

FACT SHEET ON VOLUNTEERING IN GREECE

General Information



KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC

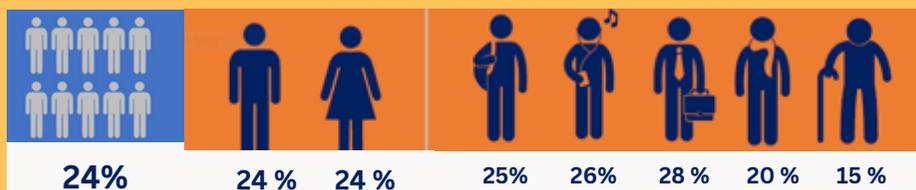
Capital: Athens
Official Language: Greek
Population: 10.4 million (as of 2023)*
Currency: Euro (EUR)
Calling Code: +30

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

GDP per capita in 2024: \$24,752. *
GDP growth in 2024: 2.3%*
Unemployment rate in 2024: 10%*

Statistics and Demographics**

Volunteer experience at least once within the last year (percentage of the total population)



Adults who volunteered at least once within the last year (formally and informally) - 24.0%

- There is no significant difference between the two genders (M: 24% W: 24%)
- For the age group: Highest participation cohort is for 45-54 year olds (28%), and lowest for those above 55 (20%) and 65 years old (15%). Other groups: 17-21 (25%), 25-34 (26%), 35-44 (26%)

Education levels show the most disparity: Post graduate (31%), Undergraduate (30%), Tertiary (26%), High School (21%), Middle School (15%) Primary or no education (12%).

Therefore, participation rises with education and peaks in mid-life.

+Adults who recognise the term “CSO” - 28%

Eurostat reports only a 7% of persons participated in voluntary activities.

Definition of Volunteering**

There is no general official definition of volunteering in Greece. Article 13 of Law 4873/2021 does define voluntary employment as “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.”.

Social Context and Significance of Volunteering

Volunteering in Greece has an important role in fostering solidarity, addressing social needs and being there to support vulnerable groups. It has shown its significance during times of crises, where society mobilised to fill gaps in public services. Notably, volunteers have been pivotal during the refugee crisis and the continuous wildfires. Although volunteer participation remains low and below the EU average, the attitudes towards volunteering have improved and is increasingly seen as a form of civic engagement that can promote active citizenship, collective action and teach skills.

The State Award for Volunteering

There is no recognised State Award for Volunteering. However, while not extensively institutionalised, various state and private initiatives (municipality programmes and foundations) recognise exceptional volunteering efforts through awards and honours.



Motivation for Volunteering**

The majority of people are still motivated to volunteer by a strong **sense of social concern and solidarity** (81%). **Environmental concern** has emerged as a growing driver (38%), especially in response to the visible effects of climate change in the country, such as wildfires and extreme weather. Other motivations include being an **active citizen** (21%), but also the need for **social inclusion** (9%). Notably, there is a rising trend, especially among younger generations, to view volunteering as a form of **career development** that provides valuable experience (13%).

Types of Volunteer Activities****

- Social welfare and solidarity (poverty relief, food, clothing, community exchanges) - 26%
- Education and youth work (free tutoring centres for low-income pupils, youth clubs) - 26%
- Health and medical support (volunteer doctors/nurses staffing social clinics and pharmacies, public-health outreach) - 16%
- Migration and refugee assistance (reception-centre support, language classes, legal accompaniment) - 9%
- Culture (Festival crews, museum guides, cultural-heritage conservation) - 6%
- Human-rights and good-governance advocacy (legal aid, monitoring, awareness campaigns) - 6%
- Environment and civil protection (Clean-up campaigns, tree-planting, conservation, wild-fire response, flood and earthquake aid, search-and-rescue drills) - 5%
- International activities - 3%

*many of the organisations are active in two or more areas.

* Source: World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/country/greece>)

** Source: Boddossaki - IOBE report (n=2000) / <https://civilsocietycontribution.gr/index.html> / Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp19_custom_17724308/default/table

*** Source: Ministry of Interior <https://www.ypes.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/nomos4873-2021.pdf>

**** Source: Thalys II Report <https://greekgnosnavigator.org/language/en/results/>

Measuring the Impact of Volunteering*

Volunteering in Greece delivers substantial benefits across social, personal, and economic dimensions. Socially, it strengthens community trust and plays a vital role in rapid responses to crises and emergencies. On a personal level, volunteers, especially those aged 18-29, report valuable outcomes including skill development, enhanced networking, and improved employability, along with increased civic awareness and overall well-being.

Economically, the 2023 Bodossaki Foundation - IOBE study estimates that civil-society activity contributed €3 billion to Greece's GDP and supported 88,400 full-time equivalent jobs (3.3% of national employment) in 2021. Additionally, CSOs generated over €1 billion in public revenue annually through taxes and social-security contributions. Most importantly, if the services of CSOs were provided by the state instead, it would cost the public double or even triple of what their activity currently contributes.

National E-platform for Volunteering

No such platform currently exists. Different networks or organisations have their own search engines. Overall, the EU Solidarity Corps is the most widely used platform. HIGGS is currently expanding its own platform (ETHELON) with the aim of offering a more centralised database.

Quality Standards in the Field of Volunteering

Officially, there are no nationally accepted quality standards in volunteering. Sector initiatives include the THALIS project, an evaluation mechanism. Moreover, many CSOs, especially youth-focused, pursue the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label, also necessary to access European funding.

Challenges to the Development of Volunteering in Greece

- *Lack of recognition and support from the state:* It creates obstacles for improvement, implementation and sustainability of initiatives.
- *Legislation and bureaucracy:* Needs more work. A lot of matters are not clearly defined creating confusion and stalling implementation.
- *Fragmentation of the sector:* Too many scattered registries remain, there is no national network, and many initiatives are short-term or informal, making coordination and cohesion difficult.
- *Data gaps:* Without clear uniformed data, it is difficult to push for changes and make informed policies.
- *No organisational framework:* Many organisations still do not have clear established structures and organisation charts.
- *Political influence:* Although direct partisan involvement in the sector has declined, perceptions of political ties remain and continue to fuel mistrust and discourage participation.



Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering in Greece**

Greece's legal framework is still lacking and is referring to volunteering more indirectly. The government has no national strategy on volunteering. A recent improvement includes the introduction of **Law on the Protection of Volunteering 4873/2021**, which establishes a concentrated public database, a registry for CSOs and provides a structure on governing CSOs and volunteer engagement. It also includes provisions on state funding and tax benefits. Another scope introduced is that host organisations must register volunteers or expected numbers in the ERGANI information system (Ministry of Labour's tool to oversee employment) and take health-and-safety measures.

Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering in Greece



There are no national public schemes or programmes to support volunteering activities. State financial assistance can be given as project-based grants. A state funding scheme is provided to CSOs registered with the Ministry of Interior according to Law 4873/2021. The sector is largely supported by European grants, private funds and donations.

Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering in Greece

- Government, public, and local administration, which can shape the policies and oversee registries.
- Foundations, such as the Bodossaki and Stavros Niarchos Foundations, play a vital role in strengthening civil society through coordination, research, capacity-building, and financial support.
- The organisations involved shape the sector, especially large volunteer-involving organisations and networks, like the Red Cross contribute expertise and visibility to volunteering efforts.

Trends in the Development of Volunteering in Greece*

With recent legislative reforms and the expansion of European programmes, volunteering in Greece is increasingly shifting towards a more structured and professionalised model. This organisational evolution, supported with digitalisation, has made finding volunteering opportunities more accessible. At the same time, the rise of training programmes for CSOs reflects a growing emphasis on improving management capacity, services and compliance with quality standards. The most popular type of volunteering is for short term projects. There is also an increase in youth, student, and CSR engagement.

Research in the Field of Volunteering****

Research on volunteering in Greece has grown but remains limited and highly fragmented. The most comprehensive research for Greece remains the EU-commissioned GHK country report on volunteering (2010), however, now is largely outdated.

Since then, two large, data-driven national mappings have served as reference points:

- THALIS I-II (2018-20): which evaluated NGOs against effectiveness, organisation and transparency criteria and built the open "Greek NGOs Navigator" database.
- Bodossaki-IOBE study (2023): A primary survey of 2.000 adults and charts on participation, motives and regional patterns supply the most recent statistical picture of citizen volunteering and its economic value in Greece.

In parallel, the Bodossaki Foundation's Action Plan on Civil Society (2024), endorsed by the President, proposes a comprehensive plan for regulatory reforms to support the improvement and functioning of Civil Society.

Academic scholarship has relatively expanded (Koutrou and Kohe 2023; Kaminioti 2020). Many research papers also emerged in response to the numerous crises. No research has been done by the government, besides the UN Voluntary National Review (2022).

* Source: Source: Bodossaki - IOBE report <https://civilsocietycontribution.gr/index.html>

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**** Thalys <https://greeknosnavigator.org/language/en/results/> / Bodossaki-IOBE study <https://civilsocietycontribution.gr/index.html> / Bodossaki Action Plan <https://www.bodossaki.gr/en/our-initiatives/1821-greek-revolution/action-plan-for-civil-society-in-greece/> / UN Greece VNR https://hellenicaid.mfa.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/VNR_2022_Greece_Report.pdf