL DOET (formerly known as Make a Difference Day); following the American concept, as many people as possible participate over the same weekend by spending a few hours volunteering. The Queen of the Netherlands and the whole royal family take part in this event, which helps ensure that NL DOET is a yearly event with a lot of media attention²².

22. For more information on NL DOET see: <http://www.nldoet.nl/nldoet/>

A successful European Year of Volunteering 2011

During the European Year of Volunteering 2011, there was a high-profile national campaign in the Netherlands, with several activities, such as a big Thank You campaign, a promotional tour, the week of Applause and an award scheme at both the local and national levels. A special edition focussing on volunteering was published in the national edition of the Metro newspaper in September, with additional pages dedicated to volunteering in a few regional editions.

The main goal of these activities during the EYV 2011 in the Netherlands was to show that volunteering is both enjoyable and valuable, that countless people experience pleasure through volunteering and that there is a wide range of regular volunteer activities, which many people are still unaware of. The EYV 2011 was very successful in terms of raising awareness of this in the Netherlands²³.

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

Infrastructure for informal care and voluntary care

As is the case with the volunteering infrastructure as a whole, a similar infrastructure exists in the Netherlands around informal care. This infrastructure includes activities for people who are responsible on a daily basis for family members who need assistance and help, for so called “respite care”, and for volunteers who are active in informal care, helping people in their neighbourhood with daily grocery shopping, cooking or cleaning without payment, or providing activities through their volunteering organisations which provide care for people in need. In Dutch policy, there is a clear division between what is called informal care, voluntary care and volunteering. However, in this area, there are a lot of people who actively help and contribute to the participation and well being of others, without receiving payment.

The national representative body of all these informal carers, support organisations and informal care organisations is Mezzo, the national association for informal care and voluntary care²⁴. Its function and role is comparable to that which NOV plays for the voluntary sector. Regionally and locally, there are support institutions similar to the volunteer centres, which provide information, support, assistance and activities for organisations and people who have the responsibility to care for family members or relatives.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations at national level

In October 2011, during the European Year of Volunteering, the Association NOV published a manifesto containing several recommendations for the Dutch government, “*Cement for a strong building*” (“Cement voor een sterk gebouw”)²⁵. This manifesto was also endorsed by the NOC * NSF, the national sports federation, Kunstfactor, the national institute for the arts and culture sector, MOgroep, the employers’ organisation for health and social services, Mezzo, the national association for informal care and voluntary care, and CSR Netherlands, the national CSR network.

23. For more information on the EYV 2011 programma of the Netherlands see <http://www.movisie.nl/eCache/DEF/1/34/295.html>

24. For more information on Mezzo see: <http://www.mezzo.nl/>

25. NOV (2011) Cement voor een sterk gebouw. Available at <http://www.nov.nl/onderwerpen/nov/docs/Vereniging%20NOV%20Manifest%20Civil%20Society.pdf>

Recommendations include:

- *Work towards concrete arrangements with all parties involved*
- *The manifesto calls on the Dutch government to work towards concrete agreements to strengthen the voluntary and unselfish efforts of citizens for the good of civil society. The government should work together on this with civil society organisations, local municipalities, businesses and social partners.*
- *Give civil society more space and opportunities to engage*

The manifesto states that the government - both at the national and local level - should give more opportunities and space for those citizens and organisations that voluntarily take on responsibilities in society. This could be achieved not by giving them more tasks, but by facilitating and where necessary, strengthening the already present and existing forces in our society. After all, only a strong society is able to take over or relieve government from its responsibilities.

Cooperate with all parties involved, based on an integrated policy on volunteering and active citizenship

We need the effort of volunteers in all areas, from health, safety, social cohesion, nature, education and care, to participation in government. Therefore, the Association NOV urges the current prime minister and his colleagues, in this manifesto, to become partners in a strong society; to cooperate and work together with civil society organisations towards a vital and sustainable civil society, based on an integrated policy on volunteering and active citizenship. Of course, other parties should be reminded of their responsibility for a strong and diverse civil society, including business, civil society organisations, associations and individuals. But the government plays a special role, both nationally and locally, when it comes to creating an environment in which volunteerism can flourish.

Recommendations at European level

Respect the intrinsic motivation of volunteering

At the European level, there should be a similar awareness of the valuable contribution volunteers make towards creating a vital and sustainable civil society in Europe. The tendency to translate this contribution into a mere economic context risks overlooking the more intrinsic value of volunteering. A better development is the focus on the valuable experience of volunteering for unemployed people, for students, for people with disabilities, as long as the decision to invest time as a volunteer remains a free choice. As soon as volunteering becomes obligatory, this is essentially harmful for the concept of volunteering.

Need for a broad view of volunteering

The main Ministry responsible for volunteering in the Netherlands, the Directorate for Social Policy of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, currently has quite a narrow policy focus in that it deals only with volunteers within care institutions and informal and voluntary care. Of course, in the current economic crisis, and given the need to sustain the level of care within the Dutch welfare state, the need for volunteers in this area is very significant. But in the long term, this does not do justice to those people who engage voluntarily with a whole range of sectors and areas of society. An awareness of the diversity of experiences and the vast range of ways in which people engage within society should be reflected in both European and national policies on volunteering.

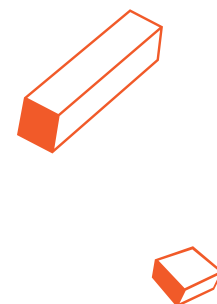
During EYV 2011 Dutch civil society developed a manifesto for volunteering in the Netherlands. The manifesto calls on the Dutch government to work towards concrete agreements to strengthen the voluntary and unselfish efforts of citizens for the good of civil society.

Be aware of the changing motivations of the next generation of volunteers

Another important aspect that should be taken into account when encouraging volunteers within society is the changing motivations and approaches people have developed in the last decades towards volunteering. New volunteers are currently approaching volunteering from the personal development focussed, “what’s in it for me?” viewpoint. Volunteer-involving organisations in particular, should take this into account, but governments, businesses and other third parties should also be aware of these changes in the way citizens want to become involved.

Recognise the skills and competences gained through volunteering

The recognition of the value of volunteering, especially for the development of (social and functional) skills and competences learned through volunteering, is an important topic to be further promoted and pushed on the European level. This recognition, in the concrete validation of these skills and competences, should be much better promoted at the national and local level, and the European institutions should promote and encourage national governments to further develop this within society.



Resources

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