



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE

CHAPTER

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VOLUNTEERING  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
IN EUROPE



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# 1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

## CONCEPT DEFINITION

Before, the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011, in Poland, volunteering infrastructure (VI) has not been officially defined in any legal document. That has changed with the adoption of a “Long Term Strategy for Volunteering Policy Development”, which is one of the main outcomes of the European Year in Poland.

The concept of volunteering infrastructure was rarely used among voluntary sector’s experts and workers. Rather in this context, they use the general term “sector”. For the purpose of this publication, we will define the volunteering infrastructure as the whole system supporting volunteering and its development.

This system consists of the following elements:

*Institutions, organisations and bodies.* Those include:

- organisations active specifically in the field of volunteering, with (one of the main) aim(s) to support and develop voluntary activities; and organisations (NGOs) supporting other NGOs i.e. volunteer centres, volunteer development centres, foundations, federations and their networks;
- organisations involving volunteers but having other aims than development of volunteering i.e. ‘cause’ organisations;
- public administration at all levels, including ministries, special offices, regional and local administration, such as self-government structures;
- business supporting volunteering in partnerships and/or having employee volunteering programmes;
- media specialised in civil society/volunteering issues (e.g. [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl));
- academic institutions active in the field of volunteering and social research (e.g. Projekt Społeczny 2012/Social Project 2012)
- governmental agencies e.g. National Agency for Youth in Action Programme;

*Political, Legal, Educational and Economic framework:* law, strategies, acts, non-mandatory acts, resolutions, investments in volunteering, governmental reports and strategies, funding & programmes;

*Research and analysis:* both conducted by governmental, non-governmental and academic world;  
Media, PR & Raising-awareness tools: including promotion and raising awareness campaigns and media activities and attitudes;

*Supporting tools & matching systems:* Volunteer banks, websites, databases, training opportunities for both volunteers and their supervisors etc.

And all types of interactions between those elements.

Hence, volunteering infrastructure has two main functions:

- *It creates an enabling environment for volunteering to develop and maintain its roles and functions;*
- *It enables people to involve, participate and sustain voluntary activities.*

It is important to mention that this definition is very wide and encompasses all possible elements of volunteering infrastructure. In Poland, the system of VI undergoes slow but constant change and many of those elements need further development and support.

## 2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Legal regulations concerning non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Poland were introduced by the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Voluntarism (2003, with further amendments 2010). The law defines a volunteer as *“a person who voluntarily, and with no remuneration provides services based on regulations specified in the law (Art. 2.3)”*.

The Law regulates the principles of volunteer employment, insurance, reimbursement of expenses incurred in connection with performing volunteer work, and the scope of powers. According to the law, volunteering may be provided for the benefit of NGOs, the authorities of state institutions and local governments, units subordinated to state authorities or, which is rare, companies acting as non-for-profit organisations. The Act does not allow the provision of voluntary work in favor of business institutions or under any other commercial activity ran by other institutions.

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**The Polish third sector consist of around 130 000 entities (associations, foundations, trade unions etc.) - 3 quarters of these function without paid staff**

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Although there is an official definition of volunteering defined by law, there also exists other definitions within voluntary sector. The Volunteer centres network defines a volunteer as *“a person who voluntarily and without compensation provides benefits for organisations, institutions, and individuals beyond family and friendship ties”*. For research purpose the Klon/Jawor

Association (conducts repeated research on volunteerism in Poland) uses a broad definition and defines volunteering as *“devoting one’s time to unpaid social activity done out of free will for non-governmental organisations, religious and social movements”*.

There is no official and regular data collection regarding the involvement in volunteering within the Polish society. Consequently, the data provided below is based on the research conducted by the voluntary sector itself or by the publicly funded independent Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS).

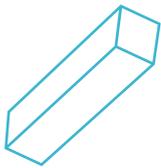
In general, Polish third sector consist of around 130 000 entities (associations, foundations, voluntary fire brigades, social organisations, trade unions, religious organisations). Research of Klon/Jawor Association shows that around 3/4 of those organisations does not engage paid staff. Another research of the Klon/Jawor Association shows that 44% of organisations use the work of volunteers, out of which only half works with more than 10 volunteers. As few as 2% of organisations works with over 100 volunteers. In general, research conducted by this association shows that consistently since 2002, more than half of Poles declares that they work socially. Moreover, “voluntary and unpaid activities for their local community or those in need, make those already engaged in them more and more absorbed (in 2001 they allocated to social work an average of 18 days, in 2003 - 20 days, in 2006- 21.5 days)” (CBOS “The state of civil society in the years 1998-2006. Report on Research”). However, these results relate to social work in



general, not only in non-governmental organisations. “The vast majority of Poles (77%) does not work socially in any civic organisation. Others work primarily in one area of social activity (14%), rarely in two (4%), or three, or more (5%)”. In 2007 14.1% of adult Poles were involved in social activities for the benefit of local communities (municipalities, neighbourhoods, towns), in 2008 - 15,6% (in 2005 - 13,6%, in 2003 - 12,9%, and in 2000 - 8%) (“Social Diagnosis 2007, conditions and quality of life of Poles”).

A survey monitoring the degree of involvement of Poles in voluntary activities, conducted by Klon/Jawor Association between 2001 and 2011, claims that the highest rate of involvement in voluntary activity was recorded in 2005, when more than 23% of the population undertook such action. In 2011, social activity was declared by only 14,5% of people (about 5,5 million Poles).

Among the 5,5 million Poles engaged in social activity all social and age groups are represented, with comparable presence of both men and women. However, level of education seems to be a strong factor, which influences one’s social engagement. Among people who declare to volunteer, there is a majority of people with high and middle education, with significantly less presence of people with vocational education.



Young people are strongly involved in volunteering. The large degree of involvement of this group can be explained by pragmatic reasons: volunteering provides an opportunity to gain additional skills and experience necessary for young people to succeed in a demanding and competitive job market. On the other hand, these are young people who have a lot of time and energy that can be effectively spent on social activities. Volunteering is also a form of a social activity, which for young people is of paramount importance. In addition, most volunteer programmes address young people. There are less voluntary options demanding higher qualifications, which would be much more attractive to older people. Also, volunteering is a relatively young field of social activity – it was re-born after 50 years of communism in 1989. Because of that reason, it is a term fairly unknown to the older generations, not well understood and as a result of it, rejected by them altogether as something not appropriate for them and not matching their idea of social activity.

Young people during their education have more chances to get acquainted with volunteering, for example in fairly newly established volunteer school clubs, or other voluntary programmes targeted at youth. They are therefore more likely to identify their actions as “voluntary.” Due to the fact that some elder people do not recognise the term volunteering, researchers (from Klon/Jawor Association) ask specific questions such as specific social activities to obtain a more extensive definition of volunteering.

Different research shows that on the level of declarations volunteering is perceived as an important and needed social activity. Despite that volunteering is not highly esteemed, probably because the majority of volunteering activities do not require high qualifications, long term engagement is not yet well developed, volunteering is organised rather on “on/off” basis. Based on 2010 research most of people not involved in volunteering explain it by the lack of time (49%) or by the fact that they have never thought about it. Other given explanations are: nobody asked me to do it, I have to take care of my family first or I am not capable to be a volunteer. I don’t have time is the reason provided by most of the respondents, quite popular for youth and adults and less popular among elderly. Significant percentages of over 30% of all age groups mention they have never heard of it, while slightly lower percentages (13% to 20%) mention that nobody asked them to volunteer.

On the other hand main people's motivation to be a volunteer is that they are enjoying being volunteers, people say that if they help others, maybe others will help them at some point, too. Some of the main motivations why people volunteer are: the values in which people believe, the possibility of getting to know new people, the desire to learn something new, the group pressure - other people (friends) volunteer as well. Those motivations differ with regard to age groups, but they do not differ much between genders.

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

*Some of the main motivations for volunteering are the values in which people believe, getting to know new people, the desire to learn something new and the group pressure - other people (friends) volunteer as well*

The Law on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work came into force in 2004. The first draft version of the law has been presented in 2001. After two years of consultations and amendments, the law was adopted on 23 April 2003. In 2010, after a request from the voluntary sector and many rounds of consultations, an amendment act was adopted. The Law on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work addresses several key issues from NGO perspective. It not only tackles issues of volunteering, but as well does it define the status of "public benefit work and organisation" (PBO) or Organizacją Pożytku Publicznego (OPP), introduces 1% mechanism which gives to every citizen a possibility to donate 1% of his/her income tax to a selected NGO, which obtained the PBO status; defines rules and responsibilities of Public Benefit Activity Councils (national and regional), and provides a procedural framework and rules for cooperation for NGO cooperation with public authorities.

According to the Law self-government institutions may encourage NGOs or create structures to support other organisations (including volunteer organisations). The Law defines specific rules of engagement of volunteers such as a volunteer contract, service certification, travel costs and other project-related cost reimbursement and insurance. The rules are now more specific as well for those volunteers who provide service abroad, defining organisation's duties.

The legal definition of volunteering has been specified in the law. According to the act, a volunteer is a person who voluntarily, and with no remuneration provides services based on regulations specified in the law (Art. 2.3). The law further states that the person undertaking the voluntary activity has to be duly qualified and meet the requirements of the benefit that he or she is providing,. Persons who decided to form or join an association as its members were not volunteers according to the law adopted on 23 April 2003, as they provided services for the association's benefit. The amendment act from 12 March 2010 changed this definition and associations' members may now as well be recognised as volunteers. Other definitions are also used in Poland.

The main responsibility in implementing the law lays with The Ministry for Labour and Social Policy and its Department of Public Benefit. The act established as well the Public Benefit Activity Council, which serves as an advisory and opinion-forming body for the Minister responsible for social security issues. The council issues opinions on matters concerning this act (of law) and on governmental draft laws in the field of public benefit and volunteer (voluntary) work. This mandate gives the council the possibility to influence the creation of new laws, check if an existing law violates the articles and propose amendments to that law.

The law represents a strong foundation for the development of volunteering and social action in Poland.

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

In Poland a number of organisational forms have been created to promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and the exchange of information. Also, many local initiatives and NGOs, together with *Caritas* (Christian charity organisation) and the *Polish Red Cross* (PCK) play an important role in supporting volunteering.

There are over a dozen regional and local Volunteer Centres operating in the Volunteer Centres Association. The first Volunteer Centre was established in Warsaw to face the issue of fast growing NGOs sector, which needed volunteers assistance to develop their activity. The main aim of the centre was to create a contact and matching point where volunteers and those interested in their work could meet. Since then, several regional and local volunteer centres have emerged in Poland and they are operating within the Volunteer Centres Network. There

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The portals [www.wolontariat.org.pl](http://www.wolontariat.org.pl) & [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl) provide informations about various volunteering opportunities.

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are new regional volunteer centres and their mission is to support all activities related to the development of volunteering in the country.

Representatives of Volunteer Centres take part in regular meetings to discuss matters concerning among others:

cooperation with other organisations and institutions, points of law and the expansion of the Volunteer Centres activity within the non-governmental and public administrations sectors. The representatives of specific centres help to create new local volunteer centres within their area of jurisdiction. This provides a constant influx of new volunteers, not exclusively from large cities. Volunteer Centres Network help to organise new centres, giving advice and sharing ideas.

However not all volunteer centres in Poland work fully in the network. They are individual organisations and they run their own projects. The structure of the Volunteer Centres Network in Poland is divided into Regional Volunteer centres (ordinary members of the association) and local volunteer centres (members supporting the association).

Whilst the volunteer centres operate independently, the function of the volunteer centres within the network is based on the implementation of operational standards for regional volunteer centres and other volunteer centres. In line with their standards, centres should provide a range of services for people who would like to contribute on a voluntary basis, e.g. assist in finding a place to develop volunteering activity.

Each *Regional Volunteer Centre* is an NGO. Its status as an association registered is recognised in the National Court Register. The main tasks of a centre include:

- *carrying out a Job Centre for volunteers,*
- *promoting the idea of volunteering.*
- *implement the Volunteering Programmes,*
- *assist in creating Volunteer centres,*
- *provide information and advice on volunteering.*

The *Council of Volunteer centres Network* is the highest authority created by the two representatives from each regional unit. The Council meets at least four times a year and is responsible for:

- *guiding (the direction of) the network activity,*
- *defining standards of the network,*
- *selecting and dismissing of the bureau,*
- *agreeing on admission/withdrawal of members.*

The ongoing activities of the Network Volunteer Centres are coordinated by the bureau which currently includes three representatives of the Network, elected by the Council. Members of the bureau (especially the President) are entitled to enforce the provisions of the partnership contract and to represent the network externally. One of the most notable achievements of the Volunteer centres Association to date is its contribution of adding references concerning volunteering to the act of law on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work. Volunteer centres have their own internet portal [www.wolontariat.org.pl](http://www.wolontariat.org.pl) which serves as well as an application for finding volunteer opportunities and different volunteer projects.

There is no national umbrella organisation for all organisations involved in volunteering. There is, however, an organisation called *OFOP* (National Federation of NGOs). *OFOP* brings together organisations from across the country that carry out activities at local, regional, and national levels in addition to supporting the work of the organisations. Member organisations operate in different areas, making *OFOP* a unique federation of associations, foundations and agreements. *OFOP* activities are implemented through: promoting legislative changes to improve conditions for the functioning of the third sector; strengthen advocacy through consultations within the sector and partnership and cooperation with other environments. This makes *OFOP* the only umbrella organisation for NGOs in Poland.

There are as well networks such as *SPLIT* (Network for Support of Non-Governmental Organisations), whose goal is to improve the management of NGOs, enabling long-term cooperation between local governments and NGOs, and promote the role of NGOs. *SPLIT*'s main activities include the collection and distribution of information, advice and consultation for social service providers.

There are as well other organisations tackling issue of volunteering, such as *Foundation for the Development of Voluntary Service*, which operates in a wide ranged programme "*Student Volunteers*". However this is still a young initiative, set up only in 2010.

Finally, there is one of the best-known NGO portals in Poland the [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl) that provides information for all non-profit organisations in Poland, also on volunteering. Volunteers can find on organisation to volunteer for and vice versa. Taking into consideration the range of the portal and amount of volunteer opportunities, it is probably the Polish best-known volunteer matching Internet tool.

In Poland the biggest volunteer involving organisations are the ones which organise one-off events or short-period actions, especially around Christmas time. The two biggest organisations involving volunteers are the *Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity* and the *Spring Association*.



The *Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity* (Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy, WOŚP) is a foundation operating in the field of health and education. Each year for 17 years, the Foundation has been organising the Finale of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity, a nationwide fund-raising event. The Finale is a very important social event bringing together millions of people. Throughout the country there are happenings, auctions, concerts and events being organised, some of which are broadcasted on public television. On 9 January 2011, during one day of the 19th Finale, 120000 volunteers collected nearly 37 008 974 PLN (approximately 9.2 million EUR). On 10 January 2010, during one day of the 18th Finale, the same number of volunteers (120000) collected nearly 43 million PLN (approximately 11 million EUR). In addition to fund-raising, the Foundation runs educational programs for young people, medical training and a centre for volunteer training. GOCC is also the organiser of Przystanek Woodstock (Woodstock Stop) music festival. The festival, which has been organised since 1995, is the Foundation's way of thanking all the volunteers and the supporters of the January Finale. At every festival dozens of Polish and international bands perform. There's also a space for debate called the Academy of Fine Arts, which invites festival-goers to join in a discussion with authorities, journalists and people from the media. In 2009 500,000 came to enjoy the festival.

The motto of the *Spring Association* (Stowarzyszenie Wiosna) is "We help people to effectively help each other". The organisation was founded in Cracow in 2001. Through implemented programs it seeks to develop mechanisms to effectively enhance the quality of life of those in need. The Association is the intermediary between volunteers, sponsors, and those in need. Selected activities include: Noble Gift - this action is carried out every year before Christmas; volunteers collect information about people in need, the data in anonymous form are published on an Internet database, through which sponsors can declare their assistance to specific individuals. Parcels prepared by the sponsor are then delivered by volunteers to the recipients. In 2008 thanks to 112,000 sponsors and almost 5,000 volunteers a total of 6.4 million PLN (1.6 million EUR) were given to 8,000 families (48,000 people) from the whole country. Academy of the Future – Working in needy communities volunteers-tutors trained by the Association help children with long-term learning difficulties in science. The programme currently covers 830 children from 12 cities in Poland.

There are as well other organisations that involve a great number of volunteers, such as the *Polish Red Cross*, *Caritas Poland* or *Foundation for the Development of Voluntary Service*.

It is difficult to measure the level of cooperation between these actors. In 2009, there have been created working groups concerning the volunteering sector in Poland. One of them was set up by the Department of Public Benefit at Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in term of preparing and coordinating national strategy for European Year of Volunteering 2011. The group has given its recommendation for the National Plan of Action for EYV 2011 and played a significant role during 2011, in the consultancy process for most of the activities in the Plan.

Second group named *Sport Volunteering 2012+* (Wolontariat Sportowy 2012+) associates organisations and institutions together with the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, active on a level of volunteering in sport. The members of this group have prepared recommendations for the development of volunteering in sport - addressed to sport organisations and associations all over Poland.

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*Around 11 million EUR were collected in 2010 thanks to a successful fund-raising event organised by the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity.*

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## 5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

### Companies

Volunteering is also a specific part of Corporate Social Responsibility. It is very hard to judge if in Poland employee volunteering is just a matter of PR strategy or it really comes from authentic social sensitivity, however, undoubtedly, the number of corporate volunteering programmes and initiatives is growing in Poland. Still, it is very rare that companies in Poland do have such a programme. Only 7% of companies claim to have an employee volunteering programme (Volunteer centre's research 2008). That shows that there is no significant number of business entities involved in volunteering in Poland. Although some of those programmes are quite big and well recognised, it can be generalised that it is domain for larger and richer companies,

corporations, mainly with foreign stakeholders. There is no annually conducted research or analysis about business volunteering itself. Last report of this kind has been issued on 2008 by Warsaw Volunteer Centre and the research was made only on 207 entities. Preliminary results of a research that will become available later in 2011 show that very few companies cooperate with voluntary organisations and most of the companies do not recognise any of those organisations.

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### Public institutions

Public Benefit Law established the *Council on Public Benefit Activities*, which serves as an advisory and opinion-forming body to the Minister responsible for social security issues.

The council issues opinions on matters concerning this Act of Law and on governmental draft laws in the field of public benefit and volunteer work. The council represents an institutionalized form of cooperation between the public administration and NGOs at the national level. Its terms last for duration of three years and it provides a platform for articulating the interests and concerns of the NGO sector.

One of the most important actors in promoting volunteering from the governmental side is the *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy*. The Ministry worked, with a group of experts on volunteering, on the Long-term strategy for volunteering policy development. The project of this long term strategy has been prepared in the end of 2011 and it has been well received by the third sector organisations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Department of Public Benefit, served also as a Polish national coordination body for celebrating the European Year of Volunteering 2011.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs administers the *Civil Initiative Fund* (CIF, in Polish – FIO), which is a governmental long-term programme. The FIO is a grant programme addressing non-for-profit organisations, established with the purpose of initiating and strengthening civic initiatives (and volunteering), in cooperation with NGOs. It is complementary to the already functioning solutions and practice in this area. One of the strategic criteria for applications in 2011 was projects focused on volunteering development, through educational measures, promotion and engagement.

The other public administration bodies involved in volunteering are local self-governments which are bound by law to establish an annual plan of cooperation with the NGOs and consult

organizations in designing and implementing volunteering related policies. Each year the interest in volunteering among local self-governments grows.

## Education sector

Neither the Ministry of Education (supervising primary and secondary schools) nor the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (supervising tertiary education) or the Ministry of Sport and Tourism do not have specially dedicated Volunteering Departments. Within the government the department in charge of volunteering, called the Public Benefit Department, is placed in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Ministry of Education supports promotion of volunteering in schools among young pupils, through the 'Strategy of Poland for young people for years 2002 and 2013'. However, the document does not mention volunteering nominally, but encourages active youth participation.

There is no systematic data collected by the Ministry. Some regions conduct research on the state of play of volunteering, as an example can serve 'First research on volunteering in schools of Warmia and Mazuria region' conducted in 2009. On the other hand, there are some bottom-up programmes and actions which promote this idea among pupils and students and teachers. In primary and secondary education these are: Training of school coordinators and Volunteering Clubs in schools; European Schools Clubs; Youth in Action programme; other programmes and actions which target students with volunteering e.g. School without violence (Szkoła bez przemocy,) Student Volunteering (Wolontariat Studencki), Equal Chances (Równać szanse).

The school volunteering is supported and developed through different tools such as trainings for volunteer coordinators, including for teachers and volunteer coordinators engaging pupils in schools organised by different NGOs, especially volunteer centres (for example a programme of the Volunteer Centre and Centre for Self-Development of Teachers "Open eyes", or a programme of the "Associations" Together, in Volunteer centre "Spinacz in Olsztyn project" Support for volunteer coordinators in schools is the province of Warmia and Mazury.); support of volunteer centres for set up and organisation of volunteer clubs in schools, including publications. Often also, volunteer centres and other NGOs engage as partners in the programmes promoting volunteering of young people, such as Student Volunteering and Equal Chances programmes.

According to the research of the Association Volunteer Centre, in Poland in 2006, there were 125 Volunteering Clubs in School (VCS) acting in different areas of social life. VCS are the informal groups of active pupils who, out of free will, engage in different activities which promoting voluntary spirit and helping those in need. They are organised by and within schools, should have a coordinator and a structure which enables both preparing and enabling young people taking part in such activities. They organise projects, help peers in need, and support the development of hobbies and passions as well as non-formal educational process. Hence, their target groups are pupils in a given school and local communities. Teachers involved in the clubs underline the positive impact that Volunteering Clubs in Schools have on young people's self-development, increase in their pro-social attitude and non-formal education dimension. The recommendation would be to promote further this idea to schools, as taking into account the size of the country, number of inhabitants, the current number of clubs does not seem to be optimal.

*Youth in Action* is a very well known EU Programme for young people aged 18-30. It aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans and to

involve them in shaping the Union's future. It promotes mobility within and beyond the EU borders, non-formal learning and intercultural dialogue, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. Volunteering is one of the main elements of the Programme and most of the volunteer programs are happening within *Action 2 – European Voluntary Service (EVS) Programme*. Since 1998 in *Youth for Europe* (1998-2000); *Youth* (200-2006) and *Youth in Action* (2007-2013) many young people took part in volunteer projects (in EVS since the year 2000). In 2009, 376 Polish volunteers have gone abroad to work as volunteers and 442 young volunteers came to Poland.

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The Volunteer week event aims to promote the projects and activities organised in schools but also to encourage the involvement of new education institutions.

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Other programmes and actions which target students with volunteering, such as *School without violence* (Szkoła bez przemocy), *Student Volunteering* (Wolontariat Studencki), *Equal Chances* (Równać szanse). These programmes are not focused directly on volunteering, but they do offer students and pupils opportunities to involve as volunteers, volunteer involvement being one of the main methods used in their implementation.

The *Volunteer Week*, organised in cooperation and with support of the Association of the Volunteer Centres, is organised around the 5th December – the International Volunteers Day. The aim of the Week is to promote the projects and activities already organised in schools but also to encourage new schools to engage in volunteering. In 2009, 850 schools from all over Poland organised voluntary projects during that week. There is also a competition for the best voluntary projects organised by schools. Its purpose is to encourage school communities to share their good practices as well as time, knowledge and experience with those who need and want to take advantage of this assistance. 2010 edition aimed at engaging and encouraging parents in particular. Jury chooses all together 48 projects, 3 per each region (voivodeship) in Poland. The award is the publication of best projects as well as participation of the volunteer leaders on the *Summer School of Volunteer Leaders*.

Undergraduate students are strongly involved in numerous volunteer actions. Even though there is no matching portal available to facilitate matching volunteers and organisations, students are quite privileged in the sense that information about social actions, in which they can involve, is easily made available to them by career offices. Academic career offices are the places where students are looking for work, training and volunteering offers. These career offices also cooperate with local NGOs and promote their actions among students.

There is no special student volunteering organisation, but there is one, country wide social programme - *PROJECTOR* - Students Volunteering. This programme gives students an opportunity to execute their own project at primary schools in their region. About half thousand students have been involved in this programme during last couple of years. Another opportunities to volunteer are made available by the *Academic Sport Association*, where students are involved in the organisation of sport activities, serve as leaders or train other students.

The voluntary sector, approaches different stakeholders in different ways. There are good examples of cooperation of the sector with public administration bodies (The Law on Social Benefit and Volunteering; strategies, recommendations, reports); there is cooperation between social responsible businesses with Volunteer centres and other NGOs in order to create interesting business volunteer programmes, but still there is a great potential in this field. The

NGOs very often approach schools, universities for their programmes, as young people are often target groups of their projects. Volunteer Centres Association, for example, encourages schools to create school clubs for volunteering. The cooperation between the voluntary sector and self-governments (regional public authorities) is somehow problematic as not all self-governments create their Annual Plan for Cooperation with NGOs, despite their legal obligation to do so. Therefore not all non-profits, especially in smaller communes (*gmina*), are able to find funds for their activities from the local level.

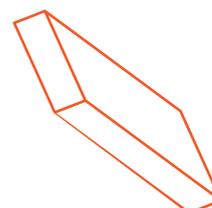
## 6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There is no available data on the amount of the national budget allocated to volunteering on an annual basis. But over the past years the financial assistance provided to NGOs by local self-governments has been increasing in Poland. Funds transferred by community councils to NGOs in 2008 were 57% higher than in 2003. At a more local level (towns and cities), the vast part of subsidies is allocated to social welfare. In rural areas sport clubs are the main beneficiaries of such financial assistance representing on average 38% of this income. According to research 68,4% of community councils provide funding for NGOs.

According to the 2007 Klon/Jawor Association' research, sources of funding of NGO activity are as follows:

- membership fees
- local authority sources
- donations from private individuals
- donations from institutions and companies
- governmental sources.

Volunteer sector organisations (non-profit sector) finances are mostly supported by public money (local governments, governmental programs – such as FIO (Civic Initiatives Fund), or European Funds – such as ESF (the European Social Fund). FIO is a long term governmental fund administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. This programme and as well ESF are distributed on project grant basis but not for institutional support (core funding). The European Social Fund is implemented in National Operational Programme – Human Capital, which allows non-profit organisations to apply for funding on national and regional levels. Some of the priorities can be used for direct volunteer promotion and projects and Priority V can support the voluntary network infrastructure.



## 7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

Research on the organisations of the third sector and social life in Poland are conducted in the following centres:

*Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor* (Klon/Jawor Association) - an organisation for the study of the third sector in Poland, creation and provision of technological tools, strengthening cooperation within the industry and initiating debates. Klon/Jawor conducts research on voluntarism and third sector issues for 10 years. Klon/Jawor runs an info-point where people and organisations are provided with research results. The association also runs the well-known non-profit portal in Poland the [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl).

*Główny Urząd Statystyczny GUS* (Central Statistical Office) - the State's centre for the collection and statistical analysis of most areas of public life. GUS researches non-profit organisations and conducts surveys on the non-profit work outside the household;

*Centrum Badania Opinii Publicznej CBOS* (Public Opinion Research Centre) - a publicly funded independent research centre leading polls on Polish society's opinions regarding socio-political and economical issues.

*Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu* (Volunteer Centres Association) - an organisation focused on the theme of volunteering; a body responsible for leading the Volunteer Centres, they carry out research on corporate volunteering.

*Fundacja Pracownia Badań i Innowacji Społecznych "Stocznia"* (The Unit for Social Innovation and Research – Shipyard) – provides research and analysis in voluntarism, education, local development and civic participation issues; runs innovative projects;

*Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych ISP* (Foundation Institute of Public Affairs) – a non-governmental and independent research and analytical centre; it conducts research, analysis and prepares recommendations for fundamental public policy issues.

*The Central Statistical Office* (GUS – Główny Urząd Statystyczny) had not measured volunteering in a systematic way before 2010/2011. There was some research done, but it has touched volunteering on the occasion of measuring other phenomena, and therefore cannot be defined as volunteering studies. Questions about the number of volunteers and scale of work and service included in the research regarding associations, foundations and other social organisations are not giving the overall statistical picture of state of play of volunteering in Poland. In 2010-2011, GUS conducted the first survey on unpaid work outside the household, based on the methodology proposed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work, on a module prepared together with the Johns Hopkins University. The study on the non-profit work outside the household has been conducted in the form of a survey on a representative sample of people aged 15 years and more, present in households randomly selected for the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The GUS has only released preliminary results on this survey, at the time of the writing of this chapter. According to these preliminary results<sup>1</sup>, direct and indirect volunteering in Poland in 2010 was equivalent to nearly 1.5 million full time employment (FTE) jobs, and to more than 9 billion EUR.



1. Główny Urząd Statystyczny. Preliminary results of the groundbreaking survey on volunteer work conducted by the Central Statistical Office of Poland. Available at: [http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL\\_se\\_Preliminary\\_results.pdf](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_se_Preliminary_results.pdf)

There is a plan for the study to be carried out every four years. One of the reasons why volunteering was not researched regularly by the Central Statistical Office was the conviction that volunteering is a small-scale phenomenon and has little economic value. Hence, measuring volunteering was not cost-effective in comparison to the costs of testing. Additional discouraging factors were: lack of comparable research conducted by public statistical offices in other countries, little international sharing of good practice with this regards and finally, limited cooperation between statistical offices and voluntary organisations on that topic.

## 8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

Besides the Act of Public Benefit and Volunteer Work and rules set by this law there are no nation-wide standards for volunteer or volunteer organisations. The Volunteer Centres Association do have standards for new organisations that would like to become Volunteer Centres (VC). Those standards tackle issues such as: target group of VCs, services provided by VCs, rules of engagement in the VCs network. Those standards apply for VCs, but they do not apply for all non-profit organisations working with volunteers.

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*A danger for organisations managing volunteers is not to have proper management training, which can lead to volunteers being disappointed and not motivated anymore to engage in volunteering.*

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Volunteer centres support as well other NGOs by organising trainings for volunteer coordinators and promotional campaigns about value of volunteering, but when it comes to trainings and knowledge sharing, those are only regional accessible projects and not standards for all non-profits.

As research made by the Unit for Social Innovation and Research SHIPYARD shows, many organisations manage volunteers, but very often, they do not have formal or informal training on how to do it. This causes that volunteers can be disappointed after not being managed in a proper way. Often organisations don't really motivate, inform or make good use of their volunteers. A lot of motivation, power and resources are lost. In such case, volunteers are disappointed, they do not come back to this organisation and moreover, very often they do not want to volunteer anymore.

Managing volunteers in an organized way is a cycle, where one needs to start with planning on the role of volunteers in your organisation, then there is a stage of informing about volunteer opportunities, next there is recruitment of volunteers, their preparation, maybe training (if needed) and moving to the important stage of motivating and supporting volunteers. The last stage of the cycle is sort of evaluation, acknowledgment and well-organised farewell for volunteers. The cycle restarts from the beginning when a new volunteer is coming to the organisation. If organisations know how the cycle works, it is more common that volunteers stay longer in the organisation and after finishing the voluntary service, they became the organisation's ambassadors. The Unit for Social Innovation and Research SHIPYARD works in coalition with non-governmental organisations from all over Poland in order to develop rules and criteria for a "prototype" of a volunteer friendly organisation/Institution based on the described cycle. Those rules are going to be distributed together with a volunteer management tool-kit in the beginning of 2011.

Different standards for volunteer friendly organisations are already implemented by the Volunteer Centres Association (VCA). The VCA is certifying organisations fulfilling the

“volunteer friendly criteria”. The difference in those two approaches is that the first one is more educational-confidence based, (“volunteer friendly organisation”), the second one is more about auditing, checking and certifying. Both ways certifying/declaring an organisation to be “volunteer friendly” are possible solutions to the problem that a lot of organisations do not know how to manage volunteers. Just as well, volunteers themselves are often not able to recognise by the first contact if an organisation is “volunteer friendly and well organised” or not.

Poland has a problem of volunteers supply. A lot of people want to volunteer, they search for good opportunities and they don't find always the best or most suitable ones. The demand for volunteers is growing each year, but the know-how on managing them does not grow that fast. If Polish organisations change their culture in relation to volunteers, we might have a quick grow in percentage of people interested and working as volunteers. Training offered by different NGOs and Volunteer Centres is not sufficient for the amount of people who want to volunteer. Just recently, in 2011, SHIPARYD Foundation issued a “Volunteering Management Practical Tool-Kit”, which was very well received by NGOs and institutions. Before 2011, most of the tool-kits and guides on volunteer management were internal documents for organisations or general guidelines published by the Volunteer Center Association. EYV2011 has played a significant role for many organisations working with volunteers. It has been a very good opportunity to re-think their volunteer involvement strategies.

## 9. AWARENESS ABOUT VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

What is probably the main barrier in development of social involvement in volunteering is a significant lack of well-recognised professional database dedicated to it. Even though there are several on-line portals with information about volunteering, none of them is recognised as leader in the field and neither of them is used significantly. Most of these databases are still fragmented and often not up-to-date. During the European Year of Volunteering 2011, many different organisations, federations of organisations started to work on their information and communication technologies (ICT) tools for volunteering involvement. There are beta-versions of portals dedicated to involvement of volunteers in metropolitan areas. The ICT world is changing very fast, so probably different internet portals will be set-up in the very near future. Among the existing volunteering e-portals the most popular are:

[ngo.pl](#) - which is also an unique portal with up-to-date database embracing the third sector in Poland, with latest research and law information; among different options this portal offers a database of 140 000 NGOs and plays a role in matching volunteers and organisations. Ngo.pl has its web page [wolontariat.ngo.pl](#) where volunteers and organisations can post their messages, but it works more as a notice-board, than a matching portal.

[v4sport.eu](#) - platform devoted to volunteering in sport, with information and e-tools, enabling searching volunteer opportunities for both volunteers and organisations interested in sports.

[wolontariat.org.pl](#) – called the “goodness box”, is an on-line tool administrated by Volunteer Centres Association where volunteers can find service opportunities nationwide and organisations can also post their announcements.

Volunteering is rarely an object of promotional actions. Until the European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011 there were no TV or radio programmes dedicated to that subject. Some organisations engaged in volunteering sometimes use outdoor billboards, but due to their limited funding, they have limited scope.

A very good example of social campaigning made by a NGO is Volunteer Centre Association campaign entitled '*Helping makes you stronger*'. Despite being professionally made and having attractive spots and posters, the presence in and interest of media was insignificant. Besides organised campaigns, there are different events that catch up social attention on volunteering. The final of the "*Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity*" is the event getting most attention for volunteering. This one-day event, repeated annually for 19 years already gathers each year over 100 000 volunteers and has each year full media coverage by one main TV channel in Poland. This is already a tradition in Poland to support Orchestra and it is a tradition to underline the work of volunteers, which is priceless for Orchestra to succeed.

Volunteering is part of the concept of the organisation of big sport events, such as *EuroBasket 2009*, *Special Olympics European Summer Games 2010* or *UEFA EURO 2012™*. There are also critical moments which paradoxically focus public attention on volunteers and their contribution to public interest, such as floods which engage hundreds of people in helping one another.

Apart from special events such as the above, media in Poland are rarely interested in volunteering. It is not so common to underline volunteer work, which is present in every-day life in non-profit organisations, public institutions or in living neighbourhoods; reflections of volunteering in media remain occasional.

## 10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

All relevant aspects have been presented in the sections above.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recognition and promotion of volunteering**

One of the main obstacles for volunteering in Poland is the lack of public awareness. Firstly, there should be more attractive promotional campaigns targeting volunteers. Media should support volunteering efforts and volunteers' stories should become a part of the everyday news. Also, the voluntary sector should learn how to attract media's attention, how to communicate volunteering and to promote voluntary activities in the society. Secondly, government and local authorities should support the development of voluntary activities for schools. Widening and supporting the network of school volunteer clubs would be useful in promoting active participation of young people in their local communities. Moreover, the National Statistical Office should support academic institutions and non-governmental organisations in regular research on social and economic value of volunteering. The recognition of the contribution of volunteering to building social capital, education and training, gaining new skills and competences and to Gross Domestic Product should be made widely known in the society and among decision makers.

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*An important obstacle for volunteering is the lack of public awareness. Media should support volunteering efforts and volunteers' stories should become a part of the everyday news. Also, the voluntary sector should learn how to attract media's attention and how to promote voluntary activities in the society.*

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## Networking, advocacy and professionalisation

The second barrier to further development of volunteering is the lack of networking and advocacy activities of volunteer centres or organisations. Volunteering infrastructure cannot be strengthened without exchange of good practices and mutual support of the organisations. The last twenty years have shown that although many voluntary organisations exist, they do not find themselves in a reality of new media, their offer for community is not 'up-to date', they often do not know how to approach different age groups, they do not use their (full) potential and what is more important they are not always ready to professionally manage and retain volunteers. As an example can serve the community centres (Domy Kultury) which are still old-fashioned, out-dated organisations, and which could be easily transformed in order to be a part of a volunteering infrastructure. Another example is the governmental programme "My Sports Field – ORLIK 2012". It foresees the construction of sport facilities, available to a wider public and free of charge. Till now there are 1300 sport fields build in Poland but ORLIK 2012 is not a volunteer centre or a community centre. It is very clear that with such an infrastructure ORLIK could be a place for an increasing volunteering in sports movement. Voluntary organisations should build networks to learn from each other's experience, to jointly follow and implement innovative ideas and advocate their needs to the national and regional public authorities. Professional and transparent organisations could also attract more business support. Polish voluntary organisations should also strengthen their participation in the European networks, government should possibly support networking and partnerships on both European, national, regional and local level.

## Standards and quality

There is a need to introduce a standard for organisations and institutions which engage volunteers in their activities. There is a need for training and raising awareness of volunteering values. There should be smart and easy tool-kits with easy tips on how to work with volunteers, how to maintain their motivation, how to recruit new volunteers and how to work with them when they cease volunteering. Those standards should be kept and the quality of volunteer management could be supervised by volunteer centres or different volunteer organisation networks.

## Local support

Local structures of self-government should be much more involved in promoting and supporting local volunteering infrastructure and volunteering as it develops social capital in communities. The rules of mutual, local cooperation should be established in cooperation with local NGOs, which are familiar with local needs.

## European Level

On the European level it is worth to maintain programmes such as Youth in Action and its EVS component, but there is a space for more volunteer supporting programmes. A programme that supports the growth of volunteering infrastructure should be developed. Introducing some standardisation for volunteer management for all European countries, starting with one coherent definition of volunteering, might be helpful. Such definition would help to compare data between different countries. Nowadays it is difficult to do it, as each country defines volunteering differently.

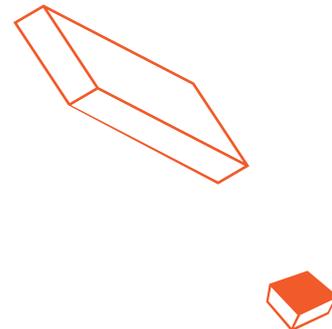
## Implementation of the Long-Term Strategy for Volunteering Policy Development

As it has been already mentioned, in 2011, The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has developed, with the contribution of experts, the Polish “Long-term strategy for volunteering policy development”. This document is a first official document addressing volunteering, since the adoption of the Law on Public Benefit and Volunteering in 2003.

The Strategy attempts to collect in one document the most important areas and factors concerning volunteering in Poland. Its structure has been divided in three parts:

1. *People and their surroundings: development of voluntary attitudes and culture of volunteering;*
2. *Institutions: strengthening volunteering organisers, developing their competences and skills; setting up support systems for volunteering organisers, including volunteering infrastructure, and support of collaborations between entities;*
3. *System solutions: strengthening public policies focused on volunteering development, particularly: creating a friendly legal environment for volunteering, strengthening the role of volunteering in societal problem-solving and developing long-term volunteering in Poland.*

The Strategy is a complex document with many useful recommendations and directions for volunteering development. It is now up to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, public institutions and different NGOs in Poland, to ensure that the strategy is implemented and measures are adopted in national, regional and local programmes and projects.



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