



GREECE

VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE IN EUROPE



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****ACKNOWLEDGEMENT NOTE***

For the purpose of this report, we also conducted a survey aimed at CSOs based in Greece, in order to gather first-hand insights and enrich the report. We thank all the organisations that participated for their time and thoughtful responses, and we wish them continued success in their valuable work.



1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

- CONCEPT DEFINITION

Volunteering infrastructure refers to conditions and support mechanisms that enable the development of volunteering on the local, national or international level. It is formed by a combination of factors, including the existence and effectiveness of policy and legal frameworks, the availability and access to accurate and relevant information, and the commitment, collaboration, and coordination of stakeholders from different sectors. Together the elements can determine the extent to which volunteerism can flourish in a given sociopolitical and cultural environment.

There is not a clear or widely accepted definition of volunteering in Greece. Organisations or government departments use various definitions. The “deontological” definitions refer to global common perceptions and include components like “unselfish actions aimed to benefit others”, “unpaid work for social purposes motivated by altruistic instincts or ideals” etc.

Officially, volunteer engagement is described under Article 13 of law 4873/2021 as:

“Volunteer engagement includes the provision of work or services by volunteers in actions, projects, or programmes by entities that offer volunteering opportunities without any financial or material compensation. Monetary benefits to volunteers exclusively to cover travel or accommodation and meal expenses, which are directly related to their voluntary engagement, as well as provisions of equipment and food supplies or free services for transport, accommodation and meals for the same reason, do not constitute compensation for voluntary work.”

The same law also defines Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as:

*“A public benefit **Civil Society Organisation** (Κοινωνικής Οργάνωσης Πολιτών ή ΚΟΠ) is a voluntary, non-profit organisation established and operating in Greece as either an association or a civil non-profit company. It pursues a public benefit, non-commercial purpose and is independent from states or governments, local authorities, public or private law entities, as well as from all types of commercial, trade union, professional, political organisations, and political parties.”*



This report uses the terms of “CSOs”, “non-profit”, “third sector” and “voluntary organisation” interchangeably as it reflects reality, but occasionally they might carry different connotations in legal or social terms.

Volunteering and volunteerism emerged relatively recently as recognised concepts in Greek public discourse. Whereas, informal solidarity and charitable acts have long existed, primarily through traditional forms of active citizenship, the Orthodox Church, and global movements like the Red Cross, and the Scouts. Solidarity was based mainly on family and kinship, and less on community. The Orthodox Church and Government’s role was subsidiary in the social protection sector, leaving many CSOs financially and politically dependent. These factors left no space for an earlier development of civil society institutions and consequently, volunteering.

Volunteering as a distinct civic practice began gaining visibility during the global associational shift of the 1980s and 1990s. The significant growth of the sector during the time was the main source of attracting and spreading volunteering ideals through Greek society. At the end of the century, government actors began implementing some projects based on volunteering. The Olympic Games of 2004 marked a turning point in Greek volunteer culture. Although Greece lacked a formal tradition of volunteering, the Games mobilised approximately 50,000 volunteers and sparked a nationwide shift in perceptions toward civic participation.[1] This momentum fostered new organisations and volunteer initiatives, however sustaining this growth proved a challenge in the long term.

The economic crisis sharply disrupted the progress made in formal volunteering. While the Games had created infrastructure for civic engagement, the financial collapse redirected public focus toward basic needs and survival. Eurostat data from 2015 show that 60% of Greeks expressed “no interest” as a reason for not participating in volunteering activities, the highest rate in the EU by clear margin.[2] Government spending and support for volunteer programmes were scaled back, and many newly formed organisations lost funding or dissolved. In response, volunteering shifted from formal, institutional settings to informal, grassroots solidarity networks, such as community kitchens, social clinics, and mutual aid groups. This marked a return to decentralised, reactive forms of civic action, driven more by necessity than policy and effectively displacing the momentum built.

[1] Koutrou & Kohe (2023)

[2] [Eurostat](#) (2015)

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

Volunteerism in Greece has grown in both visibility and importance, especially during times of many crises. First, the economic crisis, led to the creation of numerous domestic solidarity organisations, despite the funding challenges, and later the refugee crisis from 2015 onwards amplified volunteering and saw the influx of foreign organisations. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating recurring wildfires increased grassroots action and civic mobilisation. In addition, the non-profit sector has become undeniably more professional and transparent than a decade ago.

Public trust and engagement with the third sector remains fragile. Greece continues to rank low on European and international indexes on trust and participation, and concerns about transparency and accountability in CSOs have not entirely faded from public discourse. Calls are being made for a more institutionalised and trustworthy system and for volunteering infrastructure to work more effectively. In some efforts to improve those practices and meet the criteria to access EU programmes and funding, organisations have started to work on a more corporate structure or register on evaluation services. Another barometer of this professionalisation is the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). From 2023 Greece has hosted or coordinated more than 154 ESC solidarity projects.[3] In a way, the sector has gradually regained stability thanks to increased EU project funding.

Today in Greece, there are some efforts in mapping and registering non-profit and voluntary organisations, particularly following the introduction of Law 4873/2021 on the Protection of Volunteering. While no single registry captures the entire sector, estimates suggest there are now over thousand non-profit legal entities, though the number of consistently active organisations is smaller. According to recent mappings like THALIS II and the Bodossaki-IOBE study, there are roughly 750-1,000 structured CSOs actively operating with regular staff, volunteers, and financial activity.[4] Those numbers show no improvement from previous decades.

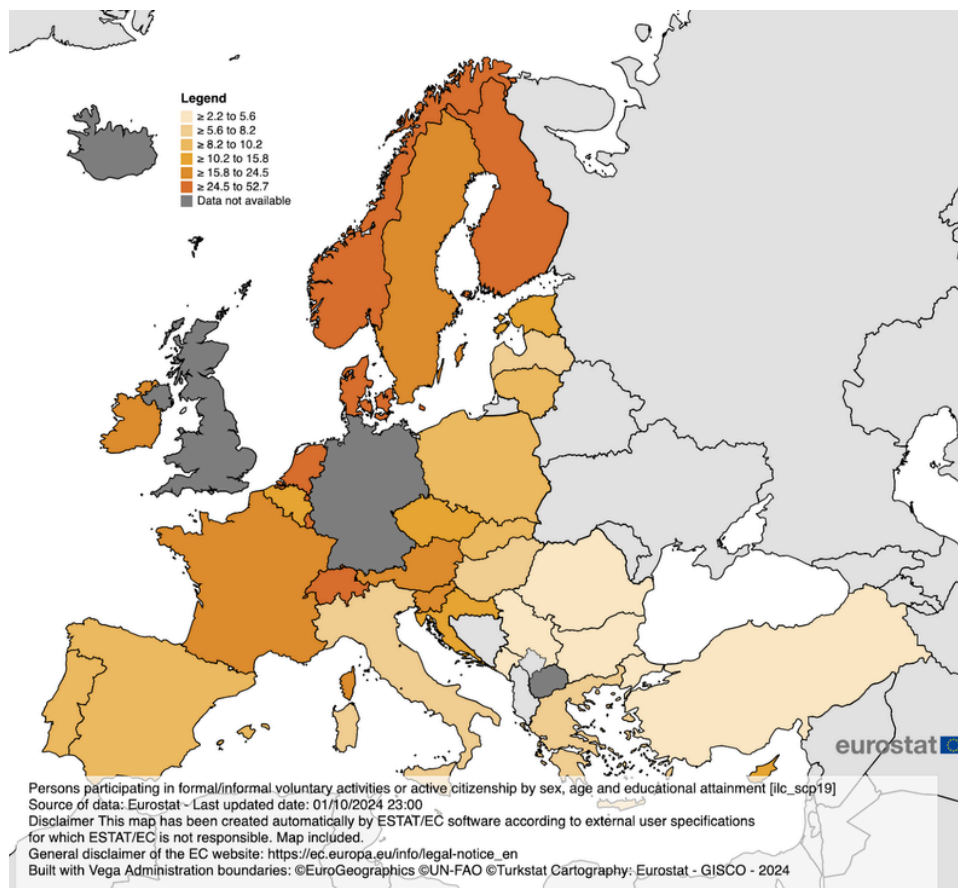
On another aspect, economic conditions have slowly improved, and private funding has partially rebounded. However, similarly to 13 years ago many of these organisations face sustainability and survival problems. This is especially the case for smaller groups outside major urban centres. Most of the major joint initiatives to promote and organise the voluntary sector were short lived. Initiatives deriving from both the state

[3] [EU Solidarity Corps](#) (2025)

[4] THALIS II (2020), Bodossaki Foundation & IOBE (2023)

and the sector itself, like MKOs in Syntagma (~2006) that brought together almost all the CSOs at the time to campaign a constitutional amendment for including the role and responsibilities of civil society and its organisations, despite efforts the project was unsuccessful.

Volunteering Participation



Volunteering participation in Greece has historically been low and remains difficult to assess due to scattered data and differing methodologies. Back in 2011 a Special Eurobarometer reported that only 14% of Greeks undertake some voluntary activity, unfortunately, the latest Eurostat report suggests that this number has decreased to 7%, below the EU average, reflecting that participation has still not returned to pre-crisis levels.[5] On the other hand, a national study provides a more optimistic estimate of a 24% volunteer participation.[6]

[5] Directorate for relations with citizens (2011), Voluntary work. Summary, European Parliament Special Eurobarometer 75.2, Eurostat 'Social and Cultural Participation' (2022)

[6] Bodossaki Foundation & IOBE (2023)



These discrepancies highlight the need for consistent measurement, but it is reasonable to place participation at roughly one in four adults when both formal and informal volunteering are included. Volunteering organisations report a pattern that while interest and eagerness to volunteer exists, commitment, especially consistent, is often lacking. This inconsistency is a challenge in sustaining participation and by extension affects the viability of projects.

The profile of volunteers has also shifted. In the past, volunteering in Greece was largely associated with middle-class participation, but this has diversified in recent years. Today, active volunteers include an increasing number of university students. At the same time, migrant and refugee communities have begun to organise their own volunteer groups.

Navigating Crises ➡ Increase in Volunteering

Over the past decade, successive crises have sparked a marked rise in civic mobilisation across Greece. The **2015–17 refugee influx** drew thousands of first-time volunteers to island reception centres and urban shelters, often side-by-side with newly arrived international NGOs. When **COVID-19** hit, neighbourhood “mutual-aid” networks sprang up, delivering food, medicine and online tutoring to vulnerable groups while larger organisations pivoted to remote volunteering and digital helplines. **Natural disasters** like the reoccurring wildfires (2018, 2021, 2023) and recent flash floods further mobilised volunteer firefighters and civil-protection units, and prompted short, intensive spikes of local participation. For the 2025 fire season more than 5.000 trained volunteers, working alongside 4.000 volunteer firefighters and 18.000 professionals are registered.[7]

Each emergency left behind not only new community groups but also a broader skills base, as volunteers gained expertise in logistics, first-aid, crisis communication and psychosocial support. Crucially, it re-introduced many Greeks to the very concept of organised volunteering motivating them to stay engaged. Some of these impromptu initiatives subsequently formalised or linked with EU schemes, such as the European Solidarity Corps, converting crisis experience into longer-term projects.

Geographical Imbalances

Due to the unique geographic make up of the country, the experience of equal opportunities is challenging. Rough data show more than 60% of registered CSOs are

[7] [Kathimerini](#) (2025)



headquartered in Attica, with Central Macedonia (Thessaloniki) accounting for another 18%. Islands and mountain prefectures remain weakly represented, one reason informal solidarity groups and parish charities continue to dominate outside the two metropolitan regions.[8] Seasonal factors compound the imbalance as summer volunteer projects surge on tourist islands and wildfire-prone zones, but, support often fades once the peak season or crisis passes creating another inconsistent system.

Political Connections and Public Sentiment

Historically, political parties penetrated almost every mass organisation, labour confederations, student unions, even some professional associations. These structures often served as vehicles for party patronage rather than independent civic action, creating blurred lines between public engagement and partisan loyalty. As a result, civic participation was frequently associated with political affiliation, this contributed to widespread public scepticism toward organised civil society. Although recent generations are less influenced by this partisan legacy and organisations have lessened associations with specific parties, especially in urban and youth settings, the perception of volunteering as either politicised or elite-driven still lingers within the society.

Current Prominent Landscape

Today, volunteering in Greece is increasingly shaped by European projects, especially among younger generations, as they offer the EU branding insurance and a Youthpass certificate, which many young people value as a recognised form of work experience and a way to enhance their CVs. But this also reflects a broader shift in motivations with many volunteers, particularly students, viewing volunteer participation as a career building tool.

In the meantime, there is a growing emphasis on professionalised and skills-based volunteering. Individuals with specialised expertise, such as lawyers, psychologists, IT professionals, educators, and health workers, are in greater demand and do offer their time and knowledge in structured, purpose-driven roles.

[8] THALIS II (2020)

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Greece does not have an extensive legal framework on volunteering, it is mainly indirect, and most developments were only recent. A major turning point came with the adoption of **Law 4873/2021 on the Protection of Volunteering**, and its supporting measures, including Presidential Decree 32/2023 and Ministerial Decision 6216/2023.[9] For the first time, the law also **defines the legal status of volunteers**, including their rights and protections, such as accident coverage and administrative accountability for their activities. In addition, these legal provisions established a **unified definition** for Civil Society Organisations (Ο.Κοι.Π.) and the formation of a **Public CSOs Database** and **Special Registry** under the Ministry of Interior. It further includes conditions for **public funding and tax incentives** in an attempt to enhance transparency. Organisations now face a **tiered system of compliance** based on the scale of funding received, which determines their legal recognition, visibility, and eligibility for public support. Consequently, the law distinguishes between CSOs that seek public funding and those that do not. Specifically:

- Basic Register: Those aiming for limited public support (up to €50,000 annually). Provide minimal documentation such as their statutes, governance structure, financial statements.
- Special Register: Those seeking more than €50,000 or tax exemptions and meet far stricter criteria, including audited financial reports, clean criminal records for leadership, detailed action plans, and public reporting.
- No register: All other organisations that don't seek public funding.

Another key introduction of the law was the requirement for organisations to register volunteers into the ERGANI information system, used to record all employment activities by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and promote adherence to basic working conditions. Although this system is positively welcomed by CSOs, the realities of diverse volunteering arrangements create a practical and administrative challenge for the sector, particularly for smaller organisations that lack administrative capacity. The law also clarifies that volunteering is not considered a dependent employment and is not subject to social insurance. A more concrete framework that concerns volunteer work is absent.

[9] Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection (2025), [AADE](#) Law 4873/2021 (2021)



It is worth noting that several sectoral registries also persist, such as those maintained by the Ministry of Health (for health and social care CSOs), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (for social protection CSOs), the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection (for emergency volunteering groups and individual volunteers), the Ministry for Migration and Asylum (for Greek and foreign CSOs active in migration and refugee support) among others. These registries predate Law 4873/2021 and are still in operation, creating a fragmented institutional environment where CSOs must sometimes comply with multiple, overlapping frameworks to carry out similar activities.

Other legal frameworks include law 4430/2016 on the Social and Solidarity Economy, for social enterprises, with short but not extensive mention on volunteering.

In response to these developments, most organisations have expressed their concerns and are calling for simplification of the systems and easier partnership with the state. They emphasise that equity of access and proportionality in compliance requirements is also vital. Without further reforms, the current frameworks risk concentrating resources among large, professionalised organisations, marginalising smaller and grassroots initiatives that also play a critical role in social resilience and crisis response.[10] During public consultations, several organisations and individuals raised similar concerns.[11] Moreover, some organisations feel that the law does not adequately address the needs of the sector and particularly the dimensions of volunteering.

Overall, current legislation is a work in progress and continues to concern mainly non-profit and non-governmental entities, rather than volunteering, which is not emphasised clearly. The frameworks are not systematic and often contradictory, and do lack cohesion, support mechanisms and most importantly full implementation and enforcement.

[10] [Insider.gr](#) (2022)

[11] Ministry of Interior (2021) [Public Consultations for Law 4373/2021](#)

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

Volunteering and civil society activity in Greece can be broadly divided into two main categories [12]:

1. Formal, Non-Profit Organisations

This includes NGOs, charitable foundations, and non-profit institutions with a legally recognised status and structured, often externally funded, operations. These actors typically work within an institutional framework and are accountable to public or private funders.

2. Informal, Grassroots and Citizen-Led Initiatives

These are small-scale, community-based efforts, such as neighbourhood solidarity networks, impromptu volunteer groups, or activist collectives. They often operate without formal legal status or funding, are locally rooted, and may be linked to social and political mobilisation or issue-specific causes.

Greek **organisational types** involved in volunteering:

- Somateío / Association (Σωματείο): Classic membership-based associations. Usually operating as local cultural, sports, parents' associations, volunteer groups.
- Club / Syllogos (Σύλλογος): Similar to associations.
- Civil Non-Profit Company / Astikí Mi Kerdoskopikí Etaireía (Αστική Μη Κερδοσκοπική Εταιρεία – ΑΜΚΕ): Very common legal form for NGOs delivering services/projects. Governed by a managing board/partners rather than mass membership.
- Social Cooperative Enterprise (Κοινωνική Συνεταιριστική Επιχείρηση – ΚοινΣΕπ): It has a social-economy legal form under Law 4430/2016. Some do incorporate volunteer roles but the volunteering angle is usually not a main activity.
- Certified Volunteer Civil-Protection Organisations (Εθελοντικές Οργανώσεις Πολιτικής Προστασίας): Volunteers for emergency response.
- Foundation, Public-benefit Foundation (Ίδρυμα / Κοινοφελές Ίδρυμα): Philanthropic entities with assets/endowments. Active in funding and occasionally running volunteer programmes.
- Informal citizen groups / collectives (Ομάδες πολιτών): No legal personality. Active in short term initiatives and usually locally.

[12] Afouxenidis, A. and Gardiki, M. (2014) p.36



Thematic Clusters and Sectors

Volunteering can be concentrated in five broad spheres regarding the field of their operations:

1. Social Welfare, Social Inclusion and Solidarity: Historically has the largest concentration of volunteers in Greece. It includes the support of vulnerable groups through food aid, housing support, social integration programmes, and other various forms of practical support.

Food Bank - Boroume - Humanity Greece

2. Humanitarian aid, Human rights and Migration: Remains a prominent sector post-2015-2017 refugee crisis, and attracts the largest numbers of international volunteers. It includes CSOs for defence of human rights, humanitarian assistance and refugee support.

Solidarity Now - METAdrasi - Babel

3. Environment, Climate Change and Civil Protection: This sector has long led in organised volunteering, as many of Greece's most established NGOs operate within it. Today, the focus has shifted to more than 290 certified civil protection volunteer organisations, which play a key role in the national wildfire response system. As of 2025, government support for this sector has become significantly more active and structured.

ARCHELON - WWF Greece - Greek Society for the Protection of Nature (ΕΕΦΦ) - Local Civil Protection Volunteer Groups

4. Culture, Education and Youth: This sector actively engages young people in civic participation and provides valuable opportunities for skills development. Additionally, hundreds of local cultural associations across Greece organise festivals, manage museums, and run sports events, often relying almost entirely on volunteer support.

Organisations like local municipalities' volunteer networks - ELIX - PRAKSIS

5. Health and Social Care: A legacy network of Red Cross units, volunteer doctors initiatives, municipal social pharmacies and home-care schemes. This sector contributes to community-based health and welfare services.

Médecins du Monde – Greece - Medin



National Network

At national level there is no single recognised peak council or large network for volunteering, there is a Federation for Voluntary Non Governmental Organisations (O.E.M.K.O.E.), but from 2021 its visibility and activities appear limited to almost gone. Some coordination, though not extensive, is provided by several other or thematic associations like:

- **THESSDIKTIO:** A no-formal regional network of CSOs based in Thessaloniki. It exists to strengthen the collaboration between local and regional organisations, with joint initiatives, and promote volunteering.
- **Anna Lindh Foundation - Greek Network:** Its members include CSOs among other entities. It facilitates programmes, with priority given to youth participation, education, and anti-discrimination work, and provides access to regional grants.
- **HIGGS** (Higher Incubator Giving Growth & Sustainability): A hub for NGOs that offers training, mentoring, project support and aims to strengthen the ecosystem through business methodologies.
- **Social Dynamo** (Centre for Volunteer Managers of Greece KEMEA and Hellenic Coaching Association): An informal peer-to-peer hub that has begun offering volunteer-management training and issuing guidelines. Supported by Bodossaki Foundation.
- **Panhellenic Federation of Volunteer Forest Protection and Firefighting Organizations (Π.Ο.Ε.Ο.Δ.Π.):** It is a central coordinating body that brings together volunteer firefighting and forest-protection teams across Greece. The Federation actively engages with government authorities.

Examples of Big Volunteer Organisations in Greece:

Scouts of Greece (ΣΕΠ): The country's oldest and most extensive uniformed youth-volunteering movement, particularly for those under-18, and a legally recognised charitable foundation. Has over 25.000 registered members nationwide. Scout groups are active and popular in many rural municipalities that have no other structured CSO presence.

Hellenic Red Cross: Auxiliary to the State for humanitarian aid, first aid, blood donation, disaster relief, and training on these. Operates three nationwide volunteer corps (Nursing, Social Welfare, Samaritans-Rescuers-Lifeguards) and remains the largest voluntary humanitarian body in Greece. Has a network of more than 80 regional branches and thousands of trained volunteers on continuous standby for emergencies and social-care programmes.



HELMEPA: Initiative from the Greek shipping industry, that primarily coordinates voluntary cleanups and environmental education campaigns, and promotes marine and coastal environmental protection. It has mobilised a wide and diverse volunteer base across Greece (more than 300.000), and engages both maritime professionals and the general public.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Public Institutions

The public sector is not at the heart of volunteering in Greece, but it still plays an important role. Four relevant ministries that show support for volunteering mainly through occasional programmes are the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education. But overall, volunteering state strategies remain fragmented. At the local level some municipalities have set up volunteer registers and offices/centres, or organise occasional volunteering initiatives. Any previous major government projects aiming to organise the voluntary sector, like the public institution “Ergon Politon” and the Hellenic Platform for Development (HPD), failed and dissolved.

Private Philanthropy and CSR

Major foundations, like Stavros Niarchos, Bodossaki, TIMA, A.C. Laskaridis and Onassi have become pivotal to volunteer infrastructure, funding, covering costs, providing digital tools and even training. Corporate volunteering (CSR) is likewise maturing. Greek banks, telecoms and shipping firms now align employee-volunteer days with SDG targets and often partner with NGOs, partly to enhance best practices.

Religious Actors

The Orthodox Church, although it has lost the prominent role it had, it still dominates the charitable sector, through initiatives such as “Apostoli” which coordinates soup kitchens and elderly-care visits.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Greek government does not systematically finance organisations to encourage volunteering. Funding for volunteering in Greece remains dominated by short-term European programmes, supplemented by foundation and private sector philanthropy. Specifically, foundations provide the most reliable domestic means of funding projects. The new national legislative reforms introduce government funding but it is still provided on a “contract grant” basis and long-term public funding is missing. In general, funding is mainly project-based, making consistency and planning challenging.

The THALIS II report (2020) which also analyses CSO's major streams of funding, and similarly our survey, found that there is a diversity between sectors, but overall European/international programmes prevail with public funding and private companies following next. It is important to mention that local administration funding was the lowest.[13]

A recent notable initiative that provided major funding for CSOs was the Active Citizens Fund. It offered grants for promoting civic participation and supported the development of organisations, groups, and the sector's infrastructure. Another possible example is Project PLATO, co-funded by the EU through CERV and coordinated by the Bodossaki Foundation which would focus on promoting human rights and supporting the professionalisation of CSOs and capacity building of the sector.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

Greece continues to have no systematic research by government departments, who have still not paid much attention to volunteering and third sector studies. No national observatory or dedicated statistical mechanism exists. Available data mostly stem from EU level research, Eurobarometer surveys, and from the sector itself.

Despite the Law 4873/2021 introducing reporting obligations for civil society organisations, data collected through the law's framework are not yet synthesised or publicly analysed. Informal volunteering, still widespread in Greece, is especially underreported. Therefore, **no cumulative general data on national level** about the number of volunteers, relevant organisations or other information like total number of hours offered, gender or other statistics exist.

[13] THALIS II (2020) pp. 26-28.



One exception is **THALIS**, a mapping and evaluation service that is run by the University of the Peloponnese together with HIGGS. It has tracked the internal organisation, transparency and effectiveness of more than 700 Greek NGOs, so it represents a very large number. This project aims to improve NGOs' development, credibility and promotion. THALIS runs in rounds (2012-2015, 2018-2020) and registering for the service is up to individual NGOs. The online platform and its ratings are publicly accessible, and it now serves as the country's main credible evidence base, encouraging professional standards and potentially repairing public trust in civil society.[14] Another concrete recent national research was conducted by Bodossaki Foundation-IOBE Institute on the contribution of civil society to the Greek economy in an attempt to highlight the sector's importance. Furthermore, it analysed citizens' current perceptions and actions in relation to CSOs.[15]

Most recent academic research has emerged mainly as a response to the different crises, analysing the impact of volunteers and in parallel offering an insight into the country's developing relationship with volunteering.[16]

8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

There are no specific standards or principles on volunteering widely accepted by the government or the non-profit sector. Again, some of the legal frameworks and public registries have introduced basic obligations for organisations engaging volunteers, including clarity on roles, non-remuneration and safety provisions, but they do not set detailed ethical norms or accreditation systems. Sector feedback from the survey also highlighted that the lack of regulations and frameworks risks the state outsourcing essential public services to civil society without adequate support.

Many of the organisations are chasing the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label and are following its standards, which includes ethical and operational benchmarks for volunteer management. Others follow their own formulated guidelines. THALIS could also be considered a recognisable evaluation tool to benchmark quality standards, as it includes criteria on data-protection policies, procurement rules, online transparency and audited accounts. As seen in previous sections, there is also an emergence of training services for upscaling organisational and volunteer practices (HIGGS, Social Dynamo).

[14] THALIS II (2020) pp. 26-28.

[15] Bodossaki Foundation & IOBE 2023

[16] Parsanoglou D. (2021), Kalogeraki S. (2020), Clarke J. et al. (2015), Sotiropoulos and Bourikos (2014)

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Awareness for opportunities within the general public remains low. Regardless, thanks to digitalisation and promotion of initiatives, exposure to opportunities, especially between the younger generations, has increased. Considerably, much of the attention is concentrated on EU-funded programmes, like the European Solidarity Corps and other Erasmus+ programmes, which actively promote volunteer roles through social media and networks and thus have become very popular among high school and university students. The EU branding also acts as a more attractive destination.

Besides the European programmes, information of opportunities on the national level remains scattered, as there is no centralised national platform for their promotion, some networks do use their own websites. For instance, [skywalker.gr](https://www.skywalker.gr) has created the platform [voluntarywork.gr](https://www.voluntarywork.gr) and HIGGS has [Ethelon.org](https://www.ethelon.org), but both still lack extensive interaction. [Volunteer4Greece](https://www.volunteer4greece.org) used to be a large online network for finding volunteering positions within many organisations, but ceased operation in 2016. This absence might have left a noticeable gap, which could be observed as a correlation to the lower percentage of voluntary participation from 2015 to 2022.[17]

It is still more common for volunteers to make contact with organisations themselves, according to their interests. Employment opportunities are advertised in the conventional way, through an organisation's website and social media. Many of the organisations also implement their own initiatives for promoting opportunities and more generally awareness for volunteering as a concept. The media provide free advertising time to promote voluntary organisations without putting emphasis on the promotion of voluntary work.

One of the most visible efforts to raise awareness and celebrate civic engagement is Greece's largest Festival for Volunteering "[Voluntary Action](https://www.voluntaryaction.gr)". Organised annually in Athens, it brings together a wide range of civil society organisations, public institutions, schools, and citizens, offering an open space for networking, interactive workshops, and sharing information. The festival serves as a key point of exposure for volunteering opportunities.[18]

[17] Eurostat 'Social and Cultural Participation' (2022)

[18] <https://www.voluntaryaction.gr>

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

One notable feature of Greece's recent volunteering landscape is the significant influx of international volunteers, particularly during and after the refugee crisis. Hundreds of foreign individual volunteers, as well as whole organisations affiliated with global humanitarian organisations and solidarity networks. This wave of cross-border volunteering introduced new practices, languages, and approaches, influencing how Greek civil society communicates and cooperates with international actors. The long-term impact is visible in the internationalisation of volunteering norms, like with the use of English as a working language in some CSOs and the recruitment of foreigners even in local CSOs.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 2012, the peak of the economic crisis, the volunteering sector has finally started to get back on its feet and show some concrete progress, like the introduction of some legal frameworks and a rise in public awareness. Despite that, structural challenges persist, particularly regarding coordination, consistency, funding, regional imbalances, and engagement.

In an attempt to strengthen and sustain the volunteering ecosystem, some recommendations are proposed:

Mobilisation of the State: The government is pivotal in supporting the development of volunteering. A stronger, ideally unified, advocacy asking for a more active role from the state, that can push for 1. stable national funding programmes, 2. a concrete strategy for the sector and 3. simplification of procedures on laws and registrations.

Create Widespread Guidelines on National Level: Accessible ethical and quality standards, training and management guidelines specifically for volunteering activities. Review best practices from other countries. Should ideally be developed with government support, however, care should be taken for them to be accessible and avoid being overcomplicated and unreachable in practice for some organisations.



Create a National Network: The absence of a formal, representative volunteering network or council limits coordination across sectors. Establishing such a platform would allow CSOs, local authorities, and public bodies to collaborate, exchange best practices, and advocate collectively for policy and funding priorities. The establishment of such networks has been attempted on many occasions but it has either never had enough numbers or ceased to exist. Could focus on expanding current initiatives.

Promote Awareness and Education: Integrate volunteering into primary and secondary education curriculum. Strengthen the understanding for civic responsibility and offer practical engagement opportunities through service learning.

Conduct Research: The absence of standardised, longitudinal research weakens evidence-based policy and hinders visibility of the sector's real impact. There is growing consensus among stakeholders that Greece needs institutional coordination between government, academia, and civil society to generate reliable data and support informed development of volunteering infrastructure.

Create a Public National Platform for Volunteering: A platform for organisations to advertise volunteering opportunities and for volunteers to find them. It would make searching for opportunities more accessible and organised. It should be publicly managed to ensure transparency, cohesion and continuity.

Update Digital Infrastructure: CSOs and volunteering organisations should invest in modernising their websites and other digital tools. This would help improve visibility, coordination, and even transparency for opportunities and the work of the sector. On that matter, securing funding and training is essential.

Empower Local Municipalities: Local governments should play a more active role in coordinating volunteer initiatives and working with CSOs. Highly important for underserved rural or island areas. Decentralisation could also help with accessibility and managing of funding. It is easier on a more local scale to evaluate and distribute public funding.

Cultivate Public Trust: Gaining public trust is essential for participation and the sustainability of volunteering initiatives. Both the sector and the state should ensure transparency and ethical standards are upheld to strengthen public confidence, while promoting positive narratives about the work and impact of volunteering.

A more concrete study worth considering is the Action Plan for the Civil Society by the Bodossaki Foundation aiming on improving and strengthening the ecosystem in the country, which outlines an inclusive policy design.[19]

[19] Bodossaki Foundation (2024)

+AT A GLANCE

Volunteer participation: ~7% to 24%

Active, structured CSOs: ~750 - 1,000

ESC projects since 2023: more than 154 hosted/coordinated.

Main challenges: fragmentation, low trust, funding instability, regional imbalance.

Top needs: stable funding, national strategy, research and available data, cooperation between sectors.

12. RESOURCES

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