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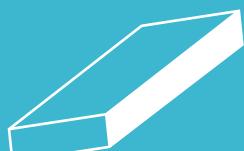
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VOLUNTEERING  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN EUROPE

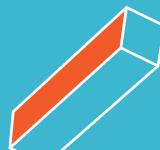


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# 1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE CONCEPT DEFINITION

Volunteering infrastructure in Moldova represents the systems, mechanisms and instruments needed to ensure an environment where volunteering can contribute to the development of all the sectors of society, to building a cohesive and inclusive society based on solidarity and active citizenship, and to increasing social capital.

Some elements of the volunteering infrastructure that are considered important and relevant in Moldova are:

- The legal and a regulatory framework on volunteering
- A national volunteer centre / networks at local, regional and national level
- Appropriate funding to ensure sustainability
- Cross-sectoral cooperation between stakeholders including Global Compact Network Moldova and other businesses
- Research done regularly and systematically by The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova
- Public policies aimed at developing a national strategy for volunteering.

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**Volunteering is well in its beginnings in the Republic of Moldova: less than 6% of people volunteer. This places Moldova below the average levels of involvement in the rest of Europe.**

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The volunteering infrastructure should:

- Be accessible, collaborative, empowering, professional and transparent in all its dealings with people and organisations
- Supply expertise and quality services, and be effective and efficient
- Support volunteering in all its diversity
- Be open to anyone regardless of age, abilities, social category or level of time available for volunteering
- Increase and improve the quality and quantity of volunteering
- Ensure high-quality, innovative and progressive services that are focused on measurable outcomes
- Give an impulse to political, social and economic development in the Republic of Moldova.

# 2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Volunteering is not very much developed in the Republic of Moldova; it is at the beginning of its path. The Moldavian Law on Volunteering defines, in Article 2, volunteerism as *voluntary participation in the offering of services, knowledge and skills or provision of activities in public utility domains, on their own initiative, by the individual called volunteer*. Volunteering can take place under the voluntary contract or outside of it. This definition was reached after public discussions that took place during 2006 and 2007.

Moldavian law on volunteering defines the followings principles:

- *Volunteering addresses human, environmental and social needs*
- *Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer*
- *Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only*
- *Volunteering is always a matter of choice*
- *Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community*
- *Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work*
- *Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.*



Moldovan Law on Volunteering presents, in Article 3, the following basic principles of volunteering:

- a) Participation as a volunteer on the basis of freely expressed consent
- b) Active involvement of volunteers in community life
- c) Conducting volunteering without any financial or material compensation from the beneficiary of the volunteering or host institution, except to cover the costs of carrying it out
- d) Recruiting volunteers on the basis of equal opportunities without any discrimination
- e) Knowledge by the volunteer of rights and obligations
- f) Awareness of relevant activity involving voluntary contribution
- g) Participation in international volunteering.

There are no official statistics regarding the number of volunteers in Moldova. According to research conducted by the Resource Center of Moldovan Non-governmental Organisations for Human Rights (CReDO) the involvement in organised volunteering activities was rated between 3.8% and 6% of the population, about 16,000 to 23,000 in 2005. This places volunteering in Moldova below the average levels of involvement in other European countries.

Most volunteers are young people. However, there are no official statistics regarding the age groups, gender or the field where they are most active. The main fields of activity are:

*NGO support:* Active participation in administrative and logistic aspects of NGO activity, organisation of trainings, seminars, documents typing, translation, etc.

*Social assistance:* Facilitators in orphanages, assistance to elderly people, assistance for people with disabilities and to people from disadvantaged families

*Environmental:* Clean-up activities, water cleaning, parks arrangements, trees and flowers plantation.

*Faith-based volunteering:* There are a number of churches and religious organisations, running projects on a volunteering basis.

The survival of NGOs depends on the involvement of volunteers in their activities. One of the most important obstacles volunteering faces nowadays is the misunderstanding of volunteering by the population and the lack of a volunteering culture. Thus the need for promotion of civic activism and for capacity-building in the volunteer sector is obvious. The media and decision-makers in general have a favourable perception and attitude towards volunteering. National activities carried out by the Volunteering Coalition, the national umbrella organisation for organisations involved in volunteering, are well covered by the media, especially by UNIMEDIA News Portal which is the permanent media partner.



### 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

There is a law on volunteering which was approved in 2010, namely *Law on Volunteering no. 121/ of 18 June 2010*, which was published in the Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova No.179-181 of 24 September 2010, Art. 608.

The Law on Volunteering aims to acknowledge the importance of this activity in promoting the values of civic solidarity through the participation of Moldovan and foreign citizens in volunteering. This law attempts to promote the active participation of every citizen in the community, to strengthen civic responsibility and to capitalise on the human capacity to fulfill the needs of the society. The Law establishes a regulatory framework for voluntary activities in Moldova.

There is no public body responsible for volunteering. However, the Volunteering Coalition in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports coordinates activities listed in Art. 15 (2):

1. *National Volunteer Week* – An annual event to promote volunteering and to recruit volunteers
2. *Volunteers' Festival* – An annual event that recognises the merits in the field of volunteering
3. *National Volunteer Conference* - An event organised every two years, aiming to identify key objectives and goals of volunteers at policy level.

From the moment that the Law on Volunteering came into force (24 September 2010) until the beginning of 2012, discussions on the elaboration of the Implementation Regulation were ongoing. In partnership with Ministry of Youth and Sport, the Volunteering Coalition organised the first National Conference on Volunteering in April 2011, which aimed to discuss with civil society the mechanisms of the implementation of the Law on Volunteering. Between 2011 and February 2012, the Implementation Regulation for the Law on Volunteering was discussed

with different civil society stakeholders, representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Protection.

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**The Law on Volunteering will promote the active citizens' participation in the community, reinforce civic responsibility & capitalise on the human capacity to fulfill the needs of the society.**

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The Implementation Regulation of the Law on Volunteering was approved during the Government meeting on 12 March 2012, and published in the Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldova on 16 March 2012.

There has been a Law on Volunteering since 2010, but most importantly, since 16 March 2012 there has been an Implementation Regulation for this Law, and this is primarily a result of the combined efforts of the Volunteer Coalition and the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Moreover, at the end of 2011, the elaboration process of the Strategy of Civil Society Development 2012-2015 started. One of the Strategy directives is Civic Participation. This group discussed the Implementation Regulation of the Law on Volunteering, identified issues to address, set objectives and identified solutions for the development of volunteering in Moldova

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

and for creating enabling conditions for corporate volunteering.

In Moldova, there is neither a national volunteer centre nor a resource centre for volunteering. At present, the Volunteering Coalition is a national umbrella organisation for organisations involved in volunteering. This coalition plans to create a national volunteer centre, but at the moment lacks funding opportunities.

The Volunteering Coalition was created in August 2006 by five non-governmental organisations and two networks of NGOs in partnership with the General Direction of Education, Youth and Sport of Chisinau and the Ministry of Education and Youth. The Secretariat of the Volunteering Coalition is maintained by the association “*Youth for the right to live*” (Tinerii pentru dreptul la viață, TDV). The other member organisations and networks are *Young and Free: Training Resource Center*, *Resource Center of Moldovan Non-governmental Organisations for Human Rights* (CReDO), *Association “Service for Peace”* (SFP), *The National Youth Council of Moldova* (CNTM) and *Social Network* (represented by the “Motivation” Association).

All the organisations that involve volunteers and the number of volunteers involved in them are not known. Well-known volunteering organisations that are active at the regional level in the Republic of Moldova and operate with international volunteers are: *Association Service for Peace* (SFP); *Association for Development, Voluntary Service and Information for Youth* (ADVIT) Moldova; *Peace Corps Moldova*, *Association for International Volunteering* (AVI) Moldova, and *International Economic and Commercial Sciences Students Association* (AIESEC) Moldova. 16 organisations are involved in the project Strengthening of the capacities of local NGOs in the elaboration and development of a volunteering program funded by The Black Sea Trust, a project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States of America and implemented by TDV Association.

According to the latest evaluation carried out in November 2010 the organisations that involve more volunteers are: TDV Balti with 35 volunteers, Association “*Children’s Friends*” with 28 volunteers and *Médecins du Monde* (MdM) Moldova with 27 volunteers.

Cooperation among organisations is not very well developed. Internal policies and procedures, especially those related to volunteer management and motivation, need to be developed in order to increase the capacity of VIOs to meaningfully engage in solving community problems.

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*Involvement of public institutions and schools in volunteering needs to be further developed, while corporate involvement in volunteering is still in great need of expansion.*

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## 5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

There are no public entities/ public service providers that involve volunteers. The businesses are not involved in volunteering yet and they are not cooperating with volunteering organisations.

In March 2012 the Government approved the normative and methodological framework necessary to implement the Law on Volunteering. During the last 2 years, the “Youth for the right to live” Association (TDV) developed sustainable models for promoting and encouraging volunteering by drafting proposals for the implementation mechanisms on the law on volunteering, developing policies to encourage employer-supported volunteering, organising public events involving civil society organisations in order to attract the media, and involving citizens and authorities in promoting the good practices and benefits of volunteering. These efforts are supported through the project Development and implementation of the policies for stimulating volunteering in Moldova funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the Academy for Educational Development (AED) Moldova Civil Society Strengthening Program (MCSSP).

Involvement of public institutions and schools in volunteering needs to be further developed, while corporate involvement in volunteering is still in great need of development.

## 6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Volunteering Coalition has received funding so far from external sources such as the USAID and the Soros Foundation Moldova. There is little funding coming from the budget of the Ministry of Youth and Sports supporting the annual National Volunteer Festival. Other sources of funding for volunteer projects are the Black Sea Trust of the German Marshall Fund. External funding is reliable and stable, based on well established systems of application and funds management.

The Volunteering Coalition has been obtaining financial support for voluntary activities from the USAID funding programs for two years, until June 2012. Also until the end of 2012 the Volunteering Coalition activities will be funded by Ministry of Youth and Sport from Republic of Moldova.

## 7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

There is no systematic and reliable research on volunteering and its contribution to society in Moldova. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of Republic of Moldova is bound by the recent Law on Volunteering to start including volunteering information in its statistics, starting with 2012 via online forms for data collection, and from 2014, introducing official standard forms.

Some research regarding volunteering has been carried out by CReDO with the study Cost-benefit Analysis of the Draft Law on Volunteering. The study shows that the economic value of volunteering in Moldova is estimated between 0.07% and 0.16% of GDP.

## 8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

The law on volunteering from 2010 includes several provisions aiming to ensure quality standards for volunteering in its Article 18. According to this Article, the authorities should develop the following:

- *Minimum quality standards for volunteering*
- *Voluntary contract models*
- *Procedures for the issuing of a certificate, a model of nominal voluntary certificates and a volunteer card*
- *Model registers of evidence of volunteers, of voluntary contract, a model of nominal voluntary certificates and a volunteer card*
- *Conditions for the implementation of incentives for volunteering.*

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*The president of the Republic of Moldova awards the Medal of Civic Merit as recognition for special merits in volunteer work.*

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Efforts to develop tools for ensuring quality of volunteering are also being undertaken by TDV Association within the project Advocacy for the promotion and implementation of the Law on Volunteering II funded by the Soros Foundation Moldova. During the project The Guide for the Volunteer Coordinator was produced; this Guide includes a general code of ethics and necessary tools for managing volunteer activities, according to the Law.

## 9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

There is no database of volunteers and volunteering opportunities yet. Some information can be found on the websites of different organisations. The Law on Volunteering, Article 10 mentions that central authorities will coordinate databases containing information on offers and requests for volunteers. However, there is no indication so far as to when such databases will become available.

The Volunteering Coalition promoted volunteering through various activities including the National Week of Volunteering “*Join our volunteer crew!*” (Hai în gașca voluntarilor!) and the annual *National Volunteer Festival Chapeau for volunteers* (Jos pălăria în fața voluntarilor!), organized to celebrate the International Volunteer Day on 5 December.

The festival is very prestigious, attracting a lot of media attention. The President of TDV received the Medal of Civic Merit for promoting youth and volunteering policies in 2009. In 2010, in accordance with Article 15 of the Law on Volunteering, the President of the Republic of Moldova awarded three people with the *Medal of Civic Merit* (two representatives of the NGO sector and one public employee) for special merits obtained in volunteer work conducted over a period of several years.

## 10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

The law on volunteering includes several provisions aimed at stimulating people to engage in volunteering, such as:

### **Development of skills and competences**

Art. 14 (3) the consideration of volunteering as work experience in terms of employment, certification and promotion.

Art. 14 (6) 5 transferable educational credits are awarded annually for practical stages in areas related to public utilities and volunteering in the professional field that the volunteer is studying.

Art. 14 (7) volunteering will be considered as an initiation practice or license practice if it is carried out for at least 40 hours.

### **Stimulation of civic activism and recognition of the voluntary contribution**

Art. 14 (4) volunteering taken into account at the enrolment in higher educational institutions, for awards of scholarships or access to accommodation in student dormitory, to differentiate between two or more candidates with similar scores.

### **Stimulation of host institutions**

Art. 16 (1) special tax status for organisations.

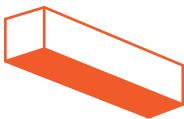
Art. 16 (2) establishment of public utility status that facilitates access to contracting the provision of public social services by NGOs.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to create an enabling volunteering infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova, we recommend the following changes:

1. *Implementation of the provisions concerning volunteering from the existing “Strategy for the Development of Civil Society in the years 2012-2014”.*
2. *Appointment of a public body responsible for volunteering in the country by creating a special department within a ministry (such as the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, or the Ministry of Youth and Sports, or the Ministry of Education) in order to coordinate volunteering activities at the Local Public Authorities (LPA) level.*
3. *Creation of a National Volunteer Centre that will - together with central administrative authorities - coordinate databases containing information on offers and requests for volunteers in order to ensure a closer cooperation between volunteering organisations.*
4. *Obtaining of continuous financial support for volunteering activities from businesses through the development of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the frame of Global Compact Network Moldova.*

At the European level we recommend that policies and regulations for neighbouring countries are more flexible and equal in order to stimulate cross-border cooperation between European Union neighbouring countries and member states.



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## Resources

State Register of Legal Acts of the Republic of Moldova, 2010, *Legea Nr. 121 din 18.06.2010 Voluntariatului (Law no. 121/2010 of 18 June on Volunteering)*. Available at: <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=336054>

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