



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE

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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

The infrastructure for volunteering is a set of policy measures and long term activities that sustain the valorisation and practice of volunteering.

The elements of infrastructure are:

- *Legal framework*
- *Fiscal policy*
- *Volunteering support centres*
- *Stable channels for dialogue and representation of interests between the public institutions and volunteering organisations*
- *Long term sustainable mechanisms for the promotion of and training for volunteering*
- *Data and standards*

The mission of the volunteering infrastructure is to facilitate the civic engagement of citizens and organisations and to enhance their impact.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Volunteering is defined in the Italian National Framework Law on Volunteering L. 266/91 published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Italy on 22nd August 1991, n.196. (Gazz. Uff., 22 agosto, n. 196). It defines volunteering as an “*activity performed at a person’s own free will, through an organisation of which the volunteer is a member, with no aim for direct or indirect profit, exclusively for solidarity reasons*”. The same Law defines voluntary organisations, stating the principles that distinguish these from other types of not for profit organisations and associations, that may also involve volunteers. It is universally recognised that volunteering

is a gift of time with no financial reward taken and an act of social responsibility for common good and for the benefit of others and the community.

77.4% of volunteers have a high-school or university education and around 8 years of work experience.

There is no regular standard census on the numbers and profiles of volunteers and their engagement. The last national survey by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) was published in 2005 and based on 2003 census on Non-profit Institutions (NPIs) data. According to these data there were 21,021 voluntary organisations (VOs). According to a slightly more recent survey carried out by FIVOL (Italian Foundation for Volunteering) in 2006 there were over 1 million volunteers active in the Italian VOs¹. These figures were based only on volunteers engaged in voluntary organisations as defined by Law 266/91 and do not take into account volunteers active in other types of non-profit non-governmental organisations or informal volunteering performed outside an organisational setting.

The most recent research on the extent of volunteering by the National Council of Economy and Labour (CNEL) provides an insight into available data.

1. FIVOL, 2006.

The first Census of non-profit institutions (1999) has shown that volunteers constitute the most important part of the human capital (of non-profit institutions). Volunteers are active in more than 80% of non-profit institutions and count a total of more than 3.2 million² individuals. A more recent source, the Eighth Census of Industry and Services of 2011, tends to confirm these structural characteristics. In 2001 volunteers active in non-profit institutions resulted in 3,315,327 units (+3% with respect to the previous census), which makes up 85% of the total of human resources. For the number of voluntary organisations there is no updated census available. On the basis of the data collection done by CSVs on the number of VOs registered in the regional registers, we can estimate a total of 40,000+ voluntary organisations in Italy.

According to ISTAT 2003 data, the majority of Italian volunteers are adults aged 30 to 54 (41.1%), with 22.1% of them aged under 29 and 36.8% aged 54 or over. Most Italian volunteers are in employment 52.2%, while 29.5% are retired and the remaining 18.3% are students, homemakers, unemployed or people looking for their first job. They are educated to upper secondary school or university level (57.2%). Male volunteers are slightly more in percentage (54.4% of the total are male and 45.6% are female), although the number of women is increasing (in 1995 only 40.1% of volunteers were female).

The fields the majority of voluntary organisations are active in are health (28%) and social care (27.8%), while growing sectors of activity are recreation (14.6%), culture (9.6%), and civil and environmental protection (4.4%). Recent regional surveys also show that civil protection and advocacy are the fields registering the greatest increase in numbers of organisations and volunteers.

Recent Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (Censis) – SPES research “The future of volunteering: The case of Lazio” reports 26.2% of the total population as engaged in volunteering. In addition, it reports 14.1% of interviewees as having a family member who volunteers. The age groups of volunteers are reported as follows:

Age of volunteers	%
18 – 29 years	34.6%
30 – 44 years	29.4%
45 – 64 years	23.9%
65 years +	20.3%

These data shed a new light on the widespread opinion that volunteers in Italy are mostly aged or middle aged and that the young generations are reluctant to engage in volunteering. It remains to be studied how these data correlate with intense activities of the last decade for the promotion of volunteering among students and youth in general.

Other Censis-SPES 2010 data as regards the profile of volunteers are in line with the historical precedents and the general opinion: 77.4% of volunteers are high-school or university educated and have on average 8 years of work experience. The vast majority (73.6%) volunteer with an

2. Which may be overestimated, this being an organisations based census, and volunteers may be active in more than one organisation.



organisation, while the remaining 26.3% are informal volunteers. Of volunteers engaged in organisations, 11% are active in 2 or more organisations. It is significant that this percentage rises to 23.9% for volunteers educated at university level (or higher). It is also interesting to note that the percentage of informal volunteers is at the very lowest among the young (4.4% of the age group 18-29), it rises with age and reaches the peak of 30.7% among volunteers aged 65 and above.



The same Censis-SPES 2010 research shows that 76% of volunteers are engaged on a regular weekly basis throughout the year, while 24% volunteers occasionally.



Field of activity	% volunteers
Health (medical assistance, first aid, transportation, etc.)	33.0
Social support (home assistance, transportation of people with disabilities/elderly/children, help lines etc.)	26.6
Promotion of volunteering (fund raising, communication campaigns, etc.)	9.4
Recreational and socialising activities	10.9
Education and training (school support, employability, etc.)	12.0
Civil protection	8.7
Spiritual and religious support	15.9
International cooperation and solidarity (development aid, adoptions, etc.)	5.0
Environment (environmental education, cleaning, animal protection, etc.)	5.8
Protection and promotion of rights	2.2
Sport (facilities, organisation of events, etc.)	7.5
Culture (guided tours, heritage conservation, surveillance of museums, etc.)	5.0

Source:
Censis-SPES, 2010.

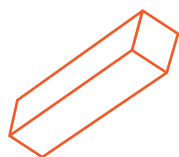
Volunteering as an expression of solidarity and as an answer to the needs of the community is recognised and valued in Italy, especially because its roots reach back to the societal organisation of medieval communes and its development is strongly linked with the social outreach and care dimension of the Catholic Church.

Censis-SPES research³, based on 550 residents in the Lazio region and 800 residents in other regions, analysed the perception of volunteering among the general public. It emerged that volunteering is perceived as more active in the field of health (69.9%) and social care facilities (52.3%); as highlighted earlier, both are indeed some of the main fields of intervention of volunteers, which shows that their presence is visible and largely perceived by the public. Less visible is the presence of volunteers in the environment and advocacy fields.

When asked to identify the role of volunteers in society, over one third of respondents (34.4%) were not able to pinpoint the role of volunteering in their locality. 4% of respondents stated

3. Censis-Spes, 2010, *Il futuro del volontariato: il caso del Lazio*.

that volunteering hasn't got any relevant role in society. The majority of those who could identify a role for volunteering stated that it favours relationships between those who can help/give and those in need (27.4), it facilitates social redistribution of resources at different levels, or that it shows that helping others is possible (23%), a dimension of active solidarity that the public appreciates.



The function of volunteering as a vehicle of active participation and problem resolution is indicated by almost 18% of the respondents and about 13% underline that volunteering means openness to others and strengthening of ever fading community links. Details of answers and percentages are shown in the Table below.

I cannot say	34.4
Favouring relationships between those who can help/give and those in need	27.4
Showing that helping others is possible	22.9
Favouring active participation of all the willing to the solution of the various issues in the community (disability, immigration)	17.9
Granting services that otherwise would not be provided	17
Spreading important values such as solidarity, non violence, freedom, tolerance	14.6
Promoting solidarity toward others as a sense of belonging to the community	12.8
Taking citizens' voices, especially the weakest, in front of politicians and those in power	8.7
Having an essential role in situations where deprivation is greatest	7
No relevant role	4
Informing about collective issues/problems (e.g. about health prevention, civil protection, etc.)	3.1

Source:
Censis-SPES, 2010.

It emerges that volunteering is perceived as supplementary to the local welfare system, able to mobilise additional resources, directing them towards the demands not being answered, having a demonstrative function, not just being a voice, but showing practically that some things can get done.

As to what the expectations are of the public towards volunteering, from the Censis-SPES research it comes to light that gratuity, humanity and direct relationships with the beneficiaries are the qualifying aspects for the majority of respondents. There is recognition of the great value of free service, implying motivation in the mission, and the importance of great humanity in providing services to people, as added value essential especially in some sectors. Services provided by volunteers are perceived as having a much higher relational closeness, and being effective in virtue of the quality of relationships between beneficiary and volunteer.

Volunteering is perceived as being more effective and more valuable because it is seen as a spontaneous, highly motivated and ethically driven activity.

More recent research⁴ carried out by a team at the University of Florence on the perception of volunteering, shows that VOs and volunteers are perceived as especially active in the resolution of local problems (particularly in the field of deprivation, need and marginalisation). This vision also affects how the relation between institutions and volunteering is perceived; volunteering is seen as subordinate to institutions and not as a cooperating partner.

According to the research, the image of voluntary activity as conveyed by VOs and perceived by the public is convergent: VOs describe their work using the words 'action,' 'organisation' and 'commitment,' and the respondents define the main features of volunteers and volunteering with the word 'continuity' and 'commitment.' Nevertheless, even though the organisations highlight 'competence,' 'methodology' and 'training' to describe the work of volunteers, most respondents keep thinking that voluntary action is guided by 'instinct,' 'passion' and 'do-it-yourself.'

Organisations highlight 'competence,' 'methodology' and 'training' to describe the work of volunteers, but most respondents believe that voluntary action is guided by 'instinct,' 'passion' and 'do-it-yourself.'

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

In Italy volunteering is regulated by the Framework Law on Volunteering, Law 266/91 (*Legge 11/08/1991 Num. 266*) which specifically defines and disciplines voluntary organisations and the interaction between them and the public institutions. Several other laws determine the nature and the activities of other non-profit, non-governmental organisations that also engage volunteers, like social promotion organisations, mostly in the sport and culture fields, or NGOs for international solidarity and development.

The Law recognises the social value and the function of volunteering as expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism. It provides the definition of voluntary activities and organisations and of the relationships between voluntary organisations and public authorities. It was adopted in 1991 after 10 years of discussions, draft proposals and awareness raising campaigns.

Some of the main elements of the Law 266/91 are outlined below.

Definition of voluntary activity and organisations

The Republic of Italy recognises the social value and function of voluntary activities as an expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism. It promotes its development by safeguarding its autonomy and favours its original contribution towards social, civil and cultural aims defined by the State and local authorities.

The Law defines as voluntary activities those given in person, spontaneously and freely, through an organisation of which the volunteer is a member, with no direct or indirect profit aim, exclusively for solidarity reasons.

Voluntary activity cannot be paid in any way, not even by the beneficiary. Volunteers can only be reimbursed by the voluntary organisation of which they are members for the direct expenses they incurred, if deemed necessary for the activity itself, within limits previously determined by their voluntary organisations.

4. Solito L., Sorrentino C., 2010.

Being a volunteer is not compatible with any form of paid work within the same organisation.

According to the Law 266/91, the services of voluntary organisations must be free of charge for target users; their aim is solidarity towards target users or towards the common good; their yearly balance is approved by the assembly of members and they are not for profit. Furthermore, they must have a democratic internal structure: their representatives must be elected and not paid, their members have rights and duties and there are criteria for admission and dismissal of members.



The insurance for volunteers is obligatory for injury and sickness related to the voluntary activity, and for third party liability. When voluntary organisations provide services in collaboration with and funded by local administrations or other public institutions, through a specific agreement, “convenzione”, the funders are obliged to reimburse the costs of the insurance for the volunteers involved.

The Law also strictly determines the essential characteristics of the voluntary organisation: not-for-profit, non-governmental, democratic; activities are for the benefit of others (not members of the organisation) or the common good; commercial revenues must be marginal.

A significant change as regards the relationship between the State and local authorities, and in the relationship between local authorities and citizens and their organisations, came into being in 2001 with the reform of the Constitution. In particular, the Art. 118 last clause affirms that the pursuit of the general interest is not the exclusive competence of public institutions, but also pertains to the active direct involvement of citizens. This change was initiated and later disseminated to the wider public by a coalition of civil society organisations and academics led by the civic movement “Cittadinanzattiva” and is of paramount importance when it comes to understanding and promoting volunteering as a direct concrete act of responsibility towards the community.

The Law regulates volunteering on the national level, but according to the principle of vertical subsidiarity, each Region – under whose responsibility the active engagement of citizens falls - draws up specific Regional laws to regulate volunteering at regional level. It is the Law that explicitly accords to Regions and autonomous Provinces, the right of instituting regional registers for voluntary organisations. As the Law states ‘Regions and autonomous provinces regulate the institution and maintenance of the general registers of voluntary organisations.’ Each Region organises its own register independently and provides periodically to its revision

and updating, making sure that the registered organisations maintain the requirements necessary for registration. The format of such registers has to abide to regional regulations that may differ for each region. The registration is a necessary requirement to access public funding, establish contract agreements with local authorities for the provision of services and for benefitting from fiscal rebates set out in the Law itself.

On top of fiscal deductions for donations, a new State regulation allows citizens to assign 0.5% of their income tax to a volunteering organisation of their choice.

VOs listed in the registers, in fact, are exempt from payment of certain State taxes. National legislation also provides for fiscal deductions for donations; moreover in the year 2006, a State regulation allowed citizens to assign 0.5% of their income tax to a VO of their choice.

The Law also set up a “National Observatory on Volunteering” to support, promote and develop volunteering through research, databases and specific training and projects. To develop

the voluntary activities in their Regions, many Regional authorities have set up “Regional Observatories on Volunteering” and Regional Conferences on Volunteering.

The Italian Framework Law on Volunteering 266/91 has set a high standard of precedent both for the legislation on other components of the third sector in Italy and for later laws on volunteering in other European countries. Some of the elements it contains are still – 20 years later and in a much more developed discussion around the legal framework for volunteering – extremely valid. These include: a specific mechanism for regulating services of public interest run by voluntary organisations in partnership with public authorities, the insurance of volunteers and the system of volunteer support centres (CSV, Centri di Servizio per il Volontariato) governed directly by grass-roots voluntary organisations.

According to the Law, the public body responsible for the implementation of the Law and the primary institutional reference point for volunteering is the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Directorate General for Volunteering, Associations and Social Bodies. It was established as a unit at about the same time the Law was passed. The National Observatory for Volunteering refers to the same unit and is presided over by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs. The Law 266/91 also provides for an annual call run by this Ministry Unit for co-funded experimental projects of grass-roots voluntary organisations. In 2010, for the first time, this same call for proposals included the provision that co-funding by VO can be provided by hours of voluntary engagement. The same DG also organises biennial National Conferences on Volunteering, participates in the controlling bodies of CSV and produces a biennial national report on volunteering.

In 2007, the Volunteer Support Centres in Italy carried out 67,045 consultancy activities, 18,541 information activities and 25,324 volunteer support activities.

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

CSVnet, the Italian National Coordination of Volunteer Support Centres, unites 72 out of the 78 regional and provincial CSV active all over Italy. It provides representation on a national level, works for the creation of shared standards, organises working groups and networking on different themes and provides input for innovation and improving impact on the national level.

In Italy there is a vast network of Volunteer Support Centres (CSVs). The Volunteer Support Centres were instituted by Law 266/91 and by the Ministerial Decree of 8th October 1997. They are at the service of voluntary organisations and, at the same time, managed by them, following the principle of volunteering autonomy that the Law aimed to affirm. They are active in every Italian region, except the autonomous Province of Bolzano.

In accordance to the Law, CSVs are financed by foundations of banking origin. The Law actually states in Article 15 that such foundations must include, in their articles of association, the donation of at least one fifteenth of their yearly net revenues for the creation of special regional funds, aimed at creating Volunteer Support Centres. Every special regional fund is controlled by a specific body (*Comitato di gestione*) made up of representatives of the pertinent Region, of voluntary organisations of that region, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the foundations of banking origin providing funding for that region and their association, and the local authorities of the Region. The controlling body holds office for two years; it approves and monitors the programme of activities and the yearly balance sheets.

Of the 78 CSVs existing in Italy, 65 are active at provincial, 9 at regional and 4 are at interprovincial or sub-provincial levels.

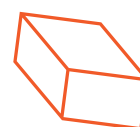
The vast majority of CSVs are associations of associations, predominantly registered voluntary organisations of the territory of reference. At least 13,000 third sector organisations are involved directly in the governance of the CSVs and 8,800 of these are local voluntary organisations⁵.

CSVs' functions and main roles are the following:

- *promotion of volunteering (meetings and conferences, promotional campaigns, organisation of public events, shows, exhibitions, publications, activities with schools and specific target groups, etc.)*
- *advice and consultancy services for grass-roots voluntary organisations, including also support to groups and individuals during the originating phase of their organisation, matching and tutoring of potential volunteers, direct support and mentoring of VOs in administration, communication, grants management and fund-raising, networking, etc.*
- *training*
- *information, documentation and research*



In 2007 CSVs carried out 67,045 consultancy activities, 18,541 information activities and 25,324 volunteer support activities.



CSVnet, *National Coordination of Voluntary Support Centres* - was officially established on 11 January 2003 with the aim of gathering, giving continuity to and strengthening the experience of the former National Association of Support Centres, constituted in 1999. It is now also the main system of governance for the sustainability of CSVs in the future, and the most active platform for the exchange of best practices, the transfer of innovation and training of both voluntary leaders and employed staff.

The main national networks uniting large national federations of volunteer involving organisations, ConVol and Forum del Terzo Settore, cooperate with CSVnet on all major training, development and policy initiatives and projects.

ConVol (*Conferenza Permanente Presidenti Associazioni e Federazioni Nazionali di Volontariato*, Permanent Conference of Presidents of National Associations and Federations of Volunteering) is an association set up in 1991 with the support and the scientific cooperation of FIVOL, the Italian Foundation for Volunteering. Today it counts 14 voluntary organisations and national federations among its members. It intends to link and coordinate its members to promote and facilitate legislation on social issues and in particular for deprived people; to inform and raise awareness on social exclusion and poverty issues; to ensure the quality of commitment of the volunteering sector for social justice, fair distribution of goods, quality of life and the development of the common good, promote volunteering through national and European legislation.

Forum del Terzo Settore (Forum of the Third Sector) was officially constituted in 1997. It represents over 100 national organisations (voluntary organisations, social cooperatives, international development organisations, fair-trade organisations). It aims at valuing activities and experiences carried out by citizens for improving quality of life. Its main tasks are social

5. CSVnet, 2010. Report 2008-2009.

and political representations to the government and other institutions. One of its bodies is the Consulta del Volontariato – a league of members of federations of voluntary organisations in the Forum.

Another important player for the development of volunteering in Southern, less developed regions, of Italy is *Fondazione per il Sud* (Foundation for the South). It is a private entity founded in 2006 through an alliance between foundations of banking, third sector and volunteering origin, to promote social infrastructure, particularly in the regions of Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Apulia, Sardinia and Sicily - through cooperation and concerted actions with the diverse expressions of the territory, in the frame of subsidiarity and social responsibility.

There are also federations, coordination and volunteering representative bodies on specific issues. Many umbrella organisations gather national and local VOs according to their specific field of activity, acting as spokespersons for target groups and mediators with the national and local government, for example:

- *Federazione Italiana del Superamento del Handicap (FISH)*, Italian Federation for Overcoming Disability
- *Federazione Italiana delle Associazioni di Volontariato in Oncologia (FAVO)*, Italian Federation of Voluntary Oncology Organisations
- *Coordinazione La Gabbianella for International adoptions*, child sponsorship and foster care.

The national federations of major voluntary organisations like the ones below are important and very well known organisations:

- *Associazione per l'Autogestione dei Servizi e la Solidarietà (AUSER)*, *Associazione Nazionale Terza Età Attiva per la Solidarietà (ANTEAS)* and *Associazione Diritti degli Anziani (ADA)* are VOs for the promotion of active ageing, linked to the main trade unions and important promoters of senior volunteering
- *Associazione Nazionale Famiglie di Persone con Disabilità Intellettiva e/o Relazionale (ANFFAS)*, National Association of Families of People with Intellectual or Relations Disabilities
- *Associazione Volontari Italiani Sangue (AVIS)*, Italian Blood Donors Association

Civil Protection Volunteers are mainly organised in local voluntary organisations integrated into the general civil protection system managed by the government. The Civil Protection

The Civil Protection Department registers about 2,500 organisations with over 1,300,000 volunteers for emergency interventions in case of natural disasters and the protection of the environment.

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Two main national generalist networks have also remained active on the national level for the past two decades: *Centro Nazionale del Volontariato (CNV)* National Volunteer Centre in Lucca and *Movimento di Volontariato Italiano (MOVI)*.

Some of the largest federations of voluntary organisations are:

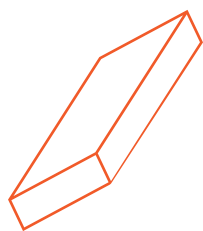
- *AUSER*, active in the sector mainstreaming active ageing and quality of life in third age, with over 1500 offices, 300,000 members and 40,000 volunteers;

- ANPAS, active in civil protection and health and social transport, with 864 organisations, 229 offices, 377,762 members, 86,630 volunteers, 986 youngsters in National Civic Service;
- *Misericordie d'Italia*, active mainly in patients' transport, civil protection and social care, with 700 fraternities, counting 670,000 members, 100,000 of those actively involved in volunteering.

At the local level, voluntary organisations cooperate with volunteer support centres participating in their governance as members of the assembly and elected board members and institutional representatives; at the same time they are also users of the services provided by the CSVs. On the national level, the umbrella organisations ConVol, Forum of the Third Sector and Consulta del Volontariato, cooperate through a protocol of intent with CSVnet, delimiting their reciprocal tasks, and belong to the platform of national volunteer representatives, which agrees with the Association of Italian Association of Banking Foundations (ACRI) and CoGe (Controlling body of the Special Fund) about CSVs core funding. They also manage political initiatives and actions together, such as the organisation of the National Assembly of Italian Volunteering 2010, the drafting of the Manifesto of Volunteering for Europe, the participation to the working group for the organisation of the EYV 2011 and, together with Fondazione per il Sud, the Formazione Quadri Terzo Settore (FQTS) Training for Third Sector Leaders Programme and the European Volunteer Measurement Project (EVMP).

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Most public service providers such as local administrations and local health authorities involve volunteers and voluntary organisations in the provision of services of public interest, notably in the social care sector. In order to initiate the involvement of voluntary organisations, public entities have to award contracts under competitive tenders or private negotiations. Voluntary organisations can only be involved in the management of services that do not require complex management, such as social promotion and support. Public entities can contract out service provision to voluntary organisations on grounds different and separate from bidding to the private sector. Local authorities, and in particular the local municipalities, are the main partners with whom voluntary organisations stipulate contracts for the provision of services addressing local needs.



CSVs approach businesses to involve them in participating in specific cooperation projects such as the programme “*Volontariato e Impresa*”. Proposals for collaboration involve the financing of projects planned by voluntary organisations to address the health and social care needs of the population or specific cultural and environmental issues; the ‘adoption’ of a voluntary organisation of the territory through a financial investment with fiscal benefits in return; the occasional free provision of technical know-how and competences, or of their facilities to voluntary organisations; and allowing their staff to take one day paid leave of absence from work to engage in volunteering in an organisation (employee volunteering). There are also different foundations stemming from large private and public-private businesses that fund volunteering programmes and collaborate on projects with voluntary organisations.

The Law 6 August 2008 n. 133⁶, promotes employee volunteering in the public sector by granting public employees with less than 5 years left to reach 40 years of service, in the years 2009, 2010

6. Legge 6 agosto 2008, n. 133 ‘Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 25 giugno 2008, n. 112, recante disposizioni urgenti per lo sviluppo economico, la semplificazione, la competitività, la stabilizzazione della finanza pubblica e la perequazione tributaria’. Published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 195, 21 August 2008 - n. 196. Available at <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/08133l.htm> [cited 2 February 2011]

or 2011, the possibility of ceasing work before reaching retirement age and still receiving 50% of their retribution. If these 5 years are spent volunteering for third sector organisations, upon presentation of the required evidence, the retribution is instead increased to 70%. So far it has been scarcely used.

Law 6 August 2008 n. 133 allows public employees with less than 5 years left to reach 40 years of service, to cease work before usual retirement age and still receive 50% of their retribution. If the 5 years left are spent volunteering the retribution increases to 70%.

On the national level, the National Observatory on Volunteering is the main public body involved in volunteering. It is comprised of 10 representatives of voluntary organisations and federations active in at least six regions, two experts and three representatives from the major trade unions. It has the following tasks: undertaking surveys on voluntary organisations; promoting research on volunteering in Italy and abroad; providing every tool useful for volunteering promotion and development; approving experimental projects devised by officially registered voluntary organisations in cooperation with local authorities to deal with social emergencies; offering support and advice on IT development projects and databases; publishing a biennial report on how the national and regional norms are implemented; supporting, together with the Regions, training initiatives; publishing an information bulletin and promoting other initiatives to spread the news relating to voluntary activities; promoting every three years a National Conference on Volunteering with the participation of all the institutional and civil society stakeholders.

Other Ministries and central government bodies also interact, collaborate and promote volunteering in their respective sectoral spheres of interest such as: the Department of Civil Protection, Office for the National Civic Service, Ministries for Youth, Health, Justice, the Foreign Ministry, and others. The inter-institutional table for collaboration on promotion and valorisation of volunteering established for the EYV 2011 has provided new grounds for future common policy developments.

On the regional and local level, there exist numerous similar examples of dialogue and participation between voluntary organisations and public authorities in different forms, such as: regional observatories, consultative bodies and sector or community based platforms. Schools are involved in the promotion of volunteering mainly through the attribution of educational credits to experiences gained out of school in various fields, including volunteer experiences undertaken for voluntary organisations or other institutions. Before the students can obtain credits the organisation they volunteered with has to provide the school with a description of the experience itself.

Education is severely under-funded in Italy since, according to OECD data⁷, education expenditure amounts to only 4.5% of the GDP, placing Italy at the penultimate position among OECD countries. The latest National Plan by the Ministry of Education which included, among other objectives, the promotion of volunteering in schools, dates back to 2007⁸. This plan was due to last three years, and it has not been renewed.

Individual schools sometimes cooperate with voluntary organisations for specific projects undertaken at school level especially on solidarity or environmental protection, but that is left to the individual initiative and good-will of interested teachers and head teachers.

Having said that, CSVs consider the promotion of volunteering in schools of paramount importance. Therefore, at regional level they have signed agreements with the Regional Office

7. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, www.oecd.org

8. Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Direttiva 18 aprile 2007, Piano nazionale per il benessere dello studente: linee di indirizzo per l'anno scolastico 2007/2008, available at www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/direttive/direttiva_18_aprile_2007.htm (cited on 31-01-2011)

for Education of their region for the promotion of volunteering in schools. These agreements aim at the promotion, coordination and recognition of the activities that the CSVs carry out in the territory and establish a partnership for initiatives in civic education and promotion of youth volunteering. These widespread activities are generally known as the 'school and volunteering' programme.

There is not a subject on volunteering in schools, but the teaching of "Citizenship and Constitution", introduced in the national school system by Law n. 169/08, includes the promotion of solidarity and volunteering⁹.

On the micro-territorial level, the interaction between VOs and public institutions is direct, while at regional level the majority of initiatives for collaboration and development with public authorities for common objectives, such as the promotion of volunteering to youth or systems of accreditation, are done through networks supported by CSVs through staff, secretariat, logistics and support for content elaboration.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Financial support for volunteering is provided by private and public funders, and from membership fees and own revenue. Public funding is becoming the principal source of income for an increasingly high number of organisations (25% in 1996 to 42% in 2000)¹⁰.

The principal public funders for VOs are local governments. European institution and national government funds are accessible to only a small portion of bigger better structured VOs. Public funding can be project-based or operational. It is increasingly based on co-financing projects mechanisms which puts small voluntary organisations under great strain, as do delays in the allocation of funds and significant bureaucratic overhead. Public funding is accessed in two ways, either through contract agreements with voluntary organisations for the provision of services or through grants conferred via public bidding for specific projects to voluntary organisations. Core funding mechanisms are becoming less common.

One of the major problems for VOs is the lack of granted or low cost premises for institutional activities, making the payment of rent to private owners one of the most important burdens on the ordinary functioning in VOs. In the last two years, which brought significant cuts to the funds available to local administrations, the access to funds and opportunities for VOs, especially in the social and educational sectors, has reduced dramatically.

Other sources of funds for the voluntary sector are private donors, members' fees and sales of goods and services. The Law sets out that private bank foundations have to devolve 1/15 of their annual profits to finance Volunteer Support Centres through the creation of a Special Fund, and this represents the core funding of CSVs, while revenues from other sources – such as participation in European projects – constitute a very small percentage of funding. For 2011 the system of CSVs counted on about 65 million EUR of core funding.

9. Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Lazio, Cittadinanza e Costituzione. Available at www.usrlazioistruzione.it/ufficiolazio.php?module=loadContenuto&PadreSub=310&Padre=327&idNav=459 [cited on 1-02-2011]

10. Volunteering across Europe, [2006]



7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

Systematic and stable provision of data on volunteering does not exist. The body responsible for the population surveys, the *National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)*, carried out the last census on non-profit institutions in 2003, publishing its findings in 2005, and is due to carry out the next one in 2012. Various research institutions and CSVs themselves promote significant research and in the last years particular attention was given to testing mechanisms for the evaluation of social impacts of voluntary activities.

So far, for the measurement of the economic impact of volunteering, the *ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* has not been used, but promotion is being done through the *European Volunteer Measurement Project (EVMP)* to make it become a stable institutional tool. It is the *Italian Association of Banking Foundations*, together with major national networks including CSVnet, that provided the initial grant for the preparatory phase of the European Volunteer Measurement Project in 2011, through which the partners, the *European Volunteer Centre (CEV)*, the *Johns Hopkins University Center for Civil Society Studies* and *SPES*, organise the promotion and initial training for the adoption of the ILO Manual by the national statistical offices. This could provide a break-through in the provision of accurate and comparable data on the number of volunteers, their profile, the activities they perform and their economic contribution. Within the EVMP, the Manual was translated into Italian, debates and small scale implementations were organised, a constructive collaboration with ISTAT developed and wide stakeholder support for the implementation of the Manual was built. ISTAT is to implement the Manual in 2013.

The valorisation of hours of voluntary engagement was recognised as co-funding in a public body supported project, namely within the yearly call for innovative projects of local voluntary organisations by the *National Observatory for Volunteering*, governed by the Italian Framework Law on Volunteering 266/1991. It is a call of the *Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies*, responsible for volunteering policy at the state level and also the *European Year of Volunteering 2011 National Coordinating Body*. It was introduced for the first time in 2010, in response to the demands of the National Observatory for Volunteering and further to the common political platform “*Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe*”, where this is expressly claimed. Volunteering activities are not at cost, but the estimated corresponding real cost may be valorised. The valorisation of the activities performed by volunteers during a project must not exceed: for ordinary activities, the ceiling of the hourly rates foreseen in the contracts of social cooperatives; for professional services, either highly qualified or not foreseen in the contracts of social cooperatives, the ceiling of the specific hourly rates provided by professional registers and from their charters of professional services. The activity performed by volunteers - as defined in the project description and in the economic plan - is subject to valorisation only within the share of the 10% that the applicant organisation has to provide.

“*Manifesto for Volunteering in Europe*” states volunteering activities are pro-bono, but the estimated corresponding real cost should be valorised.



8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

A long standing and important document drawing together the founding values of Italian volunteering is the *Carta dei Valori del Volontariato* (Charter of Volunteering Values), which sprang from a national debate between various organisations, supported by experts and researchers and officially presented in Rome on 4 December 2001 at the end the International Year of Volunteers.

The Charter describes the shared identity and shared aims of Italian volunteering, asserting its vital testimony and highlighting its social character. It has three sections: the first gathers the founding principles, the second is devoted to volunteers, and the third to voluntary organisations.

Based on the founding principles of that Charter, a new tool called *Carta della Rappresentanza* (Charter of Representation) was developed and presented in 2008. It intended to contribute to the quality and effectiveness of the relations between volunteering, third sector and public administration. The Charter is divided into nine principles, constituting practical and exemplary commitments for those represented and their representatives. It was initiated in the framework of a project originated from the CSV of Genoa which then involved CSVnet and other national networks and was devised from the experiences and aspirations of the volunteering world.

An example of another tool approved and adopted by some organisations in a specific field is the “*Code of Ethics of the Volunteer*” which sets out and illustrates the moral and ethical principles of the volunteering role. The Code was drafted in 1997 by the Italian League against Cancer of Milan in cooperation with ALA, an organisation engaged in fighting AIDS. It was later proposed to 38 VO representatives, which contributed to the final draft. It has since been adopted by the Non-profit Federation of Palliative Care.

Other experiments are in place. For example, in 2005, a group of universities and organisations of Tuscany initiated a research project which ended in 2008, to identify quality indicators for VOs. It aims to create a model which can be extended from VOs active in the field of health and social care to those active in other sectors and that if applied would set certain quality standards. The project is still at an intermediate stage and is being implemented by the University of Siena and the University of the Third Sector and voluntary organisations, with the financial contribution of a private bank foundation and the CSV of the Tuscany region Cesvot¹¹.

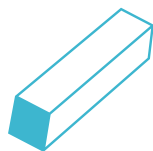
The accessibility of services and the transparency of the activities carried out are codified in about 60% of Volunteer Support Centres, while the National Coordination of Support Centres, CSVnet, promotes the use of social reporting and accounting (social accountability reports). The most important certification tool for accountability of third sector organisations is the certification provided by the Istituto Italiano della Donazione (IID) which is now also being promoted in a specific certification version for small local voluntary organisations through the project BIVIO (*Bilancio, Identità, Volontariato, Italiano, Organizzato*) in collaboration with CSVs.

11. www.cesvot.it/repository/cont_schedemm/5005_documento.pdf

The Charter of Volunteering Values describes the shared identity and shared aims of Italian volunteering, asserting its vital testimony and highlighting its social character.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

There is no nation-wide database of volunteers and volunteering opportunities. CSVs keep databases of the voluntary organisations present in their territory. Prospective volunteers are helped by their local CSV with the search for a suitable organisation to volunteer for. Volunteering is promoted to the public through the work of the CSVs, involved in organising conferences, exhibitions, fairs and promotional campaigns, internships to experience volunteering, publications, media opportunities to promote volunteering and ideas contests. In 2009, CSVs nationally organised a total of 4,590 such promotional activities, 1,475 organised directly and 3,115 in cooperation with VOs.



In addition, the *Foundation Pubblicità Progresso*¹², whose members are professional organisations, private companies and associations, provides free advertising space on national media (TV, radio, press) reserved for advertisements by not-for-profit organisations. The advertising campaigns the Foundation supports have to be promoted by not-for-profit entities and be about relevant general social issues and must involve and invite citizens to take action.

There are also media devoted to the third sector in general such as the magazine *Vita* and the press agency *Redattore Sociale*.

Mainstream media are traditionally just a little receptive to the activities and issues of volunteering. However, online communication tools have opened new more easily approachable opportunities and a good example of dedicated social communication is the “Mondo Solidale” (Solidarity World) channel of the online edition of the major Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*¹³.

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

A feature particular to Italian volunteering is the legislative vertical fragmentation of the third sector, which separates voluntary organisations regulated by the Framework Law on Volunteering L. 266/91 from other types of organisations involving volunteers. Also, the traditional definition of voluntary activity, as performed through an organisation, leaves many spheres of informal or differently organised volunteering out of the debate. The issue is now open on how to go beyond the traditional legislative settings in order to include, support and potentiate the impact and visibility of all different forms of voluntary engagement, without losing the grasp and the intimate connection of voluntary engagement and its public perception with the exercise of solidarity, fraternity and responsibility.

Another cherished feature of volunteering in Italy is the always present co-existence of two aspects - concrete practical activities and the exercise of democratic participation within the organisations where volunteers are members and in wider public sphere where volunteers are the voice of needs and changes in the society.

The most significant richness of Italian volunteering infrastructure is the system of voluntary support centres, imagined and governed by voluntary organisations themselves, with an

12. www.pubblicitapgresso.it/index.aspx

13. <http://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/?ref=HRHM2-9>

extraordinarily positive system of core funding (although with room for improvement), representing a common good for the development of volunteering.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Debates already under way and constituting a legacy of the EYV 2011 include: re-definition of the legislative framework of the third sector; stabilisation of the fiscal mechanism of 5 per thousand direct tax giving including a safe-guard mechanism for small voluntary organisations; betterment of some fiscal mechanisms in favour of voluntary organisations including VAT deduction; control mechanisms and standards for public funding; recognition of volunteering hours as own contribution in co-funded projects; standards and an equal and stable distribution of funding for CSVs; adoption and stable implementation of the ILO Manual by the national statistics institute.

The claims and proposals of Italian volunteering are outlined in the “Manifesto of Volunteering for Europe”, an outcome of a large participatory debate led by CSVnet as preparation for the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011 and adopted also as the basic platform of the Italian National Plan for the Year. Among the most concrete proposals as regards specifically the infrastructure are:

- *Infrastructure elements to be defined together with a basic set of standards, and claim made to Member States to evaluate according to these standards and put in place mechanisms to adapt the national legislation and funding mechanism to ensure the valorisation and development of volunteering.*
- *Eurostat to ask National Statistical Agencies to adopt and regularly use the ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work in order to guarantee comparable data on the number and profile of volunteers, the nature of their activities and their economic contribution.*

Resources

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