

VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE IN EUROPE
PUBLICATION

M

A

L

T

A





Centre for
European
Volunteering



Europe
for Citizens

Volunteering Infrastructure in Europe Publication

AUTHORS:

Claudia Taylor-East, SOS - Solidarity Overseas Malta
CO-AUTHOR Philippa Arrigo, Research Consultant

The current version of the chapter is an updated version of the 2012 edition and it was issued with the support of UEA trainee Connor Audsley.

Malta

1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE CONCEPT DEFINITION

The volunteering infrastructure aims at creating and maintaining an environment that enables people to come forward for active citizenship and civic engagement. The volunteering infrastructure can be defined as incorporating the structures, systems, mechanisms and instruments which are necessary for the promotion, support, coordination, and recognition of volunteering.

The role of the volunteering infrastructure includes:

- Promotion of volunteering by creating conditions and supporting initiatives that enhance renewed and innovative forms of volunteer involvement in the community;
- Motivation and support for persons interested in volunteering, including guidance in identifying appropriate opportunities to get involved, providing training, and matching volunteers with organisations that need volunteer effort;
- Ongoing support for existing volunteers and the promotion of their rights and responsibilities;
- Consultation and support to volunteer-involving organisations, including guidance in making their activities more attractive and inviting for prospective volunteers;
 - Coordination with stakeholders involved in or linked to volunteering activities;
 - Coordination of statistical databases and research efforts on volunteering;
 - Recognition of volunteering in terms of its added value from a social and economic perspective and the informal and non-formal learning experiences it provides, and its contribution towards the enhanced employability of people.
- Quality assurance and standards of volunteering activities. An enabling volunteering infrastructure would thus include legislation, policies, organizations and networks which contribute to the achievement of the above-mentioned actions. However, any volunteering infrastructure should avoid over-institutionalisation and over-regulation, since this would hinder the very nature of volunteering, which is based on freedom and flexibility.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Volunteering is defined by Maltese law, through the Voluntary Organisations Act (Act XXII of 2007) [1]. The legal act defines a “volunteer” as a person who provides non-remunerated services through or for a voluntary organisation [2]. By inference, voluntary activity is undertaken by a person’s own free will, choice and motivation, and without regard to financial gain. The Voluntary Organisations Act also defines the “voluntary sector” as including voluntary organisations, volunteers, donors who make voluntary grants of money or assets to voluntary organisations, beneficiaries of the services of volunteers and voluntary organisations and the administrators of such organisations [3]. However, a detailed set of principles for volunteering are not provided for in Maltese legislation. According to a Special Eurobarometer report issued by the European Commission in 2017 [4], 23% of people in Malta declared that they had participated in organised voluntary activities within the past year. This was a decrease of 4% from the previous report in 2014.

1. Chapter 492 of the Laws of Malta, Voluntary Organisations Act (Act no. XXII of 2007).

Available at: www.doi.gov.mt/en/parliamentacts/2007/ACT%20XXII%20English.pdf

2. Ibid., Article 2 (definitions).

3. Ibid.

4. https://ec.europa.eu/clima/sites/clima/files/support/docs/report_2017_en.pdf

However, according to the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development: 5 December 2015 News release [5] issued in 2015 by the National Statistics Office in Malta, there were 31,578 people aged twelve-and-over doing voluntary work in 2014. This amount represented 8.6% of respondents aged twelve years and over. It also corresponds to 5.3% of the total population in Malta as of the end of 2008. [6] 15,073 (just under 48%) of these volunteers were active within a voluntary organisation, 14,883 within another entity and an estimated 1,622 were doing informal voluntary work. Overall, this is an increase from the 2010 figures released by the National Statistics Office in the Survey on Income and Living conditions [7], which reported 21,920 people aged twelve and over doing voluntary work in 2010.

Other sources providing estimates of volunteers in Malta differ from the figures provided by the National Statistics Office. For example, a country report on Malta [8] which was conducted by GHK within the scope of the Study of Volunteering in the European Union, on behalf of the European Commission, indicated that according to Maltese stakeholders, volunteers represent 12% of the Maltese adult population, meaning that over 33,000 volunteers aged between 16 and 64 years are involved in volunteering [9]. The same publication noted that other stakeholders indicated that as many as 54,000 young people in Malta are engaged in voluntary activities [10]. Based on these figures and other estimates by key stakeholders, the Final Report issued by the GHK concluded that the total of volunteers in 2008 was 41,000. [11] There has not been an update or follow up to this report however, so the figures are difficult to compare. This however, highlights that there is an issue with the lack of sustained, longitudinal studies into volunteering, which makes it difficult to analyse how policy/cultural changes in the past decade have impacted the voluntary sector. Some further figures can be found in the 2016 Cultural Participation Survey, which reported that 35,675 respondents had volunteered with an arts, cultural, or heritage organisation within the last 12 months.

Specific research and statistics focused on the profile of volunteers in Malta is rather limited, and finding updates to the original 2008 SILC survey has been quite difficult, meaning that there are gaps in updating the statistics around volunteering which had been provided in the original SILC survey. The main two sources for updated information come in the form of a 2015 press release for International Volunteer Day, and a 2016 Cultural Participation publication published by Arts Council Malta in conjunction with the National Statistics Office.

An indication of the profile of volunteers can be deduced from the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), which the National Statistics Office conducts on an annual basis. The most recent available is SILC which specifically mentions volunteering was in 2008 [13], which revealed that there were 21,920 people carrying out voluntary work in 2008, and that the majority of these (37.68%) were in the age group 25-49, followed by 50-64 years (29.97%). Since then, the figures on volunteering have not been specifically included in the recent SILCs available on the Maltese National Statistics Office website, however some data can be found in the previously mentioned International Volunteer day for Economic and Social Development News Report (2015).

5. European Commission, 2007. 'European Social Reality', Special Eurobarometer No. 273 Report, p. 35.

6. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C1/Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Documents/2015/News2015_222.pdf

7. The total population in Malta stood at 413,609 at the end of 2008. Refer to National Statistics Office, 2009. 'Demographic Review 2008'.

8. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2010. 'Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2008'.

9. Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010. 'Study of Volunteering in the European Union', Country Report Malta, submitted by GHK. A

10. Ibid, p. 2

11. Ibid.

12. Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010. 'Volunteering in the European Union', Final Report submitted by GHK, p. 62.

13. Cultural Participation Survey 2016

This report highlights that 35.2% of volunteers were in the age group 25-49, followed by 29.9% of volunteers in the age group of 50-64. These figures are consistent with the previous SILC 2008 figures, albeit with a slight decrease in the percentage of volunteers belonging to the 25-49 age group. With regard to gender, the SILC 2008 revealed that 6.8% of women, as opposed to 5.3% of men, aged 12 years and over were carrying out voluntary work. However, the majority of male volunteers (43.9%) had been doing voluntary work for 5-10 years, while the largest share of female volunteers (40.6%) had been volunteering for less than 5 years.

Furthermore, the majority of male volunteers in 2008 were volunteering within a voluntary organisation, while most of the female volunteers were volunteering within another entity (church, schools etc). Males tended to spend slightly more time volunteering than females, with the averages standing at 23 hours and 21 hours respectively. The more recent figures (2015) provided by the news report on International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, tell us that 4.5% of males, compared to 3.7% of females, volunteer within volunteer organisations. In contrast, 4.3% of females, compared to 3.8% of males, volunteer in other entities. The report also found that the plurality of male volunteers had been volunteering for more than 10 years (45.4%) while the largest share of female volunteers had been volunteering for less than 5 years (35.1%). Males also mostly (33.8%) reported volunteering for more than 30 hours a week, while the largest share of females (32.8%) reported less than 10 hours a week. Therefore, these figures are consistent with the 2008 report, with males generally volunteering more hours per week (although in 2015 the gap in figures between genders is wider than it was in 2008), and having volunteered for more years.

Regarding the fields where volunteers are active, the SILC revealed that more than 40% of people doing voluntary work in 2008 were involved in membership organisations (related to business, employers, professional and political organisations). This was followed by organisations performing social work activities (24%). Social work activities are classified as including children and elderly homes, hospital and medical practice activities and other health related activities. On the other hand, 16% of volunteers were involved in religious organisations [14]. Other studies suggest that the most popular sectors for volunteering include community activities, recreation, social affairs, religious activities and sports [15].

The SILC 2008 also revealed that the largest share of people volunteering (36%) actually volunteered for less than 10 hours in a typical month. The average number of hours was highest for persons aged 12-24, with these spending an average of 24 hours a month. People spending the most time volunteering, with an average of 43 hours monthly, did informal voluntary work, while persons volunteering within a voluntary organisation contributed an average of 24 hours a month. Unemployed people spent the most time doing voluntary work, with an average of 36 hours in a typical month. Retired persons spent an average of 24 hours, while persons at work spent an average of 20 hours [16].

14. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2010. 'Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2008'.

15. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C1/Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Documents/2015/News2015_222.pdf

16. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. 'International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development: 2009', News Release No. 218/2009 issued on 4 December 2009.

The 2015 press release revealed similar results. The largest share of people volunteered for less than 10 hours a month (32.8%), followed by 26.8% volunteering for 10-19 hours, 25.5% for 30+ hours, and the smallest group being 20-29% with just 14.8% of respondents. However, the data lacks a specific breakdown of age groups combined with hours volunteered, meaning a close comparison between the 2008 and 2015 data is not possible. Volunteering is positively perceived in Malta by the general public, as well as by particular actors, including the media and decision-makers. Indeed, Malta has a rich culture of volunteering, based on an established tradition dating back many years and initially rooted in the activity of church organisations [17].

Traditional and religious activities, such as the traditional village feasts and band clubs [18], as well as processions and carnival festivities have long involved significant numbers of volunteers who engage in preparatory and organisational work all year round. Furthermore, the Church has served as a key player in drawing volunteers to contribute towards activities and services for the socially deprived both in Malta and abroad. Over time, the spheres of volunteering in Malta broadened and increased, covering other activities, including public community services, the environment, sports and recreation. Voluntary activity has gradually been gaining ground and recognition, even at the political level. This is evident particularly as a result of the work undertaken by NGOs in promoting volunteering, as well as by the Commissioner on Voluntary Organisations and the National Council for the Voluntary Sector following the adoption of the Voluntary Organisations Act in 2007 [19]. It is also evident given the political support provided in regard to strategies and initiatives promoting the concept of volunteering [20]. Furthermore, recognition of volunteering efforts has been reflected in national awards, such as the Senior Citizen of the Year Award, which in recent years has been presented to volunteers [21]. However, a 2010 country report on Malta [22] conducted within the scope of the Study of Volunteering in the European Union, on behalf of the European Commission, revealed that while government officials maintain that volunteering is a priority for the national political agenda, civil society organisations emphasize the need for further development in this regard [23].

The attitude of the general public towards volunteering is reflected in the fact that 86% of Maltese respondents to a Special Eurobarometer Survey declared that helping others or doing voluntary work was an important factor in their life [24]. The SILC 2008 issued by the National Statistics Office in Malta revealed that the most popular reason for doing voluntary work is related to a sense of moral duty to do so (44.7% of volunteers). Other reasons included the desire to meet new people (20% of volunteers), as well as sympathy for the needy (15.3% of volunteers) [25]. The 2015 data is also in line with this, with the largest reason given being “moral duty” at 46.7%, however sympathy for the needy has increased to 22%, overtaking “desire to meet new people/recreation” as the second largest reason, which has 21.4% of respondents listing it as the main reason. Other reasons only accounted for 9% of answers.

17. For example, with specific reference to youths, a report issued by the European Knowledge Centre for Youth in 2006 indicated the various fields which are popular among youths for their engagement in voluntary activities. These included, in order of preference: community activity, recreation, sport, religious volunteering, education, children and youth, emergency response, environment, arts/culture, and social assistance. Refer to: The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, 2006. 'Key Priorities for Youth Policies answers on Voluntary Activities', Report on Malta 2006.

18. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. 'International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development: 2009', News Release No. 218/2009 issued on 4 December 2009.

19. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C1/Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Documents/2015/News2015_222.pdf

20. Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010. 'Study of Volunteering in the European Union', Final report submitted by GHK, p.5.

21. Malta, band clubs are very active within both the cultural and religious spheres, organising various events throughout the year, with the voluntary involvement of various members. A survey conducted by the National Statistics Office in 2008 revealed that band club members stood at 6.4% of the total population aged 5-84 years in Malta. Refer to: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. 'Band clubs: 2008', News Release No. 154/2009 issued on 3 September 2009.

22. Times of Malta. 'Voluntary Sector's work cannot be measured – Chris Said', featured in the newspaper issue of 29 August 2009.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

There is no specific law which addresses volunteering or is concerned with individual volunteers in Malta. The only law which touches upon volunteering is the Voluntary Organisations Act (Act XXII of 2007) [26], which was adopted with the intention of regulating the voluntary sector. This law addresses the institutions responsible for the voluntary sector and voluntary organisations in general. While it defines a 'volunteer' as a person who provides non-remunerated services through or for a voluntary organisation, the law does not make any other reference to individual volunteers or to the concept of volunteering. About the Voluntary Organisations Act in brief Until 2007, there was no single legal instrument of which the voluntary sector was the principal subject. In particular, there was no system for the registration of voluntary organisations and non-governmental organisations.

Most NGOs were self-regulatory and were not subject to national rules on accountability and transparency. The Voluntary Organisations Act aimed at addressing these lacunas. Article 2 of the legal act defines the 'voluntary sector' as including 'voluntary organisations, volunteers, donors who make voluntary grants of money or assets to voluntary organisations, beneficiaries of the services of volunteers and voluntary organisations and administrators of such organisations [27]. According to the legal act, a voluntary organisation is a foundation, a trust, an association of persons or a temporary organisation which is independent and autonomous, and which is a) established by a written instrument for a legal purpose, that can be a social purpose or any other purpose which is lawful, b) as non-profit making, c) is voluntary, and d) is independent and autonomous, in particular of government and other public authorities and of political parties or commercial organisations [28].

Therefore, voluntary organisations are to have some degree of formal existence, and are hence distinguishable from informal and ad hoc groups. Furthermore, they would tend to be organisations acting within the public arena on concerns and issues which are in the interest of the well-being of people, specific groups or society as a whole. However, they cannot pursue commercial or professional interests, particularly of their members, nor can they be part of government or linked to public authorities or political parties. Most importantly, they need to be voluntary. The term 'voluntary organisations' within the scope of Maltese law, emphasises the voluntary choice to associate for a common purpose, as well as to donate one's time and labour for this purpose, particularly by board members or organisers [29]. In fact, most voluntary organisations in Malta are managed and often operated by volunteers. The law establishes a procedure for the enrolment of voluntary organisations in a 'Register for Voluntary Organisations' [30].

23. Examples include: - the presentation of the SOS Malta Award for Volunteering in 2008 by the Prime Minister of Malta, Hon. Lawrence Gonzi (refer to Times of Malta, 'FAA co-founder named Volunteer of the Year', featured in the newspaper issue of 6 November 2008. - the importance given to volunteering within the National Youth Policy 2010-2013 (refer to Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, 2010. 'National Youth Policy 2010-2013', p.28. - the renewed partnership agreement in 2010 between the Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care and SOS Malta in regard to the VolServ initiative aimed at setting up and developing structured volunteering within Malta's main public hospital, Mater Dei Hospital (refer to SOS Malta, VolServ Voluntary Services for Mater Dei Hospital.

24. Di-ve.com. 'Appogg Volunteer wins award', featured on 15 October 2010.

25. Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010. 'Study of Volunteering in the European Union', Country Report Malta, prepared by GHK. Ibid, p.

13 26. European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 273 Wave 66.3, 2007. 'European Social Reality'. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009.

27. 'International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development: 2009', News Release No. 218/2009 issued on 4 December 2009.

28. https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C1/Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Documents/2015/News2015_222.pdf

29. Chapter 492 of the Laws of Malta, Voluntary Organisations Act (Act no. XXII of 2007).

This enrolment process is overseen by the office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, established through the same legal act. Any voluntary organisation may apply for registration with the Commission for Voluntary organisations – however, organisations are not obliged to do so. Once registered, a voluntary organisation may enjoy numerous privileges and exemptions, and may even be entitled to funding from the government or other organisations.

In addition, a voluntary organisation may apply in writing to the tax authorities requesting exemption from Maltese taxes. Registration as a Voluntary Organisation is renewable annually on condition that an annual report and annual audited accounts are made available to the Commissioner's Office together with information about any relevant changes within the administration. Implications of an absence of law specific to volunteering The fact that a specific legal framework for individual volunteers is missing in Malta means that the status and rights and obligations of volunteers are not directly reflected in Maltese legislation. Individuals are therefore not required by law to obtain specific permission to engage in voluntary activities. Nor are there any specific restrictions in place which limit participation in volunteering activities. Furthermore, there is no differentiation categorization of volunteers, based, for example, on employment status or social benefits. Nor does the law or national policy provide for any support and incentive schemes for volunteering. Similarly, insurance provisions regarding volunteers do not exist. In turn, the absence of a specific law on volunteering may also be one of the reasons why procedures for the official recognition of the economic value of volunteering, as well as for the validation of informal and non-formal learning experiences gained through volunteering, have not yet been developed at a national level in Malta.

The absence of a specific law on volunteering may be one of the reasons why recognition of the economic and educational value of volunteering lags behind.

The importance of a specific law for creating an enabling environment for volunteering The introduction of a specific legal framework for volunteers is considered necessary for creating an enabling environment for volunteering in Malta, particularly since this would give volunteers recognized status as well as provide for rights and obligations within the volunteering sphere. Legislation on volunteering is important for those who volunteer, as well as the organisations they volunteer for and their clients, since it provides guidance, protection and accountability.

In Malta's case, specific legislation on volunteering is required to provide for, inter alia,

- a definition of volunteering,
- the rights and duties of volunteers (including codes of conduct and volunteering principles),
- the rights and obligations of volunteering organisations in regard to volunteers,
- a social insurance framework for volunteers,
- the establishment of a volunteer centre aimed at promoting and supporting volunteering,
- data collection and research on volunteering,
- the validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning experiences gained through volunteering,
- economic and social recognition of volunteering (including in the national budget)

The introduction of new elements, such as volunteer identification cards, may also be addressed by such legislation. This notwithstanding, it is important that legislation on volunteering does not lead to over-regulation which impedes the flexibility that volunteering implies. Indeed, legislation should facilitate volunteering and not hinder it.

There are two institutions established by the Voluntary Organisations Act 2007 which are responsible for supporting the voluntary sector as a whole (and not for supporting individual volunteers per se). These are the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, and the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector.

The responsibilities of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations include [\[31\]](#):

- providing enrolment facilities for organisations, which are eligible for enrolment under the terms of the Act;
- monitoring the activities of voluntary organisations in order to ensure observance of the Act's provisions and any relevant regulations;
- providing voluntary organisations with information about the benefits and responsibilities as a result of registering as a "legal person" in terms of the Second Schedule to the Civil Code, and enrolment under the terms of the Act;
- providing information and guidelines to individuals engaged in voluntary activities and to members of voluntary organisations, in order to help them better fulfil their roles and to improve the attainment of organisational objectives;
- making recommendations to the Minister responsible for social policy on legislation and policies in support of voluntary organisations, volunteers and voluntary activities;
- assisting the government, government departments, public agencies and entities controlled by the government in preparing and reviewing policies in support of voluntary organisations and the voluntary sector in general;
- investigating any complaints relating to voluntary organisations or individuals or organisations purporting to be voluntary organisations and their activities, and to take such action as is in their power to redress any justified grievance that may come to their notice;
- monitoring the promotion of voluntary organisations and the behaviour of their administrators so as to ensure the observance of high standards of accountability and transparency, as well as their compliance with law;
- coordinating and communicating with the Registrar for Legal Persons in terms of the Second Schedule to the Civil Code with a view to facilitating registration and enrolment processes for voluntary organisations;
- cooperating with and supporting the Council in developing policies which will be of benefit to the voluntary sector in general or specific sections within the voluntary sector; and performing any other function or duty assigned to them under the Voluntary Organisations Act and any corresponding regulations, as well as other functions which may be assigned to the role of the Commissioner under any other law.

The Commissioner is also responsible for establishing systems of communication with, and in support of, volunteers, as well as for working towards an environment where the credibility and good reputation of the voluntary sector is continually enhanced [\[32\]](#).

31. Ibid., Articles 2 and 3.

32. Ibid.

The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector, as per VO Act 2018 Article 28.3 and 28.4, represents the 1,600 Voluntary Organisations presently enrolled with the Commissioner for VOs and its Council is composed of members nominated and elected directly by the Sector. The representation on the Council covers the founders of and donors to voluntary organisations; members of voluntary organisations and volunteers; administrators; foreign and international organisations under Article 28.3.

As per same Act it represents the following sectorial groupings under Article 28.4: a member from the Social and Humanitarian Sector; a member from the Health and Special Needs Sector; a member from the Education, Youth and Sport Sector; a member from the Environmental Sector and the Animal Welfare Sector; a member from the Arts and Culture Sector; and a member from the Non-Governmental Organisations Sector in Gozo. Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector's Aim is to support the development of a more effective and efficient voluntary and community sector in Malta and Gozo through the delivery of a range of support and capacity building services including information, advice and training. It also aims to support the development of a more influential and cohesive voluntary and community sector in Malta and Gozo by facilitating networking and partnership within the sector, and between the same sector and the private and public sectors. Its purpose is that of providing a consultative forum that can effectively address issues related to the Voluntary Sector, as well as of assisting the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and acting as a platform from which to develop co-operation between voluntary organisations and the Government and co-operation between voluntary organisations amongst themselves.

Its key objectives are:

- to provide leadership and advice in relation to the implementation of the Strategy and on an ongoing basis in the Voluntary Sector;
- to support, develop and promote the interest and work of the voluntary organisations in Malta and Gozo;
- to meet the needs of the ever increasing/demanding voluntary sector;
- to promote equality [34].

To date, the relationship between voluntary organisations and the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations has been more or less administrative and regulatory. This is because the office of the Commissioner has been established for only three years, and therefore, most voluntary organisations have been seeking to get their house in order to be able to register officially in accordance with the law. On the other hand, the relationship between voluntary organisations and the National Council for the Voluntary Sector has been consultative, particularly since members of the Council are themselves representatives of voluntary organisations. The Council manages three different websites two of which are the www.maltacvs.org and www.vofunding.org.mt.

The www.maltacvs.org is the main portal of the Council providing the latest information as well as other services in relation to the Voluntary Sector such as the online VO Directory and the online booking of the Voluntary Centres. The second web portal is the www.volunteers.mt which supports individuals to register as volunteers under the "Voluntiera Malta" which is the leading national volunteering platform for civic engagement to contribute towards the promotion and support of volunteering in Malta.

34. Ibid., Article 7(1)

The third web portal is the www.vofunding.org.mt which is a one-stop-shop funding portal for VOs bringing together all national funds targeted for VOs as well as other funds managed by local fund operators, providing information, online applications as well as the management of data regarding funding projects and their beneficiaries.

This platform is linked to a Mobile App VO Funding Malta. At present supporting six different Ministries / Entities and twenty various funding lines. Apart from the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and the National Council for the Voluntary Sector, there are other public administrations which support the voluntary sector, such as the National Council of Women. However, their focus tends to be on supporting projects and networking of civil society organisations and NGOs in general, through financial grants and consultation structures. These include the Non-Governmental Organisations Projects Selection Committee and the NGO Liaison Unit, which form part of the Ministry for Social Affairs, as well as the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) and the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), which fall under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister. National Council of Women The National Council of Women had embarked on an educational programme in the year 2000 and saw hundreds of individuals upskill and reskill their potentials.

This year NCW offered through the Life Long Learning programme courses in Maths, Maltese, Maltese for Foreigners English at different levels, English for Foreigners, Italian, Computer Awareness and ECDL. NCW organised another important course, which is the entrepreneurship course spread over 9 month with twice a week participation. NCW engaged professional tutors who are experts in self development, business development, lawyer, initiatives and other information required for women to start on their own in a business career as self-employed. This proved very successful and many were encouraged to start their own business. Another very important course was the digital entrepreneurship course, which proved very essential during the COVID 19 pandemic. NCW's current Digital Entrepreneurship course which started in February 2020 continued online. NCW has also provided special Sunday courses in Food Handling for the Philipino community, who can only manage Sundays to attend courses in their free time. NCW has been an active partner in the CCWR (Consultative Council for Women's Rights) discussing women's issues. Most prominent this year was the Gender Pay Gap and means of how we can equalize this factor.

Other issues were the Equality Law and those relating to Equality. Another important participation was the consultation on the changes required to get more women in Parliament. This is still ongoing. NCW is also part of EMPOWER a Platform for Women's Organisations of which NCW holds the Vice Chair. The main objectives are to get women's organisations as one strong voice. One main issue was the discussions about the legalization or otherwise of Prostitution. The National Council of Women is and has been for these last ten years a member of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector. Members of this Council see that Malta has an efficient and transparent voluntary sector. The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) is an important Council where specific topics are placed on the table in each of the sectors. NCW forms part of the Civil Society Committee within this Council and NCW holds the Vice Chairmanship which allows it to be present at the Core Group meetings. Proposals decided upon are sent to Government. Apart from all this work NCW was involved in several other consultation meetings regarding Parental leave, Disability, Women in the Labour Market, Pensions etc. One other issue that is also being highlighted through participation in a project are women in STEM subjects as NCW is seeing a lack of women in this sector.

COVID 19 did not jeopardize the work of NCW as it continued with online sessions and also organized various talks on different topics for its members and friends. The participants that attend the courses at NCW were encouraged to learn how to engage on online sessions and together, young and not so young, embarked on new technological skills.

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

COVID 19 did not jeopardize the work of NCW as it continued with online sessions and also organized various talks on different topics for its members and friends. The participants that attend the courses at NCW were encouraged to learn how to engage on online sessions and together, young and not so young, embarked on new technological skills.

MCVS presently manages two Volunteer Centres to ensure that volunteer organizations are supported in their work, programs and services need to be offered in support of both the organisation as well as the individual volunteer. These premises are available 24/7 free of charge to registered voluntary organisations. There is, however, a national umbrella organisation for organisations involved in volunteering. This is the National Federation for NGOs in Malta (NFM) [35], which was set up in 2007. Its mission is that of representing in Malta, in the European Union (EU) and internationally, the interests of NGOs (voluntary organisations) operating in Malta, and to strengthen the role of NGOs (voluntary organisations) within civil society. It works to develop policies and practices to promote and assist voluntary organisations, to facilitate and promote communication between voluntary organisations, and to lobby on issues that are of concern to them. The Federation also monitors the legal framework within which voluntary organisations operate and ensures that it adequately reflects their needs and practices. However, volunteer support per se does not fall within NFM's mandate.

During the period 2004-2008, a local voluntary organisation, SOS Malta, ran a Malta Resource Centre for Civil Society NGOs [36], which had the purpose of supporting and strengthening civil society NGOs in Malta. Apart from providing administrative support to civil society networks, including the National Federation for NGOs in Malta, the Malta Resource Centre had also undertaken training initiatives related to the set-up of volunteering structures and support. Nowadays, the support provided to volunteers generally derives from voluntary organisations/NGOs themselves, who offer support and training to those rendering a service through their respective organisation or through projects subscribed to. According to the national Survey on Income and Living Conditions for 2008 [37], 49% of volunteers were active within a voluntary organisation, 42% within another entity and 8% did informal voluntary work. There is no available research indicating the largest volunteer-involving organisations in Malta – however, to date, it would appear that the following organisations are among those with the largest number of volunteers [38]. There is a very limited degree of cooperation on volunteering between voluntary organisations in Malta. Few, if any, take initiatives to encourage or support volunteering beyond their own requirements. An example of such an initiative is that taken by SOS Malta in 2008, when it organised a national award on volunteering which was open to nominations of volunteers involved in any type of organisation [39].

35. Ibid., Article 8(1) and 8(2)

36. Ibid., Part VIII

37. National Council for the Voluntary Sector, Malta, 2010

38. For more information about the National Federation of NGOs in Malta (NFM), refer to: www.nfm.eu

39. For more information about The Malta Resource Centre for Civil Society NGOs, refer to the SOS Malta website

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Public entities Among the public entities and service providers in Malta that involve volunteers, one finds the agency Appogg [40], which is the national social welfare agency for children and families in need. The agency has three main services which involve volunteers. These include: Supportline 179 – a 24 hour free telephone service run by a team of professionally-trained volunteers, and which provides support to callers of any age who require assistance, both in day-to-day and crisis situations. Supportline 179 receives calls on situations of child abuse, domestic violence, drug/alcohol/gambling problems, amongst others.

In 2008, volunteers offered approximately 14,400 hours of service towards the operation of this support line. There are currently 84 volunteers [41] involved in giving the service. Programm Ulied Darna - an Appogg service that offers time, skills, friendship, information and practical help to facilitate the life of families who are receiving other Appogg services. In 2008, volunteers dedicated 6,600 hours of their time to this programme. There are currently 63 volunteers forming part of the Programm Ulied Darna team [42]. Home-Start Malta – a support service which is offered in collaboration with Home-Start International. It supports families with children under the age of five years who need support in the upbringing of their children. There are currently 14 volunteers involved in supporting this service [43]. These volunteers are parents themselves or else have a direct experience in the upbringing of children [44]. The Appogg agency also has other projects running as part of its services specific to certain communities which operate with the involvement of volunteers, including Klabb Sajf (38 volunteers), Progett Taghlim (24 volunteers), Homework Club and pre-teens (27 volunteers) [45]. Other public entities which involve volunteers include public hospitals, publicly-funded residential homes and shelters, and organisations such as the Malta Community Chest Fund (a charitable institution chaired by The President of Malta, which aims at helping philanthropic institutions and more importantly, individuals with different needs, through fund-raising activities and events) [46]. The degree of corporate volunteering in Malta is rather limited. Very few businesses are involved in volunteering. Generally, it is the larger businesses who take the initiative in promoting volunteering among their employees, and such initiatives tend to consist of ad hoc fund-raising activities or of short term hands-on activities for the benefit of organisations working for the most part with the socially-excluded or in the environmental field (Examples of such activities include the refurbishment of residential homes and shelters, planting of trees and gardening, clean-up campaigns, etc.).

Unfortunately, more tangible and long-term types of corporate volunteering (such as rendering a continuous voluntary service) are as yet not practised in Malta. Similarly, there are no official or structured programmes or schemes, at national level or otherwise, which promote corporate volunteering. However, the voluntary organisation SOS Malta has recently commenced the implementation of a project aimed at developing an optimum working model for a Corporate Volunteering Scheme, with the scope of implementing such a scheme also in Malta. This project, entitled Empowering Private Sector Employees through Corporate Volunteering (EPSEV) [47] is being part-funded by the EC Europe for Citizens programme, and led by SOS Malta in partnership with Volunteer Development Estonia and Savanoriu Centras (Lithuania).

40. <http://www.sosmalta.org>

41. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2010. 'Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2008'

42. The number of volunteers per organisation was confirmed by the respective voluntary organisation through email correspondence carried out purposely for this report.

43. For more information about the SOS Malta Award for Volunteering, refer to: <http://www.sosmalta.org>

44. For more information about Appogg, refer to: www.appogg.gov.mt

45. Data provided by Appogg to the authors of this report

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

As part of the project, a survey is being carried out in Malta to identify the needs of the third sector which could be matched through corporate volunteering, as well as to identify the skills which the corporate sector itself is willing and able to provide back to the third sector. The EPSEV project also aims to raise awareness on corporate volunteering amongst the general public and more specifically the private and third sectors. It should also be noted that businesses in Malta nevertheless regularly offer financial sponsorship for volunteering projects and activities undertaken by voluntary organisations and public bodies. Political institutions Government, political parties and certain public administration bodies in Malta are involved in promoting volunteering. Political parties tend to promote volunteering within their own structures and for purposes of political outreach. Both parties have a significant number of volunteers, although the precise numbers are not publicly available. This year, the Maltese Labour Party also organised and widely promoted a dedicated day for the recruitment of volunteers [48]. Among the public administration bodies that promote volunteering in Malta, one can mention: The Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, under which auspices the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector as well as the NGO Liaison Unit fall. Indeed, the Ministry has recently been promoted volunteering through a radio campaign, within the context of the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Furthermore, activities related to the European Year on Volunteering 2011 will be coordinated by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector. In turn, national agencies such as Appogg, which engage volunteers, fall under this Ministry too. The Ministry of Health, the Elderly and the Community, which has collaborated with SOS Malta, on a project called VolServ [49] involving the setting up and coordination of volunteering structures within the general public hospital, Mater Dei Hospital. Similarly, Malta's main psychiatric hospital, Mount Carmel Hospital [50], which falls under the auspices of the Ministry, has recently launched a campaign for the recruitment of volunteers. Volunteering activities in other public hospitals and homes for the elderly, falling under the Ministry, have also been ongoing – although these are often initiated by voluntary organisations working in the health sector. The Malta Youth National Agency within the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, which promotes the European Voluntary Service among youth [51].

Furthermore, the National Youth Policy for Malta 2010-2013, specifically recognises the importance of volunteering for youth and refers to a planned strategy for public awareness and a support structure for youth volunteering [52]. Although there is no subject on volunteering within schools, there are various schools (public and private alike) which are involved, on their own initiative, in promoting volunteering among students. Furthermore, many schools in Malta have parent-teacher associations which involve some degree of volunteering effort by parents and teachers alike. At post-secondary level, students are offered the possibility of carrying out voluntary work with an organisation as part of their project assignment for the “Systems of Knowledge” subject [53] which is an integral part of the Matriculation Certificate programme of studies [54]. The project has to illustrate the relationship of “Science and Technology” with one or more of three modules, these being “Responsible Citizenship”, “Aesthetics” and “The Environment”.

48. Information sourced from the official website of Appogg: www.appogg.gov.mt/

49. Data provided by Appogg to the authors of this report

50. For more information about the Malta Community Chest Fund, refer to: <http://maltacommunitychestfund.org/mccf/Pages/Mission.aspx> 47. For more information about Empowering Private Sector Employees through Corporate Volunteering (EPSEV), refer to SOS Malta website

51. For more information about Empowering Private Sector Employees through Corporate Volunteering (EPSEV), refer to SOS Malta website: <http://www.sosmalta.org/EPSEV>

52. L-orrizont, 'Jum il-volontarjat Laburista', article written by Ray Mahoney and featured in the newspaper issue of 9 October 2010

53. For more information about VolServ, refer to: www.sosmalta.org

54. For more information about Mount Carmel Hospital, refer to: <https://ehealth.gov.mt>

Furthermore, volunteering is promoted among students as part of the DegreePlus programme [55] at the University of Malta. The DegreePlus programme aims at providing university students with the opportunity to enrich their academic studies with extra skills and experience that can add value to their knowledge base. The University of Malta grants official recognition to the efforts of students who participate in this programme. The Voluntary Work stream [56] of this programme promotes voluntary work aimed at helping others or the environment through student's involvement in approved voluntary work projects, both in Malta and abroad. The programme has five main units which students can choose from and which are structured on the basis of training hours, voluntary work hours (direct contact), and a logbook system. Cooperation between voluntary organisations on the one hand and stakeholders in the public, corporate and educational sector on the other is usually based on a project-by-project basis. Initiatives are frequently taken by the voluntary sector itself: in creating project proposals which promote or involve volunteering in sectors which are appealing for the different stakeholders to support or subscribe to. Cooperation between voluntary organisations and these stakeholders are often characterised by memoranda of understanding, sponsorship agreements or partnership agreements.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There is very limited information available which provides a comprehensive and reliable picture of the main source/s of funding for volunteering in general in Malta. The only indicative research in this regard is a Survey conducted among Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Malta by the National Statistics Office in 2007, which revealed that the largest source of total income for NGOs (44%) consisted of private donations and fund-raising activities. Service provided by NGOs generated 22% of the total income, whilst government subsidies and international grants (including EU funding) amounted to 19% of their income [57]. However, this postal survey was conducted amongst a determined number of NGOs (330 in all), and did not include other volunteer-involving organisations such as public organisations, political parties, parish encounters, youth centres, choirs, and others.

There are no specific funding mechanisms in Malta which aim at promoting and supporting volunteering initiatives and sustainable volunteering structures. Indeed, national funds targeting volunteering per se are missing. Nevertheless, there are various funds allocated by the Government for organisations within the voluntary sector. Among the more repetitive sources of financial support for the sector are the funds allocated annually to voluntary organisations by the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. The approved estimate for support to voluntary organisations in 2010 within the Ministry's budget stood at EUR 2,260,000 [58]. This budget is mainly distributed among voluntary organisations based on expressions of interest received by the Unit for Liaison with NGOs and adjudicated by the Non-Governmental Organisations Project Selection Committee within the same Ministry. Grants are given for projects which provide services that directly contribute to the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion. There is scope for the Government to support NGO programmes that sustain the implementation of current social inclusion policy and strategy.

55. Youth Partnership, Council of Europe, European Commission, 2007. 'Questionnaire "Voluntary Activities" Malta

56. Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, 2010. 'National Youth Policy 2010-2013', p.28

57. University of Malta, MATSEC Examinations Board. 'IM Syllabus 2008-2010: Systems of Knowledge'

58. Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta, Education Act, Matriculation Certificate Enrolment Regulations, 2005.

Furthermore, other budgets managed by the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family and committed to various initiatives and programmes are accessible to voluntary organisations. Other national sources of funding for the voluntary sector in Malta include the following:

Voluntary Organisations Fund

Administered by the National Council for the Voluntary Sector

The National Lotteries Good Causes Fund Administered by the Ministry of Finance Co-financing Fund Administered by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC)¹ - part of the Office of the Prime Minister. The objectives of this Fund, established by the Voluntary Organisations Act (2007), are to assist and support all enrolled voluntary organisations through education, management support and financial grants. The Fund is established as a foundation and is registered as a Voluntary Organisation. It may include part of the fees earned by the public registrar from registrations of legal persons, unclaimed funds from donations and public allocations, as well as funds from organisations which are wound up. To date, however, the fund, which holds an estimated 50,000 EUR, has not been activated despite being provided for within the law since 2007. This fund has the main scope of helping out various individuals, agencies or organisations that have a social, cultural, educational, sports, philanthropic or religious activity. The Fund generates its income through a percentage contributed from the amount of tax payable from gaming activities and unclaimed prizes. The fund supports projects and initiatives proposed by individuals, NGOs registered under the Commission of Voluntary Organisations Act of 2007, sports organisations registered with the Kunsill Malti għall-iSport established by the Sports Act of 2002, as well as Clubs, Limited Liability Companies, civic, cultural, educational and religious organisations. It finances up to 77% of the project budget. The maximum grant per organisation is 50,000 EUR. Launched by the Maltese Government in 2009, this co-financing instrument seeks to address the financial limitations faced by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the submission and implementation of EU-funded projects. The total budget available for CSOs for 2010 was 280,000 EUR.

Civil Society Fund

Administered by the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) – part of the Office of the Prime Minister

Malta Community Chest Fund Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care The objectives of this Fund include assisting civil society organisations to keep abreast of developments in the European Union; to better educate their members about EU matters related to their respective fields of competence; and to enable them to participate effectively in the decision-making process at European level. The Fund covers up to 80% of the expenses related to the affiliation of such organisations in European umbrella organisations, grouping, federations, confederations or networks, and attendance at conferences, seminars and meetings abroad on matters directly related to the EU in relation to such affiliation. The maximum grant per organisation is 10,000 EUR.

The **Malta Community Chest Fund** is a charitable institution chaired by The President of Malta, and aimed at helping philanthropic institutions and individuals with different needs. The Fund does not receive any funds from the Government, but relies on fund-raising through various activities such as balls and concerts organized throughout the year by the Fund and the Office of The President.

The Malta Community Chest Fund also relies on the generosity of corporate companies and the general public for the collection of money. During the financial year ending March 2010, 1,109,860 EUR were provided as assistance to individuals and societies, including various stakeholders in the voluntary sector. Within its budget estimates for 2011, the Ministry of Health has included a provision of 1,000,000 EUR for Care Services NGOs². Furthermore, the Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care provides a budget of 35,000 EUR per annum to an initiative called VolServ, which aims at developing and organising voluntary health services to support patients and relatives in the main general hospital (Mater Dei Hospital). The project VolServ emanates from the service partnership agreement SOS Malta has with the government.

Other national funds which voluntary organisations can apply for and benefit from include the Malta Arts Fund, as well as the budget for Overseas Development Aid. However, the reliability of these funds for the voluntary sector is questionable, particularly, since funds are revised on an annual basis and voluntary organisations need to submit applications every year. This hinders, to a certain extent, the degree of long-term planning that voluntary organisations can have. Furthermore, these grants are often characterised by uncertainty due to delays in the money being effectively transferred to the organisations. Fund-raising strategies are very rarely integrated into the business and development plan of volunteer-engaging organisations. Often, voluntary organisations carry out fund-raising for volunteering activities in a sporadic fashion. Generally, the main benefactors are corporate sponsors and those who can relate to the cause being funded.

The web portal which MVCS contributes to offers a useful tool in locating funding for volunteering projects, allowing organisations to view information on which funding is available from different sources (National funds and otherwise) and allowing these organisations to apply for funding via this portal. Indeed, the fact that this website is also linked to an app (appropriately named VO Funding Malta) is also a testament to the work that the MVCS and Maltese Government has done to ease the often arduous process of locating funding, while making the best use of modern digital tools which are available.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

There is very limited research and information on volunteering in Malta statistics are few and far between. To date, data related to volunteering is only systematically measured by the National Statistics Office as part of the National Survey on Income and Living Conditions, conducted annually, but there is difficulty in finding recent, comprehensive versions of this survey online. There is no data currently available on the impact (economic or other) of volunteering in Malta. To date, no research has been undertaken to measure such impacts. The lack of reliable data and research on volunteering in Malta significantly limits the degree to which national and organisational policies and services aimed at promoting and supporting volunteering can ever be developed in an appropriate, effective, efficient manner. Furthermore, political acknowledgement and public awareness about the added value which volunteering can render to society can be significantly enhanced and substantiated through systematic and reliable research, including an indication of the socio-economic value and income generated through volunteering.

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

There are no specific tools available in Malta to assure ethics and/or quality standards for volunteering per se in Malta. However, a few organisations have taken the initiative to set up procedures and policies for volunteering. A case in point is the VolServ project, involving the set-up and implementation of volunteering structures at Mater Dei Hospital (Malta's main general hospital). In 2009, the hospital's Committee on Voluntary Services published a set of procedures and policies for volunteering within the hospital.

Furthermore, organisations hosting volunteers are subject to general health and safety regulations provided by law. As a general principle, Occupational Health and Safety legislation in Malta covers volunteers, since the Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act 2000 [59] defines work as "any duty, activity, task or service producing a product or result, and being performed for payment or for free or in exchange for goods, for services, for profit or for benefit." [60] Furthermore, the definition of an "employer" in this law extends to voluntary organisations, where the term includes any of the persons in overall direction or having day-to-day management [61]. In turn, volunteers working in particular sectors (health, environment, culture etc.) are generally required to observe general codes of ethics and quality standards applicable in those sectors.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Databases of volunteers and volunteer opportunities are not available at national level in Malta. Organisations hosting volunteers run their own databases, and these generally serve for purposes of internal use.

Volunteering is promoted among the general public through the media, often promoted through community programmes on national TV stations, including Malta's national education TV station, E22. Fund-raising events involving significant numbers of volunteers are also regularly aired on the national TV station, PBS, as well as political and private TV stations. Apart from also making interventions during radio magazine programmes as well as issuing articles and features in the printed media, some volunteer-engaging organisations have started using electronic social networks, such as Facebook, to promote volunteer recruitment and experiences. Furthermore, in recent months, the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family has been running a radio campaign promoting volunteering within the context of the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Furthermore, the European Year of Volunteering 2011 was an outstanding opportunity for promoting volunteering through different means of communication. The Maltese media is generally receptive to volunteering activities; it is not uncommon to come across news coverage of volunteering events both on the national and private TV and radio stations, as well as in the printed and electronic media. Voluntary organisations are also often given space to promote their volunteering appeals during magazine TV and radio programmes. The endorsement of volunteering initiatives and activities by public figures, including Ministers and personalities, often helps the degree to which they are given coverage by the media, and this is something which voluntary organisations exploit to ensure increased exposure.

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

None, other than that already stated above.

59. University of Malta, Degreeplus.

60. University of Malta, Degreeplus Streams 2010-2011.

61. www.vofunding.org.mt

11. COVID-19

In view of the National Situation of the CoronaVirus Pandemic MCVS took various steps in support of the Voluntary sector in Malta. With immediate effect a survey was launched to evaluate the impact of the situation on the Voluntary Sector, ranging from the impact on services and employment to the revenue resources and volunteers. The survey had a result from 18% of the registered organisations thus giving a scientific position of the situation. As a result of this survey and the regular contact with the sector MCVS was in a position to advocate with the authorities on the issues affecting the sector and create support structures accordingly. MCVS was asking all VOs operating essential services namely those whose services are of a health, disability, social and humanitarian nature (but not only) to identify (a) which services can be stopped and (b) which services need to continue; and (c) what support may be required for essential services to continue? MCVS with immediate effect put in place an emergency/hotline number which is operational 24/7 to support VOs, complemented by an online help desk also available 24/7.

The COVID-19 Voluntary Organisations Emergency Fund (COVID-VOEF) was launched on the 8th May 2020 by the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) with the support of the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Voluntary Organisations. The COVID-19 Voluntary Organisations Emergency Fund (COVID-VOEF) Budget shall start with the allocation of €125,000.00. This allocation may increase depending on support from third parties. Requests under this Fund shall not exceed the amount of €5,000.00. The main purpose of this fund is to assist Voluntary Organisations in emergency situations arising locally as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This fund is to assist registered and compliant Voluntary Organisations (VO) working in the voluntary sector by providing financial support in case of predicament or exceptional situations. On the 15th June 2020 the Minister for Finance Prof. Edward Scicluna together with the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sport and Voluntary Organisations, Dr Clifton Grima and Dr Noel Camilleri, Chairperson MCVS have launched the Operational Assistance Scheme for VOs amounting to €3,000,000.00 at the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta. The Purpose of the Operational Assistance Scheme for VOs is to support Voluntary Organisations, mainly those directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in their operation, with main focus, but not only, on staff costs.

The Aims of the Scheme are to:

- i. Support VOs whose operation is related and essential for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ii. Support VOs which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, may be suffering a reduction in its services being offered, which is resulting in a loss of employment.
- iii. Support VOs which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, may face difficulties to restart the operation at post pandemic stage. The budget under this Scheme shall be eligible for the period 16th March 2020 until the 30th September 2020. This period shall be divided into two phases, Phase 1 from the 16th March 2020 till the 30th June 2020 and Phase 2 from the 1st July 2020 till the 30th September 2020. The Scheme supports Staff Costs, Utility Bills, Costs related to Services rendered during COVID-19 and Supplies related to services rendered by VOs during. On June 15, 2020 MCVS published the Guidelines for Voluntary Organisations in relation to the COVID-19 and the present situation. The guidelines, which are endorsed by the Public Health Authority, are intended to guide Voluntary Organisations in the return of operation in a safe manner. In light of all this, the top level volunteering infrastructure in Malta has been very responsive in addressing the needs of VOs during the pandemic, from increased funding to extra support via the guidelines and 24/7 helplines. Of course, however, in line with Malta's legal framework for VOs, an organisation has to be properly registered and compliant with the relevant regulations to benefit from these measures.

12. RECOMENDATIONS

Recommendations at national level

To facilitate the creation of an enabling volunteering infrastructure in Malta, it is recommended that:

- legal provisions which specifically provides for the status, rights and obligations of volunteers should be introduced
- a national volunteer centre promoting and supporting volunteering is established
- a national volunteering fund aimed at supporting the promotion, research and development of new opportunities for volunteering in Malta should be established
- systematic and regular research on volunteering, including focused data collation and analysis, should be conducted by a public body purposely appointed to do so
- a national mechanism accounting for the contribution which volunteering makes to the country's national economy should be developed
- new training programmes for volunteers and volunteer managers are introduced and the accreditation of such training programmes should be promoted
- national efforts currently being undertaken at establishing a system for the validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning experiences should be accelerated, thus also facilitating the process for volunteers
- multi-stakeholder networking platforms should be established, with the aim of promoting volunteering structures, schemes, and initiatives within the community, the corporate sector and the educational sector, among others. It is recommended that these measures are incorporated within a national strategy on volunteering.

Recommendations for measures at European level

In order to enhance the recognition and support for volunteering at European level, it is recommended that that the EU institutions consider:

- introducing legislation aimed at promoting and safeguarding the rights and obligations of volunteers within Member States
- establishing funding programmes at European Commission level which are aimed at promoting and developing sustainable volunteering structures
- promoting the recognition of unpaid voluntary work by all managing authorities as eligible in-kind contributions for co-financing purposes related to structural funds.

12. RESOURCES

- Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta, Education Act, Matriculation Certificate Enrolment Regulations, 2005.
- Chapter 424 of the Laws of Malta, Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act (Act XXVIII of 2000).
- Chapter 492 of the Laws of Malta, Voluntary Organisations Act (Act no. XXII of 2007).
- Arts Council Malta, “Cultural Participation Survey”, 2016.
- ‘Appogg Volunteer wins award’, featured on 15 October 2010.
- Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010. ‘Study of Volunteering in the European Union’, Country Report Malta, submitted by GHK.
- Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2010. ‘Volunteering in the European Union’, Final Report submitted by GHK.
- European Commission, 2007. ‘European Social Reality’, Special Eurobarometer No. 273
- L-orrizont, ‘Jum il-volontarjat Laburista’, article written by Ray Mahoney and featured in the newspaper issue of 9 October 2010.
- Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, 2010. ‘National Youth Policy 2010-2013’. Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, Malta, 2010. Estimates for the Ministry for Social Policy, Recurrent, 2010.
- Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, Malta, 2011. Estimates for the Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, Vote 42 Recurrent, 2011.
- National Council for the Voluntary Sector, Malta, 2010. Terms of Reference [2010 draft]. National Statistics Office, Malta, 2008. ‘Social Aspects. Non-Governmental Organisations Survey : 2007’, News Release No. 230/2008, issued on 29 December 2008.
- National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. ‘Band clubs: 2008’, News Release No. 154/2009 issued on 3 September 2009.
- National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. ‘Demographic Review 2008’.
- National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. ‘Demographic Review 2008’.
- National Statistics Office, Malta, 2009. ‘International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development: 2009’, News Release No. 218/2009 issued on 4 December 2009.
- National Statistics Office, Malta, 2010. ‘Survey on Income and Living Conditions 2008’.
- National Statistics Office, Malta, “News Release 2 December 2015.
- The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, 2006. ‘Key Priorities for Youth Policies answers on Voluntary Activities’, Report on Malta 2006.
- The Malta Community Chest Fund, 2010. ‘Annual Report and Financial Statements, 2010’.
- Times of Malta. ‘Voluntary Sector’s work cannot be measured - Chris Said’, featured in the newspaper issue of 29 August 2009.
- Times of Malta, ‘FAA co-founder named Volunteer of the Year’, featured in the newspaper issue of 6 November 2008.
- University of Malta, MATSEC Examinations Board. ‘IM Syllabus 2008-2010: Systems of Knowledge’.