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General Information



KEY INFORMATION ABOUT SLOVAKIA

Capital: Bratislava
Official Language: Slovak
Population: 5,720,615 (as of January 01, 2024)*
Currency: Euro (EUR)
Calling Code: +421

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

GDP per capita: US \$ 21 256,8 (as of 2022)**
Real GDP growth in 2022: 1,8%**
Unemployment rate in 2023: 5,9% ***

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING****

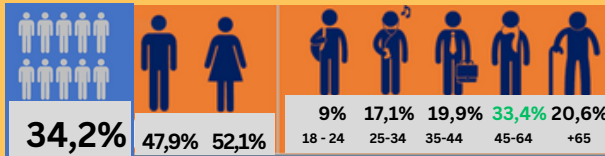
The Act on Volunteering defines a volunteer as an individual who, based on his/her free decision, performs a voluntary activity based on his/her ability, skill or knowledge for another person with his/her consent. The volunteer's activities align with the fulfilment of the public interest.

SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING*****

The term volunteering is well-known; it is often used in public discourse. Its importance was mainly strengthened by the events connected with COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Volunteering is perceived positively, but people mainly associate it with environmental activities, the social field and humanitarian aid. There is a lack of understanding of the broader context of participation and active citizenship supporting democracy. The involvement of work teams in volunteer activities is becoming part of the corporate culture in the private and public sectors. However, these are primarily one-time events without the ambition to motivate employees to volunteer long-term. A significant part of the public in Slovakia still believes that volunteers would not be needed if the state fulfills its responsibilities.

Statistics and Demographics*****

Volunteer experience at least once in a lifetime (percentage of the total population)



The average volunteer in Slovakia, a person who has been involved in volunteering at least once in their life, is almost equally likely to be male or female, of middle age (45 to 64 years, 33,4%), with higher education (44,44%) and self-employed people volunteered (40,20%).

The average of hours/volunteer is 11,7 hours per month *****



According to the level of education, 18,90% of people with elementary education were involved in volunteering, 29,53% with secondary education finished without a diploma, 35,66% with secondary education with a diploma, and 44,44% with higher education.

Types of Volunteer Activities*****

The survey in 2023 revealed a shift in the preferences of volunteers in the areas they engage in. In 2023, the largest share (40%) of volunteers participated in activities related to the protection and development of the environment. In 2019, 18% of volunteers were engaged in this area. 23% of volunteers were engaged in social services, 18% in culture, 17% in youth organizations, 15% in humanitarian aid, 12% in sports, and the same in volunteering, 9% in education and the same percentage in health, and 4% in advocacy. It is typical of many people involved in formal volunteering that they are involved in more than one area. Volunteers are associated mostly with NGOs, but there is no statistical data about this.



Motivation for Volunteering*****

The predominant motivator for individuals engaging in volunteer activities in Slovakia is their values. Volunteering serves as a platform for expressing altruistic and humanitarian values. The second most significant factor influencing volunteering is personal enhancement, signifying that individuals participating in volunteer work aspire to foster psychological growth and development through active involvement. A third crucial motivation for volunteering is the pursuit of understanding, involving a desire to expand one's knowledge about the world and to exercise and develop skills, thereby viewing volunteering as an avenue for acquiring knowledge, skills, and abilities. Additionally, volunteering is perceived as an opportunity to fortify social relationships.

* Source: <https://www.scitanie.sk/en/population/basic-results/number-of-population/SR/SKO/SR>

** Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=SK>

*** Source: Statistical office of the SR (<https://lnk.sk/msvh>)

**** Source: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2011/406/>)

***** Source: Brozmanová Gregorová, A., Šolcová, J. and Siekelová, M. (2018), Dobrovoľníctvo mládeže na Slovensku—aktuálny stav a trendy, Platforma dobrovoľníckych centier a organizácií, Stupava

*****Source: Brozmanová Gregorová, A. et al. (2024) Volunteering in Time of Crisis in Slovakia

Measuring the Impact of Volunteering

In Slovakia, regular assessment of the impact of volunteering on individuals and society is not implemented. We only have partial data from which we can estimate the economic value of volunteer work. According to the data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic in 2019 (the latest available data), 181,769 male and female volunteers worked in non-governmental non-profit organisations, contributing a total of 13,300,485 hours. This represents a total work value of 53,507,851 Euros.

We can also calculate the economic impact of volunteering based on information about tax assignments in Slovakia. Volunteers who volunteer at least 40 hours per year may be assigned 3% of the paid taxes (for non-volunteers, only 2% of the paid taxes) for the selected NGO.*

Quality Standards in the Field of Volunteering****

The Quality standards for volunteer management were established in 2014 through financial support from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Based in the experience with implementing standards, the accreditation for volunteering activities was introduced in 2023 as part of an amendment to the Act on Volunteering. Accreditation serves as a state verification process but is not mandatory for volunteering activities. However, as of March 2024, the accreditation process has not yet been implemented.

Challenges to the Development of Volunteering in Slovakia**

- Insufficient financial resources for adequate volunteer support.
- Unsuccessful recruitment activities, and a lack of time capacities.
- The absence of subsidy schemes focused on the development of volunteer infrastructure and the support of long-term volunteering.
- A lack of knowledge and skills for working with volunteers.
- Inadequate legislative support and administrative obstacles.

National E-platform for Volunteering



A national online database of volunteer opportunities is being prepared and will be launched in 2024 on the website www.dobrovolnictvo.sk. The database is developed by the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations and will be jointly operated with regional volunteer centers. The national database of expert volunteer opportunities is operated by growni.sk.



Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering in Slovakia

The Law on Volunteering defines volunteers, voluntary work, terms and conditions for hosting and sending organizations, including rules for signing volunteering contracts and conditions for accreditation in the field of volunteer activities. The responsible authority for volunteering is Ministry of Interior of Slovak republic. The Strategy for civil society development in Slovakia for the years 2022–2030 identifies challenges in volunteering and proposes measures to address them.***

The Strategy for Youth (2021-2028) outlines various methods to achieve its goal of increasing young people's involvement in volunteer activities domestically and internationally. In the realm of volunteering, it establishes 12 measures and several associated metrics. Strategy for Education for volunteering in formal education and provides recommendations on enhancing and improving this aspect.



Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering in Slovakia

Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of Slovak Republic manages a grant scheme called 'Programs for Youth,' with one specific area dedicated to youth volunteering. This scheme supports activities of regional volunteer centers in the field of youth volunteering. In 2023, within the framework of the amendment to the Law on Volunteering, opportunities were created for the introduction of a financial mechanism for the support of long-term volunteer programs by the state, but they have not yet been implemented in practice due to a lack of funding.

The Heart in the Palm award

For over two decades, the Heart in the Palm award has been bestowed upon volunteers, organisations, and projects. Annually, regional volunteer centres across all 8 regions present these awards. The most compelling stories progress to the national awards, held under the auspices of the country's highest representatives. The event is organised by the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations. Volunteers who contribute more than 40 hours of their time in a calendar year can allocate 3% of their annual taxes to any registered NGO when filing a tax return.

Trends in the Development of Volunteering in Slovakia*

The most relevant fact that can influence the involvement of people in volunteering in Slovakia is the current political situation. Since the elections, the government has been expressing a negative attitude towards civil society and NGOs, which are the primary places of action for volunteers. NGOs are facing also real financial restrictions when cancelling subsidy schemes for NGOs in certain areas (e.g., human rights protection, culture). NGOs are already struggling with a lack of funding for their work with volunteers and their activities. Volunteer centers in Slovakia, as a key element of the infrastructure, do not have stable financial support, and no mechanism has been put in place to support long-term volunteer programs, even though legal conditions have been created. Lack of financial support is the most significant barrier to engaging people in volunteering from the perspective of organizations, especially for volunteers and volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering

- Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.
- Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society under the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
- Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations
- Ministry of Education, research, development and youth of the Slovak Republic
- Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations
- Regional volunteer centers (1 center in each region, 7 of them gathered under a network run by PVC)
- Youth Council of Slovakia

Research in the Field of Volunteering

Regular research ensuring consistent and comparable data collection is not being carried out. The last representative study that has been published was released in 2020. Therefore, it does not capture changes related to the most significant crises that society has faced in the last century.

* Source: Statistical office of Slovak republic (http://datacube.statistics.sk/#/view/sk/VBD_SLOVSTAT/ns2006rs/v_ns2006rs_00_00_00_sk)

** Source: Ministry of Interior of the SR (https://www.minv.sk/swift_data/source/rozvoj_obcianskej_spolocnosti/vyskum_neziskoveho_sektora_a_obcianskej_spolocnosti/2020/ANALYZA_NP%20VYSKUM_17.12.2020_FINAL.pdf, page 538)

*** Source: https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/images/stories/files/2023/KROS_2022-2030.pdf

****Source: <https://www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk/sk/aktivity/znacka-kvality>