



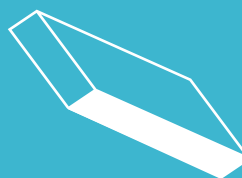
EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

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CHAPTER



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VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE

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1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

In the authors' opinion, volunteering infrastructure consists of providing a supporting environment for volunteers and organisations on different societal levels, from the individual to organisations, to municipalities and eventually countrywide. On the individual level, for the volunteer, an appropriate infrastructure provides good access to volunteering opportunities, professional support by qualified staff throughout the volunteer engagement and adequate exit procedures.

The field of volunteering needs a stable financial basis provided by the authorities, as proper volunteering infrastructure cannot be supported by donated money only.

On the organisational level, an appropriate infrastructure consists of professional commitment to volunteering resulting in clearly defined volunteer policies, employment of volunteer coordinators, availability of appropriate office equipment, training and development opportunities, and a coherent culture of recognition of volunteers and their contributions. Municipalities are bound to provide funding for organisations in order to enable them to manage volunteers in an appropriate and efficient way. Together with other public authorities, municipalities are responsible for establishing and supporting the functioning of information centres for volunteering, and are able to inform and to facilitate the access of interested individuals to volunteering opportunities. By means of support programmes, the government encourages municipalities and non-profit organisations to further develop sustainable structures for volunteering and to enhance a social culture in which volunteering is recognised positively.

The field of volunteering needs a stable financial basis provided by the authorities, as proper volunteering infrastructure cannot be supported by donated money only. Crucial infrastructure therefore includes well-established and adequately funded volunteer centres, trained volunteer coordinators, who perform quality volunteer management. General liability and accident insurance should be eligible prerequisites for volunteer assignments as well as allowances for special expenditure.

Volunteering infrastructure should encourage volunteers to make the first step into volunteering and it should provide adequate mechanisms for them to continue their voluntary assignment. It has to be a properly defined part of organisations' internal structures and procedures in order to establish job security for employed staff just as for volunteers. On the national level, supporting the creation and functioning of a sound volunteering infrastructure shows governmental valuation of that societal sector.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

According to the first report on volunteering in Austria¹, volunteering is defined as productivity by choice (i.e. without any legal obligation), unpaid and in aid of persons outside the volunteers' own private households. The report differentiates between formal and informal volunteering, the former being performed within non-profit organisations, and the latter on a private basis (e.g. mainly neighbourhood help). These definitions have been agreed upon since the first report

1. Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, 2009. "First report on volunteering in Austria". Available at: http://www.bmask.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/freiwilligenbericht_letztzf.3_%282%29.pdf

on volunteering in Austria 2009.

Based on the 2009 report on volunteering in Austria, 27.9% of the Austrian population aged 15 and older are involved in formal volunteering, and 27.1% in informal volunteering.

Formal volunteering

Approximately 1.9 million Austrians are involved, working for 7.9 million hours per week. The survey presents remarkable differences between the nine Austrian Federal States. The capital Vienna shows a significantly lower percentage (14.3%), compared with the other federal states (ranging from 25.1% in Salzburg to 34.1% in Upper Austria). More men (33.0%) than women (23.2%) volunteer formally, i.e. 57% men and 43% women in the total formal volunteering population. Table 1 shows the distribution according to age:

age 15-19	age 20-29	age 30-39	age 40-49	age 50-59	age 60-69	age 70-79	older
31.4%	29.3%	29.1%	32.4%	32.3%	25.6%	16.2%	8.1%

Marital status: single 29.8%, married 29.6%, divorced 21.4%, widowed 13.5%.

Education: basic education 19.4%, completed apprenticeship 27.6%, secondary technical and vocational education 32.3%, secondary academic school 31.4%, higher education 38.8%.

Nationality: Austrian 28.9%, Non-Austrian 18.8%, which is 94% Austrian and 6% Non-Austrian from total formal volunteering.

Considering average weekly hours of involvement the survey shows the following: total average number of hours volunteering (4.1), emergency aid (3.8), cultural activities (3.4), sport (3.0), politics (2.6), social field (2.5), religion (2.4), environmentalism (2.0), community work (1.9) and education (1.7).

Informal volunteering

Compared with formal volunteering there is a considerably narrower range in informal volunteering, from a minimum of 23.3% (Salzburg) to maximum 30.4% (Tyrol).

There is an equal gender distribution: women (27.3%), men (26.9%) volunteer informally, that is 48% men and 52% women from total informal volunteering. Table 2 shows the distribution according to age:

age 15-19	age 20-29	age 30-39	age 40-49	age 50-59	age 60-69	age 70-79	older
24.7%	26.5%	29.6%	29.4%	30.3%	29.6%	18.6%	13.2%

Marital status: single 27.6%, married 27.7%, divorced 27.7%, widowed 20.0%.

Education: basic education 21.1%, completed apprenticeship 28.6%, secondary technical and vocational education 28.6%, secondary academic school 29.2%, higher education 31.8%.

Nationality: Austrian 27.5%, Non-Austrian 24.0%, which is 91.6% Austrian and 8.4% Non-Austrian from total informal volunteering.

Total average of weekly involvement in informal volunteering: 3.6 hours.

In our opinion there is an ambivalent view of volunteering in Austria. On the one hand it is obvious that a wide range of activities could not take place without volunteers and therefore volunteering is highly appreciated. On the other hand there still exists a perception of volunteering as not being worthwhile because it is unpaid labour, or fears that volunteering might be seen as an alternative to paid employment, especially when public funding is reduced. In Austria we are still stuck in an unhelpful supplement-supplant debate. Besides some positive exceptions, there still is a remarkable gap between public discourse on volunteering and actual measures to ensure the quality of volunteering by supporting the essential volunteering infrastructure.



3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

In Austria, a specific law on volunteering was adopted in December 2011 and will come into effect in July 2012. This law includes paragraphs on

- [Promotion of Volunteering](#)
- [Voluntary Year of Social Service](#)
- [Voluntary Year of Ecological Service](#)
- [Memorial, Peace and Social Service Abroad](#)
- [Austrian Volunteer Council](#)
- [Recognition Funds for Volunteering](#)

It provides a new frame for volunteering activities in Austria.

Volunteering in Austria is supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and by the Austrian Volunteer Council, which is appointed every five years. The council acts as an advisory body for the federal ministry and considers itself as a lobbying body for volunteering and volunteers. It has 53 members from the Austrian Federal Ministries, the Austrian Federal States, and the coalition of Austrian municipalities, from trade unions and worker representatives as well as from several volunteer organisations. It is supposed to serve as a platform for an institutionalised dialogue of political decision-makers. One of its objectives is to deliver opinions on governmental bills and draft regulations concerning volunteers and volunteer organisations. By setting up steering committees, the Austrian Volunteer Council managed activities for major events such as the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

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

In Austria there is no national volunteer centre, but an Austrian network of volunteer centres (*Interessensgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenzentren Österreichs, IGFÖ*) consisting of nine volunteer centres so far. The IGFÖ works on improving the quality of volunteer management and of framework conditions for voluntary work. Its main activities include organising annual conferences on specific topics related to volunteering, such as involvement of migrants in volunteering, adolescents and volunteering, projects with volunteers, volunteering as a socio-political area of tension, among others.

There are volunteer centres in four out of nine regional capitals, i.e. Innsbruck, Salzburg, Linz and Vienna, and five local volunteer centres in Kapfenberg and Bruck an der Mur (both in Styria), Waidhofen an der Ybbs (Lower Austria), Wels (Upper Austria) and Jenbach (Tyrol). Except the one in Linz (funded by the Upper Austrian regional government), all these volunteer centres lack sufficient funding. They either depend on donations, are run alongside other (funded) projects or by marginally part-time employed staff (e.g. 5 hours a week, in the worst case) or by volunteers.

The volunteer centres see themselves as information platforms for people interested in volunteering, for whom they provide counselling and orientation. Due to the lack of funding one volunteer centre has reduced the time span for individual interviews with persons interested in volunteering to six hours a week and in addition runs a detailed homepage presenting various possibilities for voluntary involvement. The volunteer centres in Innsbruck, Salzburg, Vienna and Linz regularly provide training courses for volunteer coordinators, Innsbruck and Linz for volunteers as well. Some of them organise promotional events like an annual day of volunteering or projects with schools (Tyrol), or publicly launch local pilot projects (*Gemeinsam aktiv, Active together, Linz*).

In Austria many organisations involve volunteers. The biggest are the Volunteer Fire Brigades (250,000 volunteers), the Austrian Red Cross (51,000) and Caritas (27,000). Some of these are registered at volunteer centres, but many do not have this opportunity due to the lack of appropriate volunteer centres. The existing volunteer centres successfully cooperate with many non-profit organisations of all sizes within their remit, but their coverage is restricted by the limited resources available.

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5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

In Austria there are many volunteers involved in political work, supporting parties during and between election campaigns, or for senior citizens organisations. This involvement is usually called political participation rather than volunteering.

During the past few years more and more companies became involved in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes like *Seitenwechsel (Changeover)*, *Brückenschlag (Bridging)*, *Freiwilligentag Tirol (Volunteer Day)* or *Vernetzte Welten (Networking worlds)*. *RespACT*, the Austrian business council for sustainable development, was founded in 2005 and considers itself as a platform for realising sustainability, CSR and business ethics. The Austrian Chamber of Commerce provides so called CSR-consultants, who support companies that want to get involved

in CSR projects. Companies with significant involvement in CSR programmes are awarded the TRIGOS Prize by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. Marketplaces called 'Good business' are organised by RespACT once a year in order to bring together non-profit organisations and profit companies.

Support by public authorities takes different forms. By operating the web portal www.freiwilligenweb.at and via various promotional projects the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection has been promoting volunteering. The Federal States of Vorarlberg, Upper Austria and Vienna support volunteers by providing liability insurance for them. In Tyrol the volunteer centre in Innsbruck accomplishes projects with schools on a regular basis giving pupils the opportunity to volunteer in home care facilities for the elderly.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There is no consistent data about funding of volunteering in Austria. Data from the field shows that two volunteer centres are funded by donations given to Caritas, and one by the Upper Austrian regional government. One is run alongside other projects (reliable operational grants by the municipality) and the smaller local volunteer centres survive by getting minor project-based funding from municipalities and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

The Austrian network of volunteer centres has agreed on a set of 10 standard criteria for advanced quality volunteer management.

Funding at the national level is usually project-based, but is reliable if approved. Volunteer centres have no fundraising activities themselves, but if they are part of a bigger social welfare organisation, they benefit from that organisation's fund-raising

efforts. Organisations finance their internal volunteer infrastructure from their own resources, from municipality (mostly operational grants) and governmental (mostly projects based) funding or from donations. There are different fund-raising strategies applied by volunteer organisations, from charity events to collecting donations.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

Most of the research on volunteering in Austria is conducted by the Vienna University of Economics and Business, Institute for Non-Profit Research², using survey data from Statistics Austria³. Sociological research takes place at several universities, but in the authors' awareness there is no specific long-term research programme on volunteering. There are no established mechanisms to make results from specific studies available to the general public or those involved in the non-profit sector.

2. <http://www.wu.ac.at/npo/competence/en>

3. http://www.statistik.at/web_en/

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

Some Austrian organisations, such as Wiener Hilfswerk, Vienna Social Aid, working with volunteers apply measures of quality management, thus establishing standard procedures for recruiting, supervising and qualifying their volunteers. The Austrian network of volunteer centres has agreed on a set of 10 standard criteria for advanced quality volunteer management. The development of quality standards in volunteering is also one of the key issues in training courses for volunteer coordinators which, starting from the volunteer centre in Tyrol, spread out to more and more Austrian Federal States. Since 2010 the Viennese Platform for Volunteer Coordinators has been engaged in enhancing the quality standards in volunteer management by providing regular workshops for volunteer coordinators.

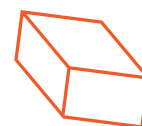
9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

The Austrian volunteer centres provide internal databases of volunteer opportunities, one of which is published on the website www.ehrenamtsboerse.at in full, administrated by Helpers Vienna (Die Helfer Wiens), an organisation dealing with civil protection and coordinating disaster management. Another on-line regional database, run by the government of Upper Austria, is www.boerse-ehrenamt.at. A national database is provided by the website www.freiwilligenweb.at, featured by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

Sometimes regional governments or volunteer organisations launch awareness campaigns on volunteering, promoting volunteering by means of newspapers or radio. The Austrian Red Cross and Caritas have especially promoted volunteering with effective publicity.

Austrian media are receptive to volunteering if there is a special occasion like International Volunteer Day, or an International or European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011, and especially if there are individual stories to tell. Sometimes the issue of participation by and for the elderly raises the attention of the media. During the EYV 2011 volunteering was promoted very intensely by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection and the Federal Association of Welfare Organisations by organising a Day of Caring and offering Orientation Workshops for people interested in volunteering.

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10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

The involvement of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection also takes the form of issuing an Austrian volunteer pass based on the stamps gathered by volunteers from the organisations they have volunteered for. The Ministry also distributes folders containing forms for confirming voluntary activities and a detailed instruction manual for the organisations interested in using those forms. The Ministry also published a detailed training manual for the qualification of volunteer coordinators.

Some volunteer organisations took part in the Senior European Volunteers Exchange Network (SEVEN) and thereupon successfully carried out senior volunteer exchange projects, either funded by the national government (Wiener Hilfswerk, 2008) or by the National Agency within the Lifelong Learning programme of Grundtvig (Styrian Red Cross, Wiener Hilfswerk, 2009; Red Cross Vorarlberg, Wiener Hilfswerk, 2010).

In February 2010 the “Viennese platform for volunteer coordinators” was founded as an independent organisation whose main focus lies on the improvement of the quality of volunteer management and on ensuring adequate framework conditions for contemporary volunteering.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

A truly enabling volunteering infrastructure in Austria would require measures to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding, based on operational grants, of at least one regional volunteer centre per federal state.

There is an urgent need for long-term research programmes on volunteering carried out by university departments of sociology and psychology.

There should be an explicit consensus in society on the significance of volunteering, its socio-political relevance and the balance of employed work and volunteering, which calls for a national discussion about volunteering and its benefits.



Resources

Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, 2009. *First report on volunteering in Austria*. Available at: http://www.bmask.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/freiwilligenbericht_letztf.3_%282%29.pdf

Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection www.freiwilligenweb.at

Government of Upper Austria www.boerse-ehrenamt.at

Helpers Vienna (Die Helfer Wiens) www.ehrenamtsboerse.at

Senior European Volunteers Exchange Network www.seven-network.eu

Statistics Austria www.statistik.at/web_en

Vienna University www.wu.ac.at