



EUROPEAN VOLUNTEER CENTRE



2

CHAPTER

S

L

6



O

V



E

N



VOLUNTEERING
INFRASTRUCTURE
IN EUROPE

I

A

AUTHOR
Primož Jamšek,
Slovenska Filantropja





1. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

CONCEPT DEFINITION

In Slovenia there is no clear definition or clearly set understanding of volunteering infrastructure. From an organisational perspective, mechanisms that support volunteering in the country are coordinated and reinforced through the national network of volunteer centres and volunteer organisations, which was set up by Slovenska Filantropija, Združenje za Promocijo Prostovoljstva (Slovene Philanthropy, Association for the Promotion of Volunteering). At the time of the writing of this chapter, the network comprised 809 member organisations gathered under the coordination of the Centre for the Promotion of Voluntary Work, within Slovenska Filantropija.

The role of the centre is to provide support to voluntary organisations and individuals and information to the wider public. The main target audiences are therefore: potential volunteers, individuals who are interested in volunteering and use the centre as a point of information on volunteer opportunities, volunteers who need training, guidance or reinforced support that their host organisations are unable to provide, organisations hosting and needing volunteers, in which case the centre fulfils the supply-demand matching function.

Advocacy for volunteering is also carried out on behalf of the network as is dialogue with major stakeholders. The ultimate goal of the centre's activity is the development of volunteering in Slovenia, with a particular concern to protect the values of volunteering, identify and lead systemic development and carry out promotion, communication to stakeholders and the public.

2. VOLUNTEERING LANDSCAPE

The Law 374 on Volunteering¹, presented to and approved by the Slovenian National Assembly on 3 February 2011, gives the definition of volunteering and voluntary work in Slovenia as follows: *volunteering is an unpaid activity, carried out by free will, for the benefit of others or for public good.*

The law on volunteering also provides a definition of organised voluntary work; it specifies that organised voluntary work be carried out “*within a voluntary organisation, public institutions of for-profit sector if they carry out activities for the common good at least 24 hours per year*”. Organised voluntary work can also take place in social enterprises, which are regulated by the Law on Social Entrepreneurship².

1. 374. Zakon o prostovoljstvu, Uradni list Republike Slovenije Št. 150-01/10-5/77 http://www.uradni-list.si/_pdf/2011/Ur/u2011010.pdf

2. Uradni list Republike Slovenije Št. 003-02-3/2011-14, 2011 – 819. Zakon o socialnem podjetništvu

In the Slovenian context, unpaid activity carried out with the purpose of education, training and preparation needed in order to obtain professional licences or study certificates is not considered volunteering.

However, some aspects of the definition of volunteering are still being debated. One of the largest debates, that took place between civil society and the government, concerned the functions of Board members, not considered volunteers by the government under the argument that their work is regulated by the Law of Associations, and that through their election, they are mandated to pursue a mission and therefore their work is not an act of free will.

The law on volunteering also provides a definition for “voluntary organisation”, a private organisation that works with volunteers and registers itself in a special registrar, and for “long-term voluntary work”, as supposing a minimum 20 hours per week, during at least 6 months.

In Slovenia, there is no precise, accurate data on the number of volunteers. Slovene Philanthropy collected data for the year 2008 from 3226 NGOs from throughout the country. The findings of this survey, which is the one most frequently referenced when speaking about the size of volunteering in the Slovenia, reflected that the surveyed organisations gather 180,000 volunteers, who in average contributed a bit more than 14,500,000 volunteer hours altogether, resulting in an average of 80 hours per volunteer per year. This data cannot be entirely reliable, as it does not take into account the fact that a person can volunteer in more than in one organisation, nor does it capture a significant part of the NGOs, as according to the Government’s records there are around 23,000 associations operating in Slovenia.

In terms of the volunteer profiles, a survey done by Social Protection Institute of the Republic Slovenia³ showed that 58,7 % of volunteers are male. The higher percentage of male volunteers is not depicted in community, social volunteer activities, however, it is believed to be so high due to male majority amongst volunteers in the field of sport and civil protection, which are in fact the areas that gather most volunteers. As for the age distribution, it can generally be stated that the most active part of the population, engaging in volunteering, are youth and elders.

Volunteering is very well perceived in Slovenia. Public opinion, the average citizen would think of volunteering is as well-intended, humanitarian work for people in need. There still lack of knowledge and understanding of volunteering as a form of active citizenship and of voluntary activities in other fields that social service providing. The former political system and social realities of Slovenia before its independence in 1991 was encouraging voluntary activities in a different, more distorted form, supporting some organisations; the social context was also set up in such a way that the government and social solidarity was providing service to the citizens and there was no acute need of relying on each other, nor reciprocity between citizens fostered.

Government nowadays sees volunteering as a resource, but not always in the understanding that voluntary organisations support, but rather as an alternative to service delivery, at better quality, lowers cost and enhanced flexibility. Presidents of the Republic of Slovenia play an important role in the promotion of volunteering. For instance, the former president initiated

Reportedly, in Slovenia there are 180,000 volunteers, who in average contributed 14,500,000 hours altogether, an average of 80 hours per volunteer per year. This data cannot be entirely reliable, given the methodology used.

3. www.irssv.si

a volunteer project for intergenerational, which is run by Slovene Philanthropy. Each year the President hosts a recognition event, inviting 600-800 volunteers from across Slovenia to attend a reception in their honour, and the First Lady is officially taking responsibilities as Ambassador for Volunteering.

According to the monitoring carried out by Slovene Philanthropy in 2011, during the year the number of Slovenians who volunteered increased by 35%, the visits on the Slovenian volunteering web portal⁴ on volunteering, constantly increasing, rose to around 4.500 unique visitors per month and media produced around 40% more features about volunteering in 2011.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Law on Volunteering was voted by the Slovenian National Assembly on 3 February 2011 and published in the Official Gazette and came into effect in March 2011. The process for the development of the law started in 2003, with a first written proposal done by NGOs. This proposal was followed by public discussions and consultations and a first draft was handed over to the government in 2004. The government assigned it the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. In 2008, following negotiation, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration took further the procedures on this law. In 2009 a special unit for NGOs was created within this ministry, which facilitated dialogue and negotiations with and between voluntary organisations. In the beginning of the 2010, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration created a special dialogue forum, a cross-sector group, including ministries and NGO representatives. This group prepared the proposal for a law on volunteering, which went for public consultation in the summer of 2010, when 14 public consultations were held across Slovenia. Amendments to the draft were made, the final discussion on the law took place in January 2011 and the National Assembly adopted it on 3 February 2011.

Some of the most important positive aspects of the law on volunteering are the following:

1. Provides a definition for volunteering, for organised voluntary work, for voluntary organisation and for long-term volunteering.
2. Outlines the basic principles of the organised voluntary work: anti-discrimination rule, protection of minors and users, transnational activities.
3. Defines the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and voluntary organisations
4. Sets as an obligation to have a volunteer agreement, even oral, with some basic elements included.
5. States the need to collect data on volunteers
6. Proposes activities aimed at supporting and recognising the value of volunteering such as national volunteer awards to be granted yearly, voluntary work being recognised as in-kind contribution in project budgets.

Volunteering in civil protection, aimed at disaster and emergency response, falls under special regulations, concerning civil protection, the Law on Protection Against Natural and Other Disasters, adopted in 1994 and amended in 2010⁵. Their activity falls under the Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief, within the Slovenian Ministry of Defence.

The number of Slovenians who volunteered increased by 35%, the visits on the volunteering web portal rose to around 4.500 unique visitors/month and media produced 40% more features about volunteering in 2011.

4. www.prostovoljstvo.org

5. Law Amending the Law on Protection against Natural and Other Disasters

The Law on Volunteering represents an important step for the development of volunteering in Slovenia. As much as the law is not the unique solution to all the challenges, it does give a good framework for volunteering. For example, one of the matters left out is the discussion around taxation. At the moment, according to the law, organisations can reimburse volunteers costs that are incurred in direct relation to having carried out the volunteer activity, such as travel expenses, meals and accommodation, if applicable, as well as compensation for the use of own resources, e.g. pro-rated use of internet at home for volunteering activities done online. The law specifies ceilings for these reimbursements, but nothing is set with regards to taxation nor is there any specific regulation being references, which results in these reimbursements needing to be taxed.

In order for volunteering to be further developed in Slovenia and for all stakeholders to work together towards it, it is necessary to have National Strategy on Volunteering. At the moment there is no strategy set, however a special body is constituted, including government and NGO representatives, which will work together, as equal partners, to develop the strategy. In Slovenia, the governmental body responsible for volunteering is the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, through its Service for NGOs.

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

Slovenska Filantropija, Združenje za Promocijo Prostovoljstva (Slovene Philanthropy, Association for the Promotion of Volunteering) fulfils the role of National Volunteer Centre, runs and informal network of currently 809 voluntary organisations and provides the following services:

- *Direct support to members,*
- *Capacity building on volunteer management,*
- *Training courses,*
- *Information dissemination,*
- *Communication, raising profile and enhancing visibility,*
- *Management of the national database on volunteering placements,*
- *Function of resource centre, in terms of managing volunteers.*



In 2011 Slovenska Filantropija provided 144 training courses, reaching out to 2968 participants and responded to consultations coming from 2475 individuals and organisations.

In Slovenia there are no local volunteer centres, but organisations at local level take up the role of volunteering catalysts, act as focal points locally and coordinate with other volunteer management organisations.

The largest volunteer involving organisation is the Union of Fire Brigades involving at least 100,000 volunteers. Other big volunteer-involving organisations are the Slovenian Red Cross, the Slovenian Tourism Organisation, Caritas Slovenia, the Elderly People's Association, Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth, the National Scout Organisation etc. There are also networks of voluntary organisations, movements or campaigns that gather volunteers or a set of different voluntary activities, under a common slogan or goal, like for instance the *Let's clean Slovenia in one day* Campaign, where voluntary organisations synchronise their actions.

5. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration set up different networks to support the non-profit sector in general, and which therefore have an impact on volunteering:

1. *a horizontal national network for NGOs in general,*
2. *regional resource centres for NGOs,*
3. *thematic, professional networks in different fields, such as culture, environment, amongst which there is a Network on Volunteering, and its support was assigned to Slovene Philanthropy.*

Cooperation between the voluntary sector and the business sector grew stronger in the last two years and fortunately it is going farther than sponsorship or donation. Employee volunteering is getting more and more interesting for companies; multinationals and large Slovenian companies are especially willing to collaborate. For example, in 2011, a company encouraged 300 of its employees to volunteer for an international community engagement campaign titled “*Make a difference day*” and also financially contributed to the project.

Governmental institutions and public authorities in general are expressing their support to the volunteering sector primarily through their participation at the events and through giving recognition to the contributions of volunteers in their public speeches and in events. Some bodies of the public administration, mostly at the local level and less at the national level, do have employee volunteering support mechanisms.



In Slovenia, each pupil between 14 to 18 years has to do an activity of 40 hours/year to complement the formal education process: the activities include voluntary work.

Since 1996, volunteer organisations are actively collaborating with schools. Approximately half of the primary, secondary and high schools in Slovenia are actively involved in volunteering, as organisers of voluntary work and collaborating with volunteer organisations. For instance, a lot of schools organise visits to elderly homes as projects. Schools are also open to collaboration when it comes to organising, facilitating or hosting ‘traditional courses’ such as first aid training delivered by the Red Cross, gatherings and education work through Scout Clubs and providing space for organisations to go into schools and do presentations and volunteering promotion campaigns. The level of collaboration depends usually on the leadership and personnel of the school, interest on the side of the director and the teachers is a pre-condition for a good collaboration.

In Slovenia, each pupil with an average age of 14 to 18 years has to do an activity, informal or non-formal education, including voluntary work, to complement the formal education process. The duration is of 40 hours per year and no specification is made as to what should it be, it can be any activity of their interest, related to sports, additional courses, volunteering, just that a certificate needs to be brought as proof to the school management.

There is a regulation in Slovenia that each high school must provide information on volunteering or have volunteering “on offer” amongst these activities, not necessarily organise volunteering activity but facilitate volunteering, by making information on volunteering opportunities available in schools. With the support of the Ministry of Sport and Education, in 2011, Slovene Philanthropy delivered to 600 school employees a 40 hours training course on how to organise volunteering activities. In fact, it nearly became a kind of competitiveness between schools, with regards to which one offers more interesting volunteering opportunities.

Slovene Philanthropy initiated a project with the national education institute of the Slovenia to develop a proposal for the new optional class for the high-school curricula called “Community service activities” and which aims to provide a lot of information on volunteering. This proposal is under consideration at the moment.

In the cross-sector collaboration, it is usually the volunteering sector approaching public authorities and schools, as opposed to the cooperation with the business sector, where it is more likely companies to contact the volunteer organisations, seeking their expertise to be used in the development of employee volunteering schemes and corporate social responsibility programmes.

6. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration provides funds for volunteering infrastructure, disbursing both funding from the European Social Fund and the national budget dedicated to experimental development projects. The budget for infrastructure from end of 2010 till end of 2012 is 160,000 EUR, whereas the national yearly budget for projects is approximately 100,000 EUR. Voluntary organisations fund their programmes through national and local call for projects of diverse nature, under which costs for the development of voluntary activities are normally also allowed.

There is a significant dependence on public calls for proposals; donations from the private sector and individuals are usually rare because of the fact that sponsorship and donation are not stimulated from the taxation regulations’ point of view. There are many organisations with a budget that consist only from membership fees, in which cases volunteers ultimately suffer as these are organisations that would not afford to reimburse any travel or other costs to the volunteers.

Calls for project proposals usually held at the national and local level for projects lasting one year. The project proposal application cycle is usually as such that for a given year the call ends in the last months of the previous year, and the resolution for the applications is announced in the first trimester of the year of execution. Local calls for proposals follow a variety of time lines. Operational grants do not exist in Slovenia. Most of the calls for proposal have co-funding as a pre-condition and voluntary work is rarely considered as own contribution of the applicant organisation.

7. REGULAR AND SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH

There was no detailed research done of volunteering in Slovenia. Existing research is limited to youth volunteering, to which data collected by Slovene Philanthropy from the network member organisations adds up.

The law on volunteering obliges voluntary organisations to report to the relevant ministry data of volunteers and volunteer hours along with other basic information such as age group, gender etc. Given the fact that the law was adopted in February 2011, the data will be collected for the first time in 2012, having as reference period the second half or a few months of 2011.



8. ETHICS AND QUALITY STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERING

There is a Code of ethics for organised voluntary work, which was developed and adopted by voluntary organisations in 2006. Slovene Philanthropy provides also technical support to the commission developing the Code and published information materials, such as posters and printed versions of the Code, which were distributed to voluntary organisations.

Slovene Philanthropy also published and distributed a toolkit for the involvement of volunteers in organisations, but no toolkit or guidelines on quality standards have been developed.

9. AWARENESS OF VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

In Slovenia, the first web database of voluntary organisations was done in 2004. This first system was providing information about voluntary organisations and their contact persons for volunteering related matters. Organisations having a profile registered in this database could manage part of the content themselves, by publishing news and events. In 2009, the site was revised and re-designed, the web-site provides also information on volunteering opportunities. In 2011, the site⁶ was upgraded with volunteer matching features, so that it now gives the possibility for individuals to register, create a profile as volunteers, set filters and receive prompts of volunteering opportunities of interest.

The promotion of voluntary work in Slovenia is mainly campaign-based. Such activities include the organisation of events with presentations of voluntary organisations, public animation activities and propaganda e.g. posters and other promotional materials displayed public places, T-shirts and gadgets. Promotion and communication strategies also include videos and adverts played in public media, volunteer stories, recognition events etc.

10. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY SPECIFICITIES

All relevant country characteristics have been outlined.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the national level recommendations for the advancement of volunteering in Slovenia were made during a congress of voluntary work, held in Slovenia in December 2011. As per these recommendations, the government should inform all public institutions and ministries about law on volunteering and give the latter an appeal to them to implement the act. It should also foster dialog with local communities and voluntary organisations and encourage local communities to get more involved.

6. www.prostovoljstvo.org

prostovoljstvo.org, the Slovenian volunteer portal, was redesigned to provide more features: matching of volunteers, filtering of activities, volunteering alerts.

Another widely supported recommendation is to include volunteering and service learning into school curricula in Slovenia.

As far as the staff shortcomings in most of voluntary organisations, where there is a huge lack of professional, paid staff, the government should support employment in the volunteering sector, without which the support of volunteers and volunteering development in Slovenia is practically impossible. This personnel carries out operational tasks, such as reporting, provides support to volunteers and ensures quality for the voluntary work.

Government should also simplify project, grant reporting as well as co-financing procedures, so that the volunteer organisations, already short-staffed do not get overburdened with administrative tasks.

On the other hand, voluntary organisations should put more emphasis on qualitative processes, supporting volunteers, taking care of their rights. Voluntary organisations should also fully cooperate between themselves and with other sectors.

We would recommend that at European level, each European Union member states commits to support the implementation of the recommendations formulated by civil society and included in the Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E.)⁷ and overall plan their policies respecting the P.A.V.E. document.

7. http://www.eyv2011.eu/images/stories/pdf/EYV2011Alliance_PAVE_copyfriendly.pdf



Resources

EYV 2011 Alliance, 2011 – *Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe - P.A.V.E.*

Inštitut Republike Slovenije za socialno varstvo www.irssv.si

Prostovoljstvo.org www.prostovoljstvo.org

Republika Slovenija Urad Vlade za Komuniciranje www.ukom.gov.si

Slovenska Filantropija, Združenje za Promocijo Prostovoljstva www.filantropija.org

Uradni list Republike Slovenije www.uradni-list.si

Uradni list Republike Slovenije Št. 150-01/10-5/77, 2011 – 374. *Zakon o prostovoljstvu*

Uradni list Republike Slovenije Št. 003-02-3/2011-14, 2011 – 819. *Zakon o socialnem podjetništvu*