

## General Information



## KEY INFORMATION ABOUT HUNGARY

**Capital:** Budapest  
**Official Language:** Hungarian  
**Population:** 9,584,000 (as of 2025)\*  
**Currency:** HUF (forint)  
**Calling Code:** +36

## KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

**GDP per capita in 2024:** €30,445 PPP\*  
**Real GDP growth (first quarter of 2025):** 0.8%\*  
**Unemployment rate in November 2025:** 4.4%\*

## DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

Defined in Hungarian law as unpaid, voluntary activity carried out for the benefit of others or the community, outside family obligations  
 (Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Public Interest Volunteer Activities)

## SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering has grown in importance since the 2000s, especially through EU integration and civil society strengthening, though still below Western European averages.  
 Nevertheless volunteering is increasingly seen as a tool for social cohesion. The School Community Service (IKSZ), making 50 hours of service mandatory for graduation, has fundamentally reshaped youth involvement.

## Statistics and Demographics

### Volunteering rate of population\*\*



**Formal:**  
~10–15%  
**Informal:**  
~30–35%

### Total number of volunteers:

Approx. 2.2 million people participate in volunteering annually (formal + informal combined)

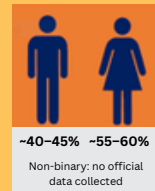
### Annual economic value of volunteering\*\*\*:

Estimated at 1.2% of GDP, representing millions of hours of unpaid labor.

### Education Levels and Volunteering\*\*\*\*

Higher education graduates are significantly more likely to volunteer (up to 2–3x higher participation rates than those with primary education)

### Volunteer experience per gender and age group (percentage of the total population)\*\*\*\*



**15-24: ~24%**  
 Participation is high due to the 50-hour School Community Service (IKSZ). However, many drop out of volunteering once the requirement is met.

**15-24: ~19%**  
 The lowest participation group due to "time poverty" (career building and starting families).

**45-64 years: ~26%**  
 High involvement in professional-led volunteering and local community aid.

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## Motivation for Volunteering\*\*\*\*

- Helping others / solidarity
- Gaining experience (especially youth)
- Community belonging
- Religious or moral values

## Types of Volunteer Activities\*

- Education
- Sports
- Social services
- Environmental protection
- Cultural heritage

## Impact of Volunteering\*\*\*\*\*

Strengthens social cohesion, improves employability (especially youth), supports public services.

One of the most significant impacts of volunteering in Hungary is a gradual shift in social attitudes. Following the legacy of compulsory "social work" during the socialist period, contemporary volunteering is increasingly associated with free choice, civic engagement, and personal responsibility. This cultural transition contributes to strengthening civil society and social trust.

In addition, corporate volunteering is steadily expanding, and the growing professionalisation of NGOs—particularly in volunteer management—supports advocacy efforts and raises awareness of the value of volunteering nationwide.

## Measuring the Impact of Volunteering\*\*\*\*\*

In Hungary, impact measurement is currently bifurcated. At the macro level, we use the KSH replacement cost method to justify the sector's economic relevance. At the micro level, NGOs are increasingly adopting the V-I-O-L-E-T or SROI methodologies to satisfy the reporting requirements of international donors and corporate partners. However, the lack of a centralized national impact database remains a challenge for unified sector advocacy.

\*Source: KSH - Hungarian Central Statistical Office  
 \*\*Source: KSH, Eurobarometer (European Commission surveys)  
 \*\*\*Source: Civilizemle / KSH Satellite Accounts  
 \*\*\*\*Source: KSH Nonprofit Report and Eurobarometer  
 \*\*\*\*\*Source: KSH, OECD social capital reports  
 \*\*\*\*\*Source: OECD, Hungarian NGO Sector report

\*\*\*\*\*Source: Source: KSH Nonprofit Statistical Report (2024/2025), Önkéntes Szemle (Volunteer Review)  
 - Methodology Sections, Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (OKA) Quality Standards, V-I-O-L-E-T Project Documentation  
 \*\*\*\*\*Source: European Commission, UNW, Council of Europe

### Trends in the Development of Volunteering\*\*\*\*

1. Increase in youth participation driven by the compulsory Iskolai Közösségi Szolgálat (IKSZ) programme (50 hours of community service for secondary school students).
2. Growth of corporate volunteering, with more companies integrating volunteering into CSR activities.
3. Professionalisation of NGOs, with improved volunteer management, training, and coordination
4. Ongoing dominance of informal volunteering over formal participation.
5. Emerging focus on skills-based and impact-oriented volunteering.

### Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering\*\*\*

#### 1. Primary Legislation

- Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Public Interest Volunteer Activities: This remains the "Gold Standard" and the core legal pillar. It distinguishes "Public Interest Volunteering" from informal help.
- Key Provision: It allows host organisations to provide benefits to volunteers (travel, meals, accommodation, insurance, training) tax-free, provided there is a written "Volunteer Contract."
- Host Organisations: Only specific entities (NGOs, state institutions, churches, etc.) registered with the relevant Ministry can host "Public Interest Volunteers" under this Act.
- Act CLXXV of 2011 (Civil Act): Governs the operation, registration, and support of civil society organisations. It defines "Public Benefit Status," which is often a prerequisite for accessing certain volunteer-related grants.

#### 2. Institutional Oversight

- The Prime Minister's Office (Miniszterelnökség): Currently holds the "Civil Relations" portfolio. It oversees the National Cooperation Fund (NEA).
- Ministry of Culture and Innovation: Responsible for youth policy and the School Community Service (IKSZ).
- County Civil Centres (Civil Közösségi Szolgáltató Központok): A network of 20 centres (one per county + Budapest) that provide legal, financial, and management advice to volunteer-hosting organisations.

#### 3. Strategic Status (The "Gap")

- Expired Strategy: The National Volunteer Strategy 2012–2022 has expired.
- 2026 Status: As of today, there is no officially adopted 2023–2030 strategy. While professional drafts exist, the April 2026 change in government means a new strategy will likely be drafted under the incoming "Tisza Party" administration, expected to prioritize European integration and civic independence.

### Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering

Financial support for volunteering in Hungary comes from a mix of state, EU, international, and private sources:

1. State funding: The National Cooperation Fund (NEA) provides core and project-based support to civil society organisations, including those involving volunteers.
2. European Union programmes: Programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps fund volunteering activities, mobility, and organisational development.
3. EEA and Norway Grants: After a period of interruption, the EEA & Norway Grants Civil Society Fund (2021–2028) relaunched in Hungary in 2026, providing approx. €23 million for NGO capacity building and community engagement, including volunteering.
4. Other international and regional funding: Sources such as the International Visegrad Fund support cross-border cooperation and civic initiatives.
5. Private and corporate funding: Includes corporate CSR programmes, private donations, and Hungary's 1% personal income tax donation system, a key income source for NGOs.

Note: Following the April 2026 general elections, funding structures and responsible authorities may evolve.

### Research in the Field of Volunteering\*\*\*\*\*

It is critical to note that the sector is currently operating with a data gap. While academic journals like the Önkéntes Szemle provide excellent qualitative and pilot-level insights (such as the 2026 study on multifunctional activism), the last representative national research was conducted in 2018. This lack of fresh, large-scale data makes it difficult to measure the long-term impact of the pandemic and the subsequent economic shifts on the general population's willingness to volunteer.

- Last Official Comprehensive Research (2018): The most recent large-scale, representative national research specifically dedicated to mapping the status of volunteering in Hungary is the "Önkéntesség Magyarországon 2018" (Volunteering in Hungary 2018). This study was conducted by the KSH (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) in collaboration with the Századvég Foundation. It remains the primary baseline for formal and informal volunteering rates, demographic breakdowns, and motivational mapping in the country.
- Ongoing Academic Research (The "Önkéntes Szemle"): While a comprehensive national survey has not been repeated since 2018, the field is kept active by the Önkéntes Szemle (Volunteer Review). This interdisciplinary journal is celebrating its 5th anniversary in 2026 and has just entered its 6th volume (2026/1). It serves as the central platform for smaller, niche studies that provide snapshots of the current landscape.
- Key Recent Pilot Studies (2025–2026):
  - Political Volunteering: A significant pilot study was conducted between November 2025 and January 2026 (published in Önkéntes Szemle 2026/1), exploring the "multifunctional" nature of volunteers who engage in both civic and party-related activism.
  - Barriers to Engagement: Research published in late 2025 by Corvinus University and the University of Szeged identified "lack of visible opportunities" and "time poverty" as the primary obstacles for the 2026 workforce.
- Statistical Monitoring: The KSH (Hungarian Central Statistical Office) continue to collect data on the nonprofit sector annually. However, these reports focus more on the institutional side (number of volunteers registered by NGOs) rather than a general population-wide behavioral survey like the 2018 study.
- Methodological Manuals: To bridge the gap since the 2018 data, researchers released the "101 Questions and Answers about Volunteering" handbook in late 2025 to provide updated methodological guidance for practitioners.

### Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering\*\*

The development of volunteering in Hungary involves a multi-level set of stakeholders:

- Government bodies, particularly ministries responsible for social affairs, youth, and civil society, which shape legislation and funding frameworks for volunteering (e.g. Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Public Interest Volunteer Activities).\*
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) and NGOs, which are the primary organisers of volunteer activities and play a central role in volunteer management, training, and advocacy.
- Volunteer infrastructure and capacity-building organisations, including Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány and Talentum Alapítvány, which provide training, research, coordination, and - methodological support for volunteer-involving organisations.
- Educational institutions, including secondary schools implementing the Iskolai Közösségi Szolgálat (IKSZ) programme and universities promoting service learning and student volunteering.
- Corporate sector, increasingly engaged through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes and organised corporate volunteering initiatives.
- Local municipalities, which facilitate volunteering at community level, particularly in social services, culture, and local development.
- European-level actors, such as the European Commission and the European Volunteer Centre, which influence policy, provide funding (e.g. Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps), and support knowledge exchange.

### Challenges to the Development of Volunteering\*

- Relatively low participation in formal volunteering compared to the EU average, with a stronger reliance on informal help networks rather than organised civic engagement.
- Historical legacy of compulsory volunteering during the socialist period, which continues to influence public perceptions and may reduce motivation for long-term, self-initiated volunteering.
- The introduction of the Iskolai Közösségi Szolgálat (IKSZ) (School Community Service), which requires secondary school students to complete 50 hours of community service to graduate, has significantly increased youth participation. However, its compulsory nature can sometimes limit intrinsic motivation and does not always translate into sustained volunteering in adulthood.
- Limited and unstable funding for civil society organisations, constraining their ability to effectively manage and retain volunteers.
- Administrative and legal burdens associated with compliance under the public interest volunteering framework.
- Regional disparities, with fewer opportunities and weaker NGO infrastructure in rural areas compared to urban centres such as Budapest.
- Lower levels of institutional trust, which can negatively affect engagement in organised volunteering.

### National award and recognitions for volunteering

Volunteering Hungary (ÖKA)'s Volunteering Award has been organized every year since 2009 in several categories: Volunteer of the Year; Volunteer Program of the Year; Best Volunteer Community Initiative and Best Volunteer Corporate Program. In addition to this several NGO awards its own volunteers on an individual basis but there as of 2025 there is currently no award given by the government focused on volunteering.

### National E-platform for Volunteering

Hungary's volunteering infrastructure is decentralised and fragmented, the country does not currently have a fully functioning, widely used national e-platform for volunteering.

Note: Following the April 2026 general elections in Hungary, the institutional landscape may evolve, including potential changes in ministerial responsibilities related to volunteering and civil society.

\*Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office, European Commission (education and youth policies), Hungarian Act CXV of 2011 on National Public Education (IKSZ regulation), Eurobarometer surveys  
\*\*Source: European Volunteer Centre country reports; Hungarian legislation (Act LXXXVIII of 2005; Act CXV of 2011 on Public Education); Hungarian Central Statistical Office; European Commission policy documents; national NGO sector sources  
\*\*\*Source: Act LXXXVIII of 2005 (Hungarian Bulletin / Magyar Közlöny); KSH Nonprofit Statistical Report 2024/2025; NIOK Civil Sector Status Report 2025  
\*\*\*\*Source: European Commission; European Volunteer Centre; EEA & Norway Grants (2026 call); Hungarian government and NGO sector sources  
\*\*\*\*\*Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office; European Commission; Hungarian NGO and CSR reports  
\*\*\*\*\*Source: KSH (Önkéntes Szemle) and (Budapest Management Review, Nov 2025) and (Foundation for the Development of Hungarian Volunteering)