

## NATIONAL REPORT – POLAND

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN POLAND

## 1.1 History and contextual background

The origins of the third sector organisations in Poland can be traced from the ideology of Christian mercy and Catholic Church's activity, which date back to the medieval age. Alongside the Roman Catholic Church, the secular welfare traditions taking form of voluntary interventions of the aristocracy and municipalities to help poor people had also a significant impact on voluntary activity<sup>1</sup>.

From 1795 to 1918, when Poland disappeared from maps as a sovereign state, efforts to alleviate poverty, bolster the national spirit, and preserve Polish culture became important social, cultural and political forces. Despite various restrictions, charitable and philanthropic organisations continued to carry out their role during this period.

From 1918, when Poland regained its independence, voluntary organisations played an important role in shaping national identity and reintegrating Polish society. Apart from levelling the complex legacies of partition, foundations and associations were also vital to Poland's recovery from the 1st World War in terms of material losses. At that time, the legal basis for establishing associations was laid down in the Polish Constitution of 1921 and the Law on Associations of 1932. Approximately ten thousand associations and three thousand foundations were registered by the governmental administration (Ministry of Interior Affairs) in pre-war Poland<sup>2</sup>.

However, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the activities of voluntary organisations were subject to strict political and administrative controls of the communist regime. Many of those that existed before the war were simply dissolved and their property confiscated and nationalized. Also the Catholic Church was subject to repression, and in 1950 was disposed of its charitable function. The only organisations allowed by the authorities were the Polish Red Cross, the Polish Scouts' Association, and the Society of the Friends of Children. Still, they were required to support the same political and welfare objectives as did the communist state.

With the end of the communist rule, Poland has experienced a renaissance of civic voluntary initiatives. In the years between 1992 and 1997, the number of foundations nearly doubled and the number of associations quadrupled. Considering that 90% of the organisations were established after 1989, one can say that the Polish third sector is rather young. At the same time, however, the social legacies of previous regime appeared to be difficult to root out within such short period of time. The general reluctance to become involved in mass membership and for collective action are still perceived as the main obstacles for the development of volunteering in Poland that result from the idea of compulsory collectivism promoted during communism. As Siciński puts it, "*Compulsory work on a voluntary basis in the communist period produced the term 'social activist' which is sometimes considered in a negative way, rather than a positive one*". Voluntary workers' attitudes are not always understood<sup>3</sup>. According to some opinions, nowadays volunteering

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<sup>1</sup> Siciński A. (2001) *Volunteers at the Heart of Culture: Culture, Civil Society and Volunteerism in Europe*. Conference Reader. Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. Available from Internet: <http://www.circle-network.org/activity/newcastle2001/poland.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Leś, E., Nałęcz, S., Wygnański, J. (2001) *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Poland*. Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, no. 36. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Centre for Civil Society Studies.

<sup>3</sup> Siciński A. (2001) *Volunteers at the Heart of Culture: Culture, Civil Society and Volunteerism in Europe*. Conference Reader. Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. Available from Internet: <http://www.circle-network.org/activity/newcastle2001/poland.htm>

in Poland is an incidental phenomenon, which means that in contrast to an enduring engagement it is triggered on special occasions.

In addition, it appears that the attitude of Poles towards NGOs remains rather restricted. As shown by the research, only 54% of respondents agree that voluntary workers can offer something that is cannot provided by paid personnel (in 2003-2005 the share was 80%). Yet, the same research reveals that voluntary organisations are becoming perceived as watchdogs for government activities and as having impact on solving social problems<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.2 Definitions

Volunteering is one of the main components of the Polish Third Sector and is regulated by the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism of 23 April 2003. According to the Act, a volunteer is 'a person who voluntarily, and with no remuneration provides services based on regulations specified in the law' (Art. 2.3). The law further states that the person undertaking the voluntary activity has to be duly qualified and meet the requirements of the benefit that he or she is providing, if other legal provisions would include the need for such qualifications and requirements. Persons who decide to form or join the association as its members are not volunteers as they provide services for the association's benefit<sup>5</sup>.

Other definitions are also used in Poland. The Volunteer Centres network defines a volunteer as 'a natural person who voluntarily and without compensation provides benefits for organisations, institutions, and individuals beyond family and friendship ties'. The Klon/Jawor Association, defines volunteering as 'devoting one's time to unpaid social activity done out of free will for non-governmental organisations, religious and social movements'. The concept of 'volunteer' remains problematic and is often not understood by the general public<sup>6</sup>.

The term 'voluntary organisation' does not exist in Poland. Relevant organisations are referred to as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the non-profit sector /organisations and social organisations. While the first two terms have been recently 'imported' from abroad, the latter term was used in Poland prior to 1989. Its use has dramatically declined due to its negative connotation with the communist era, but recently the term has started losing its pejorative meaning and it refers predominantly to public benefit<sup>7</sup>.

## 1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

### **Total number of volunteers**

According to data from 2007, around 4 million (13.2% of the adult population) Polish adults carried out voluntary activities for an organisation or group<sup>8</sup>.

### **Trend**

Volunteering flourished in Poland from 2001 until 2007. In 2004, around 5.4 million Poles, i.e. 18.3% of the population, were engaged in a voluntary activity compared to 10% in 2001, accounting for an increase of 8.3 percentage points. According to the Klon/Jawor

<sup>4</sup> Baczo, A., Ogrocka, A. (2008) Volunteering, Philanthropy and 1% - research report 2007. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor. Available from Internet: [http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont\\_filant\\_internet.pdf](http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont_filant_internet.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Public Benefit. Available from Internet: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/FAQ,632.html>

<sup>6</sup> The Polish term *wolontariusz* (volunteer) has been used historically to describe either a person who is participating in an unpaid apprenticeship or someone who offers to join the army.

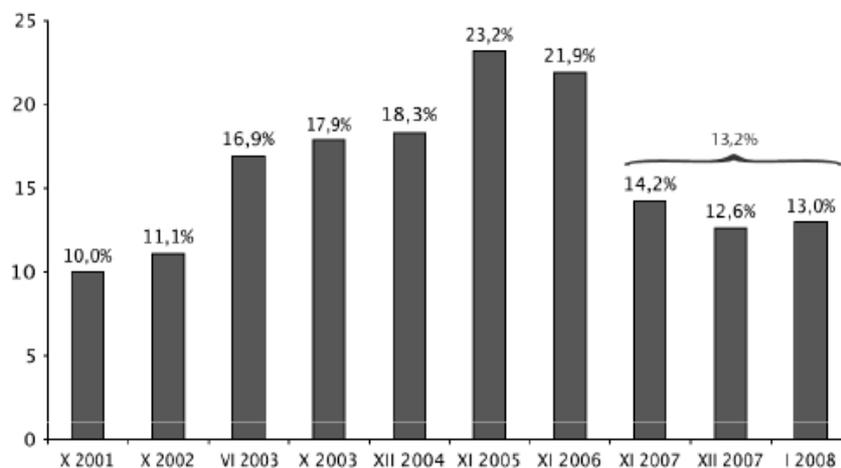
<sup>7</sup> Leś, E., Nałęcz, S., Wygnański, J. (2001) Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Poland. Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, no. 36. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Centre for Civil Society Studies.

<sup>8</sup> The data presented in this part of the report draws on the research carried out by Klon/Jawor Association, which for the sixth time used the same methods and questions to provide comparative data and to enable comparative analysis. It is based on the Omnibus-type research conducted by Millward Brown SMG/KRC. The research covered a representative sample of people (N=1001) in December 2007 and in January 2008. The statistical error of the assessments of the proportions amounts to +/- 1.32% for a result 50% (Klon/Jawor Association 2008).

Association, the main reason for the increase in voluntary engagement was the positive change that was taking place in the way people perceived voluntary activities. People are more aware of volunteering and no longer consider it as compulsory work of a collective nature<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, 41% of the young people under the age of 25 (who constitute the age group most engaged in volunteering) were not working. Therefore, it is possible that volunteering may be considered by some young people as a way to gain professional experience in the social or non-profit sector.

A drastic decrease in the number of volunteers noticed at the end of 2008 triggered a debate on the 'serious crisis' or 'drastic swing' of social activity in Poland. Only 11.3% (about 4 million) of the adult population declared to have devoted their free time to volunteer for others - more than 10 percentage points less than in 2006. One key explanation for this trend is the improving labour market and intensive migration processes. This may have been of particular relevance for young people (as they frequently engage in voluntary work), which could now enter the labour market directly<sup>10</sup>.

**Table 1: Dynamics of volunteering in Poland, 2001 – 2008**



Source: Civicpedia, 2009.

### **Gender**

Men and women show equal levels of involvement in volunteering, with 13.3% of the surveyed men reporting to volunteer in 2007, against a female participation rate of 13.0%.

### **Age groups**

Research confirms that the age group most committed to volunteering are young people below 25 years. It is worth noting that the share of young volunteers tripled between 2001 and 2005, which may suggest that volunteering is perceived as vocational experience gained while studying to enhance the employability of young graduates<sup>11</sup>. However, this differentiation between age groups is slowly changing with more people between 36 and 45 showing high levels of voluntary activity. People aged between 26 and 35 represent the lowest share. This may relate to the lack of a stable personal and professional situation after people have finished university, which makes it difficult to engage in activities which

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Civicpedia (2009) 2008 - Volunteer crisis is still going. Available from Internet: <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/322225;jsessionid=F77C7100AA40A95249E018C2A0CFF732>

<sup>11</sup> Samolyk, E. (2005) Voluntary action in Poland. Facts and figures. Brussels: European Volunteer Centre.

are outside the professional domain. The mass economic migration of young people to other countries can also be an influencing factor<sup>12</sup>.

### ***Geographical spread of volunteering***

In geographical terms, the majority of volunteers come from Eastern and South-Eastern Poland. Whereas in the Eastern part of the country the level of volunteering was usually below the average in previous years, in the South-Eastern part volunteering activity was previously higher. Inhabitants of Southern and South-Western Poland show the lowest engagement in volunteering<sup>13</sup>.

Some estimates also point to large cities and academic agglomerations as determinants of volunteering in the country. This is due to concentration of NGOs, public institutions and corporations in urban areas, which constitute the main infrastructure for volunteering.

### ***Education levels***

Most volunteers are among those with secondary (15.2%) and higher education (19.1%). There has been a significant decrease in the number of individuals with a VET qualification. The number of volunteers with a VET background declined from 18.9% in 2006 to 8.5% in 2007.

### ***Volunteer involvement by sectors***

According to the Polish law, volunteering can take place in a wide range of public benefit areas, ranging from social care to the protection of consumer rights. The most popular organisations where individuals choose to volunteer are those that provide assistance to the poor, religious organisations and movements, organisations and groups working in the area of education and upbringing, the Voluntary Fire Brigade, GOPR (Mountain Voluntary Emergency), and WOPR (Water Voluntary Emergency)<sup>14</sup>.

The statistics show that there has been a decrease in the number of volunteers who have chosen to volunteer for more than one volunteering-involving organisation. For example, in 2007, 40% of volunteers (representing 2% of the Polish population) declared that in the last year they volunteered for more than one organisation. Interestingly, in 2008, the statistics show that only 20% of volunteers (representing 6% of the population) volunteered for more than one organisation.

### ***Profile of volunteers by employment status***

There is very limited information on the profile of volunteers by employment status. However, there are some indications that students and pupils appear to volunteer most. From the total number of students and pupils surveyed, 17.3% reported to volunteer in 2007, whereas only 10% of the unemployed volunteer<sup>15</sup>. However, Klon/Jawor points out that the differences between these groups are diminishing.

### ***Time dedicated to volunteering***

When looking at the time spent by Polish people on volunteering, it appears that the recent drastic decline in the number of volunteers in Poland has been partly compensated by an increasing number of hours spent on volunteering (in 2006, 9.3% of volunteers worked more than 50 hours a year while in 2007 close to 20% provided such time inputs).

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<sup>12</sup> Baczeko, A., Ogrocka, A. (2008) Volunteering, Philanthropy and 1% - research report 2007. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor. Available from Internet: [http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont\\_filant\\_internet.pdf](http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont_filant_internet.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Civicpedia (2009) 2008 - Volunteer crisis is still going. Available from Internet: <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/322225;jsessionid=F77C7100AA40A95249E018C2A0CFF732>

<sup>15</sup> Samolyk, E. (2005) Voluntary action in Poland. Facts and figures. European Volunteer Centre, Brussels.

However, the results of a more recent study (2008) do not confirm this trend. The further reduction in the number of volunteers is not accompanied by an increase in the hours dedicated to volunteering. The group of people who volunteer more than 50 hours a year decreased from 19.8% in 2007 to 16% in 2008<sup>16</sup>.

#### 1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

##### ***Definition of voluntary organisations in Poland***

From a legal point of view, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) was first defined on 23 April 2003 when the new Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism was adopted. Article 3.2 of this law defines NGOs as “*legal entities or entities with no legal personality created on the basis of provisions of laws, including foundations and associations*”<sup>17</sup>. Non-governmental organisations are not bodies of the sector of public finances in the understanding of regulations governing public finances, and operate on a not-for-profit basis.

The legal definition is broad in that NGOs include associations and foundations, as well as all corporate and non-corporate entities not forming part of the public finances sector, not operating for profit, and formed against separate legal provisions. At the same time, provisions of the Act do not apply to: political parties, trade unions or employers’ organisations. This also applies to foundations formed by political parties, State Treasury or local authority associations, except for foundations engaged in academic research or scientific work<sup>18</sup>.

**Table 2: Main features of foundations and associations**

Foundations	Registered associations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Established by founders</li> <li>▪ Have separate assets designated for a given social goal</li> <li>▪ Carry on social goals or goals which are economically useful</li> <li>▪ Non-profit organisations</li> <li>▪ Legal persons</li> <li>▪ Operate under statutes (the statutes is the core document wherein the name of the organisation, its objectives, internal structure are defined, etc)</li> <li>▪ Registered in the National Court Register</li> <li>▪ May carry on business activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Established by its members (a minimum of 15 members is required for an association to be established) who associate freely</li> <li>▪ Organised in a democratic manner (the general meeting is the highest authority)</li> <li>▪ Are non-profit organisations, established for non-profit-generating reasons</li> <li>▪ Legal persons</li> <li>▪ Operate under statutes (the statutes is the core document wherein the name of the organisation, its objectives, internal structure are defined, etc)</li> <li>▪ Registered in the National Court Register</li> <li>▪ May carry on business activities</li> </ul>

In addition, provisions of the Act of law regulate forming public benefit organisations as a qualified type of the NGO. The status of public benefit organisation may be obtained by NGOs (with some limitations concerning foundations of political parties, public foundations, labour unions, etc) if they fulfil certain criteria in relation to the area of activities engaged in by the organisation as well as a number of additional conditions (see Section 3). For instance, aside from being an NGO, an entity applying for the public benefit status should

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The problem arises only when classifying foundations that are established or funded by the state authorities. However, if structurally independent and not under the direct state administration, they are considered as entities of the non-profit sector (Samolyk 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Department of Public Benefit. Available from Internet: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/Law,534.html>

conduct activities in the sphere of public benefit (as defined by the Law) and for the good of the whole society. The authority which decides on granting status is the National Court Register and its branches. The Court examines applications submitted by NGOs with regard to the formal criteria described in the Law.

### ***Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector***

When looking at the fields of activity of voluntary organisations in 2008, the highest share of NGOs was active in the field of sport and leisure (38.3%), culture and arts (12.7%), education and upbringing (12.8%), social welfare and social services (11.2%) and healthcare (7.7%)<sup>19</sup>. NGOs active in the field of health protection, social services and social assistance work most with volunteers. Of these, 60% reported to work with up to 30 volunteers<sup>20</sup>.

### ***Trend***

The main sources for determining the number of NGOs in Poland are the official register of national resources of the national economic entities REGON<sup>21</sup>, the Central Statistical Office and the National Court Register. In December 2007, the REGON register listed<sup>22</sup>:

- 75 281 associations;
- 9 041 foundations;
- 14 173 units of the Catholic Church;
- 1 428 units of other churches and religious organisations;
- 3 804 social organisations not listed separately;
- 19 217 trade union organisations;
- 5 719 self-government organisations of various professions;
- 233 political parties; and
- 324 organisations of employers.

The data collected indicates that out of the 129 220 registered units, most NGOs assume the legal form of associations, foundations, individuals and churches, religious organisations and trade unions, while the smallest group were registered as political parties.

For comparison, the register of associations, other social organisations and unions, foundations, and public health care institutions maintained by the National Court Register included<sup>23</sup>:

- 46 883 registered associations;
- 7 652 foundations;
- 494 craft organisations;
- 3 992 socio-occupational organisations of farmers;

<sup>19</sup> Civicpedia (2008) Types and numbers of organisations. Available from Internet: <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/328111>

<sup>20</sup> Samolyk, E. (2005) Voluntary action in Poland. Facts and figures. European Volunteer Centre, Brussels.

<sup>21</sup> The REGON register, is the responsibility of the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) and provides a list of national economic subjects, created in accordance with article 41.1 in the 29 July 1995 Act on Public Statistics (Dziennik Ustaw N° 88, item 439 with later changes).

<sup>22</sup> Information made available to the Department of Public Benefit Ministry of Labour and Social Policy by the Department of Information Sharing Central Statistical Office.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

- 118 self-government organisations of entrepreneurs;
- 327 business chambers;
- 6 157 trade unions;
- 335 employers' associations;
- 6 156 physical culture and sports associations;
- 76 other social or professional organisations; and
- 332 legal entities and other organisations, which are units of the public benefit.

At the end of 2007, there were 72 522 entities classified by the National Court Register as belonging to the non-governmental sector. The dominating forms of organisation were associations, foundations, physical culture and sports associations. In contrast, the smallest group of registered entities embraced other social or professional organisations and self-governed units of other entrepreneurs<sup>24</sup>.

It is important to note that the number of third sector organisations listed by REGON is higher than those included in the National Court Register. The latter includes also religious and church organisations that have public benefit organisational status. Moreover, there is no obligation to request the removal of an organisation from the REGON register. Hence, some registered organisations no longer exist (estimated between 10% and 30%). At the same time, the register does not account for data on 'informal' ventures, which have no legal personality and which are not registered as local branches. The Klon/Jawor Association's database of NGOs records approximately 16 000 such entities<sup>25</sup>.

The number of NGOs listed in the REGON register in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007, and 2008 has been steadily growing. In April 2004, the non-governmental sector included nearly 109 000 entities. Over the year their number grew by more than 6% to 116,000 in December 2005. Within the following year, an increase of almost 7% was notified and at the end of 2006 there were 123 599 NGOs. Whilst increasing at a slightly lower rate than in previous years, by 2007 number of non-governmental organisation reached 129 220. National Court Register shows a similar trend where the number of registered NGOs increased from 63 744 in December 2005 to 72,522 by the end of 2007<sup>26</sup>.

At the same time, research carried out by Klon/Jawor Association reported a decline in the number of newly established organisations. According to their study, in recent

	April 2004	December 2007	1st quarter of 2008
<b>Associations</b>	45 891	75 281	58 237
<b>Foundations</b>	7 210	9 041	9 106

years the third sector 'grew older', which means that the number of 'young' organisations reduced while the share of the older ones increased. In 2008, 37% of the organisations were less than five years old, compared to about 40% in 2006. About 18% of the associations and foundations exist since more than 15 years, whilst two years ago their share was 15.5%. According to hypothesis provided by the study, a combination of several factors could have had impact on this decline:

- improving labour market conditions;

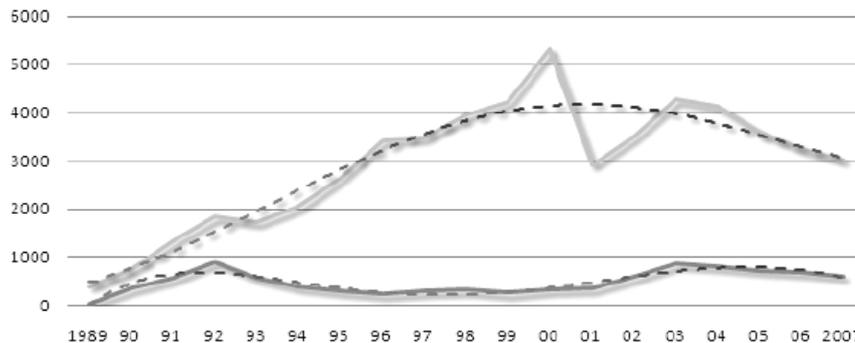
<sup>24</sup> Department of Public Benefit. Available from Internet: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/Badania,i,analizy,-,aktualnosci,1058.html?PHPSESSID=de0e9971292fe638da2045c54e540320>

<sup>25</sup> State of the Art of the Third Sector in Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Poland and Greece. The MOSE Project 'An Innovative Training Model for Social Enterprises Professionals/Qualifications', 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Department of Public Benefit. Available from Internet: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/Badania,i,analizy,-,aktualnosci,1058.html?PHPSESSID=de0e9971292fe638da2045c54e540320>

- decreasing unemployment;
- the enlargement of the European Union and the emigration of young people;
- the development of the NGO sector, raising the standards of its functioning and expectations of donors; and
- declining commitment to social activities in the part of Polish population.

**Figure 1: Annual dynamics of emergence of associations (upper line) and foundations (bottom line), REGON**



Source: Klon/Jawor Association.

Some changes are also visible in terms of volunteers' involvement in various fields of NGOs activity. Since 2003 help for the poor and homeless attracted the highest involvement of voluntary workers. By 2006, 7.8% of volunteers were active in this field. Although the number of participants had declined by 2.5% in 2007, organisations dealing with health protection, social services and social assistance still have the highest share of volunteers.<sup>27</sup>

#### ***Types of organisations engaging volunteers***

In summary, pursuant to the definition, non-governmental organisations are legal persons or entities without legal personality formed under the binding statutory provisions, which are not part of the public finance sector (within the meaning of public finance provisions) and are operating not for profit. By excluding certain entities from the definition of an NGO only two legal forms may be classified as such, namely foundations and associations.

The adoption of such a definition of third sector entities resulted in two approaches as to what the definition encompasses, with the narrow definition listing only foundations and associations and the extensive definition covering the following civic groups:

- Foundations;
- Associations and their unions;
- Federations or unions of associations and foundations;
- Political parties;
- Social organisations operating under separate provisions of law;
- Trade unions;
- Employers' unions;
- Self-government organisations of various professions (trade chambers, guilds and craft organisations);

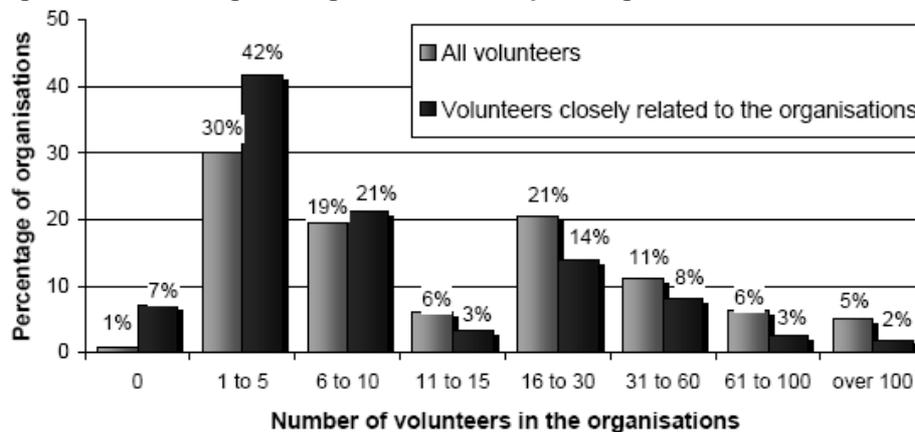
<sup>27</sup> Baczeko, A., Ogrocka, A. (2008) Volunteering, Philanthropy and 1% - research report 2007. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor. Available from Internet: [http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont\\_filant\\_internet.pdf](http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont_filant_internet.pdf)

- Farmers' unions and farmer women's groups;
- Church organisations;
- Other groups such as local community clubs of support groups; and
- Cooperatives (social cooperatives).

The Polish non-profit sector is essentially based on volunteering. As such, it could be argued some of the organisations would not exist without volunteers. Research carried out by Klon/Jawor Association reveals that two thirds of Polish NGOs do not employ any paid personnel. Accordingly, approximately 1 million volunteers supported the activities of 44.4% of Polish NGOs in 2004.

The survey shows that in 2004, NGOs declared cooperation with fewer volunteers than in 2002 (47%). At the same time, the percentage of organisations that declared cooperation with more than 5 volunteers increased by 8%. A further trend to note is that the percentage of organisations that in the last year had more than 60 volunteers decreased by 4%. About 35 % of the NGOs include paid staff<sup>28</sup>.

**Figure 2: Percentage of organisations cooperating with volunteers in 2004**



Source: Klon/Jawor Association (2004) NGOs in Poland - basic facts.

## 1.5 Main voluntary activities

According to 78.8% of NGOs, the main tasks carried out by volunteers are usually of an organisational nature. In half of the organisations volunteers promote the work of the organisation. In one out of four organisations, volunteers play the role of experts. In 41.9% of the organisations, volunteers help in tidying-up activities<sup>29</sup>.

When asked about the nature of their volunteering activity, volunteers reported<sup>30</sup>:

- permanent and regular work for an organisation or an individual – 33.1%;
- occasional actions, one-time help – 28.1%;
- fundraising and collections of donations – 12.4%;
- other answers (not classified) – 18.2%; and
- lack of understating of a term 'volunteering' – 14.9%.

<sup>28</sup> Klon/Jawor Association (2004) NGOs in Poland - basic facts. Available from Internet: [http://www.ngo.pl/files/01english.ngo.pl/public/Basic\\_facts\\_2004.pdf](http://www.ngo.pl/files/01english.ngo.pl/public/Basic_facts_2004.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Baczek, A., Ogrocka, A. (2008) Volunteering, Philanthropy and 1% - research report 2007. Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor. Available from Internet: [http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont\\_filant\\_internet.pdf](http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont_filant_internet.pdf)

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

#### *Main public body responsible for volunteering*

The government and volunteer organisations (national and regional centres) are the main actors engaged in promoting and supporting voluntary work and the idea of volunteering across Poland.

The issues related to public benefit and volunteering are an element of responsibility assigned to the Department of Social Protection within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The competences of this Department have a horizontal character, which means that the relevant minister is responsible for promotion of volunteering in relation to other ministries and entities of public administration. At the same time, this responsibility also includes overseeing the conditions necessary for development of the third sector in Poland and development of volunteering as a phenomenon in general (e.g. in terms of supervision of public benefit organisations, foundations).

On 1 April 2003, the Department of Public Benefit was established by the then Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy as the government body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit Activities and Volunteerism (Journal of Laws No. 96, item. 873). The Department promotes the legislation and initiates legal changes shaping the development of the third sector in Poland. It is also responsible for creating the conditions for the development of NGOs and other entities operating in the public interest and for the development of volunteering. Finally, the Department is responsible for the cooperation between public administration and the third sector<sup>31</sup>.

Other institutions that embrace volunteering within the scope of their responsibilities are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Sport and Tourism (mainly in terms of Poland's preparation for hosting the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship).

#### *Other public bodies involved in volunteering*

In addition, Chapter IV of the Public Benefit Law established the Council on Public Benefit Activities, which serves as an advisory and opinion-forming body to the Minister responsible for social security issues. The Council issues opinions on matters concerning this Act of Law and on governmental draft laws in the field of public benefit and volunteer work. This mandate gives the Council the possibility to influence the creation of new laws, check if an existing law violates the articles and propose amendments to that law.

The Council consists of twenty members appointed by the Minister:

- There are five representatives of the central administration. These include the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- There are five representatives of local government authorities delegated by the local government side of the Joint Central and Local Government Committee.
- There are 10 representatives of NGOs nominated from among candidates proposed by civil society organisations.

In summary, the Council represents an institutionalised form of cooperation between the public administration and NGOs at a national level. Its terms last for a duration of three years and it provides a platform for articulating the interests and concerns of the NGO sector vis-à-vis public authorities in an organised manner and within the parameters of an

<sup>31</sup> Department of Public Benefit. Available from Internet: <http://pozytek.gov.pl/Slowo,wstepne,541.html>

existing legal framework. Though the Council's functions are limited to an advisory and opinion-forming role, it constitutes an important form of institutionalised civic dialogue that complements two existing forms. These include the Socio-Economic Trilateral Commission and the Joint Central and Local Government Committee.

***Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information***

In Poland a number of organisational forms have been created to promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and the exchange of information. Also, many local initiatives and NGOs, together with CARITAS and PCK (the Polish Red Cross) play an important role in supporting volunteering<sup>32</sup>.

*Volunteer Centres Network*

The first centre for volunteering in Poland was established in Warsaw in 1993. The National Volunteer Centre was the only voluntary organisation in Poland and in Central and Eastern Europe at that time. The main incentive for its creation was the enormous growth of the number of NGOs and independent social initiatives after 1989 who sought voluntary assistance to develop their activity. The main aim of the first centre was thus to create 'a contact point' where volunteers and those interested in their work could meet. Since then, several regional and local volunteer centres have emerged in Poland and they are operating within the 'Volunteer Centres Network'<sup>33</sup>. There are now regional volunteer centres and their mission is to support all activities related to the development of volunteering in the country.

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

In order to contribute to the comprehensive development of volunteering in Poland, the volunteer centres should focus their actions on the promotion of voluntary activities, create programs for cooperation with volunteers and lobby for relevant regulations concerning the volunteers' activity. One of the greatest achievements in the volunteer centres network has been its significant contribution to the development of the concept of volunteering in the provision of the Law on Public Benefit Activities and Volunteerism.

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

- carrying out a Job Centre for Volunteers;
- promoting of the idea of volunteering;
- providing training activities in the field of volunteering;
- implement the Thematic Volunteering Programmes;
- assist in creating Volunteer Centres; and
- provide information and advice on volunteering.

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

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<sup>32</sup> Samolyk, E. (2005) Voluntary action in Poland. Facts and figures. European Volunteer Centre, Brussels.

<sup>33</sup> Regional Volunteer Centres in Poland are based in Warsaw, Szczecin, Słupsk, Gdańsk, Elbląg, Lublin, Opole, Łódź, Kielce, Katowice. There were twenty local Volunteer Centres listed on the Volunteer Centre website.

- guiding the direction of the Network activity;
- defining standards of the Network;
- selection and dismissal of the Bureau; and
- agreeing on admission/withdrawal of members.

The ongoing activities of the Network Volunteer Centres are coordinated by the Bureau which currently includes three representatives of the Network elected by the Council. Members of the Bureau (especially the President) are entitled to enforce the provisions of the partnership contract and to represent the Network externally.

Representatives of the network participate in regular meetings during which they raise issues concerning cooperation with organisations and institutions, legal matters along with the extension of Volunteer Centres in the non-governmental and public administration sectors. Representatives also assisted in setting up local Volunteer Centres in the regions. As mentors, they help to organise the new centres, offer advice, and share ideas. They also present the conditions and criteria to be recognised as a Volunteer Centre. Through training provided for coordinators of voluntary work and volunteers themselves, the network prepares both parties to work together for the benefit of society<sup>34</sup>.

According to the data from 2003, 22 people are employed in Volunteer Centres on a full time basis, the majority of which (5 staff members) are based in Warsaw. The volunteer centres are supported by 231 volunteers who help run the organisations. In total, volunteer centres have up to 13 595 registered volunteers<sup>35</sup>.

In the early 2000s, volunteer centres received financial support from the Stefan Batory Foundation, Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Polish Foundation for Children and Youth, European Union – Phare Access 2000, 2001, SFP 2001, European Commission – Youth Programme, MOTT Foundation, PFRON, Kronenberg Foundation, American Embassy, Polish – American Foundation INFRUST Information and Trust in addition to the Polish Ministry of Education and Sport, and local governments<sup>36</sup>.

#### *Network for Support of Non-Governmental Organisations - SPLOT*

SPLOT was founded as a partnership of six organisations in 1994. Since January 2003 the SPLOT Network has been registered as a union of associations. Its goal is to improve the management of NGOs, enabling long-term operation of the organisations, facilitate cooperation between state institutions, local governments and NGOs, and promote the role of NGOs. SPLOT's main activities include the collection and distribution of information, advice and consultation for social service providers.

#### *National Federation of NGOs - OFOP*

OFOP brings together organisations from across the country who carry out activities at local, regional, and national levels in addition to supporting the work of the organisations. Member organisations operate in different areas, making OFOP a unique federation of associations, foundations and agreements. OFOP activities are implemented through:

- promoting legislative changes to improve conditions for the functioning of the third sector;
- strengthening advocacy through consultations within the sector; and

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<sup>34</sup> All information was adapted from the Volunteer Centre website: <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl/strona.php?p=93>

<sup>35</sup> Evaluation of the Volunteer Centres' performance in 2003. February 2004. *Internal document*. Warsaw Volunteer Centre. Cited from Samolyk, E. (2005) Voluntary action in Poland. Facts and figures. European Volunteer Centre, Brussels.

<sup>36</sup> According to the data from 2003 cited in Samolyk, E. (2005) Voluntary action in Poland. Facts and figures. European Volunteer Centre, Brussels.

- partnership and cooperation with other environments.

#### *National Forum Non-Governmental Initiatives – OFIP*

Every three years the Warsaw Association Forum Non-Governmental Initiatives (FIP) organises two-day meeting for the national and foreign NGOs under the name of National Non-Governmental Initiatives Forum. The past five national forums (in 1996, 1999, 2002, 2005 and 2008) were attended by more than five thousand people associated with NGOs. The purpose of these meetings are to discuss key issues and challenges faced by organisations, exchange experiences and network with representatives of public administration, economic sector and the media. Representatives of NGOs also take part in numerous conferences and workshops.

#### *The Regional Information and Support Centre*

The Regional Centre Foundation has been operating since 1993 and is part of the SPLOT network outlined above. Though the regional centre foundation is most prevalent in the Pomorskie Region, its main goal is to support NGO's and social leaders in building the civic society. Among various initiatives, the regional centre foundation provides advice, training and supports partnerships in solving social problems at local levels.

#### *The Responsible Business Forum (FOB)*

Corporate volunteering is still a novelty for Polish companies and remains a domain of international corporations. The issue of volunteering in private organisations is partially addressed by the agenda of Responsible Business Forum (FOB). FOB is the first nongovernmental organisation in Poland to provide in-depth focus on the concept of corporate social responsibility. It was established in Warsaw in 2000 as an initiative of Polish businessmen, academics and NGOs.

#### *The Foundation of Great Orchestra of Christmas Help (WOŚP)*

The Foundation is active in the field of health, which consists of saving lives of sick people, especially children, and promoting the improvement of their health, as well as action to promote health and preventive care. This objective is realized through the Final Collections, purchase of equipment for hospitals throughout Poland, as well as by carrying out four national medical programs and an educational one. Above all, the Foundation is associated with fundraising every January, known as the Final WOŚP. During this time, about one thousand of volunteers enter the streets of Poland to collect donations for a specific, previously specified goal.

#### ***Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks***

Volunteers Centres are participating in the European Voluntary Service action (a part of Youth in Action Programme).

## **2.2 Policies**

The issue of volunteering has been on the political agenda since early 2000s. This is characterised by the consultation on the draft Law and final introduction of the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism.

At the moment, it can be said that whilst there is a positive political discourse concerning volunteering on all levels of governance, it does not constitute a priority on political agenda.

#### ***National strategy/framework for volunteering***

There is no national strategy for volunteering. However, although there is no one official programme that promotes volunteering in Poland, the strategy of support for the development civil society for the years 2007-2013 is of particular relevance.

*Strategy of Support for the Development of Civil Society for the years 2007-2013*

In the absence of a systemic policy towards the civil sector and volunteering more specifically, in 2008 the government accepted the decision to implement the 'Strategy of Support for the Development of the Civil Society for the years 2007-2013'. The document describes contemporary civil society in Poland and highlights general social apathy along with the deep democratic deficit Poland is facing. It further states that low levels of social awareness is characterised by the lack of activity and responsibility for the community. As such, there are low levels of social trust in the state and between public and civic institutions.

The main role of the strategy is therefore to promote the development of civil society. It builds on the Operational Programme Civil Society and has four basic functions:

1. Educational (understood as having an impact on shaping civic awareness and civic attitudes)
2. International (understood as the impact on the relationship between the actors involved in the joint construction of the strategy and implementation of its objectives)
3. Mobilising (defined as a set of substantive content and practical tools inspiring citizens, public authorities, and other environments in the process of developing civil society)
4. Programming (building on the Operational Programme Civil Society and contributing towards the aims of other strategies and operational programs).

One of the main objectives of the strategy is to reach the optimal level of citizens participating in public life and the development of civil society institutions. Responsibility for stimulating the civic activity of citizens is assigned to local self-governments. Their role is to achieve collective agreement in the resolution of social problems and to shape social order based on social bonds, joint activities, invention and initiatives of local communities.

Among the four priorities, the strategy lists:

- Priority I. Active, aware citizens, active local community;
- Priority II. Strong, non-governmental organisations in the right country;
- Priority III. The development of non-governmental organisations for social inclusion;
- Priority IV. The development of social entrepreneurship.

Implementation of the strategy will be financed from the state budget, budgets of local government units, the EU funds (Operational Program Human Capital 2007-2013, Rural Development Program for the period 2007-2013), fund for NGOs under the EEA Financial Mechanism, Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2004 – 2009, and Swiss-Polish Cooperation Program<sup>37</sup>.

### ***National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering***

There are no national targets set for volunteering. There are no reporting arrangements to monitor volunteering activity by a national body either. However, regular studies on volunteer activity are carried out by the Klon/Jawor Association.

### ***International policies***

The Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism was passed by Parliament in 2003 after several years of lobbying between NGOs and public administration and under the pressure of the nearing accession to the EU. The UN designated International Year of Volunteers in 2001 also served to raise the political and legal recognition of volunteers and

<sup>37</sup> Department of Public Benefit. Available from Internet: <http://pozytek.gov.pl>

their social importance. For example, the draft Law was presented by the Minister for Labour on 5th December 2001 (International Volunteer Day). It also triggered a coalition of NGOs to promote volunteering in various environments.

Moreover, the European Year of Volunteering 2011 is considered an opportunity to raise the profile of volunteering and attract economic and political assistance related to the overall concept of volunteering in Poland.

## 2.3 Programmes

### ***Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level***

There are no key national policies/programmes that stimulate volunteering directly; however there are a number of programmes worth mentioning.

#### *Operational Programme Civic Initiatives Fund*

Civic Initiatives Fund (*Fundusz Inicjatyw Obywatelskich*, FIO) is a governmental long-term program, passed by the Ministers' Council and administered to the minister responsible for social care issues (currently by the Minister of Social Policy). It continues the main aims and objectives of the Government Program 2005-2007. FIO is aimed at non-for-profit organisations formed with the purpose of initiating and strengthening civic initiatives and cooperation with NGOs. It is complementary to the current solutions and existing practice in this area.

The main goal of the FIO is to provide financial support to civic initiatives aimed at:

- supporting activities initiated by NGOs in the area of public tasks defined in the article 4 of the public benefit and volunteer work Act of Law;
- supporting cooperation between NGO and public sectors;
- providing financial support to NGO activities to enable the use of the EU funds;
- supporting comprehensive endeavours in the area of civic initiatives, demanding integrated forms of NGO activity; and
- promoting good practice, model solutions in the area of subsidiarity, standards of cooperation and shaping democratic social order.

More specific objectives of the FIO include increased activity and awareness of citizens and local communities along with the development of the third sector and the participation of NGOs in social services - particularly in the field of integration, social inclusion and social protection and finally, in supporting the development of the Polish model of social economy.

The implementation of these objectives will take place in line with five key priorities:

- Priority I. active, aware citizens, active local community (PLN 18 million);
- Priority II. The functioning non-governmental organisations in the functioning country (12 million PLN);
- Priority III. Social integration and activation. Social security (PLN 18 600 million);
- Priority IV. The development of social entrepreneurship (PLN 9 million);
- Priority V. Technical assistance (PLN 2 400 million).

#### *Strategy for volunteering*

This is a nationwide programme run independently by the Volunteer Centres Network. Its main objective is to support volunteering initiatives across Poland, such as establishing local or regional centres for volunteering, providing training for people who manage volunteer centres, facilitating exchange of experiences etc.

### ***Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level***

Most of the programmes that promote and encourage volunteering in Poland are run by the Volunteer Centres. Examples of projects and programmes for voluntary workers carried out by the Centres on the local level include:

- Student volunteering

The main aim of this program is to develop the knowledge and interests of pupils from primary schools and gymnasium in areas with populations of no more than 20 000 people. The programme is run by student volunteers who lead educational workshops in schools and in small towns and villages. Through participation in the programme student volunteers spend their time in an active and creative and can use this experience to transfer knowledge into practice.

This program was established in 2004-2005 by the Volunteer Centre in Warsaw supported by financial assistance from the Polish-American Freedom Foundation. More than 2 700 students were involved in 2 000 educational projects within this undertaking. As a result, approximately 30 000 pupils from 70 colleges benefited from the voluntary work. Since 2006 the programme has been carried out by "KLANZA" association.

- Volunteering in business

It is the first program in Poland, which promotes 'corporate volunteering'. It encourages employee from companies and corporations to engage in volunteering. The main mission of this program is to build a local partnership between business, NGOs, and public institutions. The aim is to actively engage companies in solving problems within their local communities.

- 50 +

This programme was carried out in 2006-2007 and was based on partnership cooperation with Regional Volunteer Centre in Elblag. Its main goal is to promote volunteering among people who are 50 years and over and to develop a model for volunteering for this particular age group.

- Volunteering in hospitals

This initiative promotes volunteers' engagement in children hospitals. Before joining the programme volunteers receive training and vaccinations. At the moment four hospitals participate in this programme.

- Volunteering in Social Assistance Centres (OPSs)

In July 2006, the Association of Volunteer Centre in Warsaw in partnership with the Volunteer Centre in Lublin, and Silesian Forum for Social Organisations KAFOS implemented a project in the Social Assistance Centres. It is co-financed by the European Union within the framework of the European Social Fund. The project is a continuation of the 'Volunteering in OPS in Mazowsze' introduced in 1997 by the Volunteer Centre in Warsaw. The aim of the programme is to broaden the knowledge of social workers in the field of integration of voluntary action into the OPSs for people at risk of social exclusion. This objective will be achieved through a series of training courses, which provide the necessary knowledge and skills: diagnosing the needs of local communities, new methods of social work, the possibility of using volunteers' efforts to those at risk of social exclusion, methods of working with volunteers along with the legal aspects of volunteering. About 30 centres which never cooperated with volunteers will be invited to take a part in this project.

- Colours of volunteering

'Colour of volunteering' is a competition for all volunteers and organisations to select a group of laureates among voluntary workers. Its first edition was in 2001, during the

International Day of Volunteering. Since then, volunteering activity has increased significantly not only in relatively established areas of volunteering (e.g. social care, ecology, education, health system), but also in areas such as administrative work, corporate volunteering, and within the context of specialist areas (e.g. translations or legal advice). Nominations can be awarded to individual volunteers, groups of volunteers or families. The final gala of the contest is broadcasted on public television.

- First Job programme

The final example is the First Job programme led by public authorities. In 2004 young graduates were the group most at risk of unemployment (representing 45% of the population). In order to increase the employment opportunities for young people, an initiative called 'First Job' was launched in Poland in 2002. Voluntary engagement was central to this programme along with offering information, vocational guidance and opportunities for job matching.

The main entities that were to benefit from the services of the 'First Job' volunteers included: non-governmental organisations with regard to their statutory activities (particularly in terms of public benefit activity), public authorities (with the exception of their business activities) and subordinate units of the public authorities. The possibility to use a volunteer work in public administration appeared to be particularly important as some areas of responsibility within the government with high social importance suffer from lack of human resources (particularly skilled staff). As such the programme ended in 2005. Its rather limited popularity is by some attributed to low awareness among Polish youth of the idea of volunteering in early 2000s as well as of possible benefits volunteering can have on their future career prospects.

***Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level***

According to data published in 2006, four out of five support bodies interviewed within the framework of SPES project<sup>38</sup> carried out activities at an international level. The projects addressed the following issues: the establishment of new volunteer centres in Armenia and Russia to answer the needs of local populations; the exchange of experience; training courses; office visits and volunteer exchanges with European countries; youth programmes and the European Voluntary Service (as a part of Youth in Action Programme); collaboration with Kaliningrad, Lithuania, Estonia, the USA, Denmark, Ireland and countries in the Baltic region.

## 3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 General legal framework

***Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering***

The Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism came into force in 2004 as the 'NGO sector Constitution' which regulates the relationship between the public sector and the third sector. Its draft was first presented by a group of Polish associations and foundations in 2001 and again in 2002 following several years of discussion. After a series of amendments, the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism was signed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and submitted to Parliament in 2003.

The Act on Benefit Activity and Volunteerism of 23 April 2003 is the most significant development in the Polish third sector which has had a direct impact on volunteering. It addresses several key issues from an NGO perspective. It defines the status criteria for

<sup>38</sup> Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio (SPES) coordinated the research on volunteering in 10 European countries. In Poland, the support bodies interviewed included: four Volunteer Centres (in Gdańsk, Warsaw, Elbląg, and Dzierżonów) and the RC Foundation.

Polish NGOs and provides a procedural framework for NGO cooperation with public authorities. In addition it introduces a version of the '1% mechanism' which means every citizen has a right to donate 1% of its income tax to a selected NGO. Finally, it sets specific provisions related to voluntary activities and represents a strong foundation for the development of volunteering in Poland.

One of the crucial terms introduced by the Act is the 'public benefit work'. The term is used for any activity in the general public concerning public tasks performed by NGOs, as well as religious unions and local authority associations. It should be noted that the scope of public tasks includes:

- social aid;
- charity work;
- activities aimed at people with disabilities;
- popularization and protection of consumers' rights;
- protection of natural environment and wildlife;
- protection of historic heritage, developing national, civil and cultural identity; and
- activities aimed at ethnic groups.

According to the Law, 'public benefit work' may take form of paid or unpaid activity. Paid public benefit work consists within the framework of tasks considered public, as part of objectives pursued by organisations in their statutory business, for which remuneration is charged.

Paid public benefit work also applies to the sale of products or services offered by the organisation. The provision is expected to guarantee the right to obtain profits by selling goods and services generated by the organisation's members. Paid public benefit work – provided it fits within the limits defined by the Act shall not be subject to provisions of the Act of Law on business activity.

Provisions of the Act of Law also regulate the formation of public benefit organisations. Obtaining public benefit status results in an obligation to fulfil certain criteria. Amongst many, these are in relation to the area of activities the organisation is engaged in.

Public benefit organisations are required to furnish annual financial reports and narrative accounts on activities. These documents are made available to all interested entities.

Other principal laws that apply to non-profit entities include:

- Law on National Court Register of 20 August 1997;
- Law on Assemblies of 5 July 1990;
- Law on Associations of 7 April 1989;
- Law on Foundations of 15 April 1984; and
- Law on Public Funds of 15 March 1933.

### ***Self-regulation in relation to volunteering***

There are no official forms of self-regulation in relation to volunteering in Poland other than those independently introduced by some NGOs. Rather accidentally, the Volunteer Centre in Warsaw adapted the Ethical Card of a Volunteer from the American materials that served as an inspiration for development of the Centre in Poland. Organisations began spontaneously implementing these rules in their work with volunteers. In consequence, it turned into an unofficial document that regulates the relations with voluntary workers.

### 3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

With regards to volunteers, the legal Act includes provisions concerning the legal status of their voluntary activity. The basis of cooperation with a volunteer is an agreement. It defines the scope, the manner, and the timeframe of providing benefits. The agreement contains a clause on allowing for the termination of voluntary work. In case of benefits provided for more than 30 days, the agreement should be prepared in writing. Upon the demand of the volunteer, the beneficiary shall be also obliged to issue a written confirmation and an opinion on benefits provided.

The law also includes a provision for foreign volunteers and volunteering in the framework of an international volunteer exchange. It is worth noting that the promotion and organisation of volunteering is listed as one of the field of action, as well as activities for European integration and the development of relations and cooperation among nations.

Still, despite the wide application of the law, volunteering may still take place outside the law within organisations that do not fulfil the required criteria. Under these circumstances, the general legal framework applies.

#### ***Provisions for specific categories***

Generally, it is recognised that a volunteer is a person who helps others free-of-charge under terms and conditions specified in the Act. Volunteering can be provided everywhere, in any field of life. The following individuals can serve as volunteers:

- the unemployed - they are not deprived of status or social benefits;
- immigrants - they are not required to obtain permission to volunteer in Poland;
- under-age persons - provided, that they have written consent from their supervisors.

Currently, amendments to the Law are being discussed with regard to statutory distinction between performing volunteer work for the association and a member of the association. More specifically, the law would forbid volunteering by members of associations, who would not be allowed to sign volunteering contracts. Such provision demarcates volunteering as having an element of spontaneity, engagement on *ad hoc* basis, and the activity in associations as by its nature based on the permanent organisational structure. The proposed change is sometimes perceived as unjustified and led to a protest of some organisations (e.g. because it privileges volunteers over members of associations)<sup>39</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that when volunteering takes place in specific institutions such as education and care institutions as well as psychological-pedagogical clinics, the specific requirements for volunteers apply, which include majority and non-punishment for crimes.

No specific permission is required for an unemployed person when volunteering. Nevertheless, he/she should notify a relevant Labour Office on undertaking such activity (though it is not a legal obligation). In general, unemployed people are encouraged to volunteer and they are not deprived of their benefits when volunteering as long as they are able to demonstrate they are looking for employment and are available to start work.

#### ***Support schemes and incentives***

From the literature review and interviews it appears that there are no specific incentives for people to volunteer.

The main disadvantage from taking up voluntary activity relates to the benefits being suspended if a person chooses to volunteer abroad. For example, volunteers going abroad for longer than three months lose the right to receive family allowances. To re-start the

<sup>39</sup> Zakład Badań Naukowych Polskiego Towarzystwa Socjologicznego (2008) Diagnosis of operating problems in the public benefit organisations - a test report. PTS Warsaw.

payment, is necessary to submit a new application to the employer when the volunteer has returned. Moreover, young people with an unemployed or student status may lose their health insurance if they volunteer abroad for a long period of time.

Young people, whose parents are divorced, are entitled to a special allowance until they have finished studying. When volunteering, they also lose their allowance. Young people are entitled to receive orphans pension until the start of their studies, however they also lose their benefits if they go abroad as a volunteer for three months or more. It is important to note inconsistencies exist and volunteering and arrangements differ depending on whether the individuals is at school, university or wishing to leave the country to volunteer<sup>40</sup>.

#### ***Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers***

There are two groups of costs related to volunteering. One group is addressed by the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism, which says that an organisation has to cover costs of business travelling (travelling to and from the place of providing benefits, accommodation, meals, and other relevant and documented expenses). Volunteers can resign from this entitlement.

The same law states that an organisation can reimburse the costs borne by a volunteer that are necessary to carry out a volunteering activity, apart from business travelling (e.g. tickets for public transport). Usually, NGOs benefiting from volunteer services reimburse most of the costs that occurred while volunteering. It should be noted that this at the discretion of the hosting organisation.

The costs reimbursed to a volunteer are not considered to be an income and thus they are not taxed. According to the Act on Personal Income Tax, travelling allowance is free from taxation to the amount specified in legal acts and regulations.

The only costs that can be treated as an income (though it is not being practiced) is the liability insurance provided to volunteers by some organisations. This will be addressed in amendments to the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism in order not to be treated as an income for a volunteer.

#### ***Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers***

As described in the AVSO (2005) study, there are no clear legislative provisions concerning taxation of the payments received by the volunteer. This means that it is up to the discretionary decision of the Polish Finance Ministry. Up until now, usual practice has been that pocket money is not taxable; however, the matter is addressed on a case-by-case basis. In addition, host organisations are not obliged to pay social contributions for volunteers.

The NGOs' practise shows that non-financial awards granted to volunteers (e.g. statuettes, books) are not taxed.

### **3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers**

There is no legal obligation for organisations to notify the details of each volunteer to the public authorities / tax offices etc.

Associations, foundations, and other non-profit organisations are subject to the same taxes and to the same public and legal fees as all other legal entities (such as commercial law companies, enterprises, etc.). Therefore, tax benefits are granted not on the basis of an organisation's legal status, but on its pursuit of specific public purposes. Tax exemptions

<sup>40</sup> Musiała, A. (2004) Facilitate voluntary activities – exploring the obstacles to young people's participation in voluntary activities. Research seminar papers on 'How does the voluntary engagement of young people enhance their active citizenship and solidarity?', European Youth Centre, Budapest, 5 – 7 July 2004. Available from Internet: [http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYYP/Youth\\_Policy/docs/Voluntary/booklet\\_of\\_papers.pdf](http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Voluntary/booklet_of_papers.pdf)

apply to all legal personalities, including associations and foundations engaged in scientific and technical research, education, culture, sports and recreation, charity, health care, social welfare activities, vocational and social rehabilitation of the disabled, religious worship, environmental protection, and construction of roads, telecommunication networks and the water supply (Kurczewski, 1997).

The Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism defined a status of public benefit that can be granted to an organisation. The main privilege stemming from this status is the possibility of receiving 1% of income tax, which can be donated by an individual citizen. In addition, the following exemptions apply:

- from income tax;
- from real estate tax;
- from civil law transactions; and
- from treasure and court fees.

However, these are only exempt in relation to public benefit activity carried out by an organisation.

With regards to the taxation rules on income generated by non-profit activities of organisation, non-profit organisations engaged in education, health care, social welfare activities, sports, recreation and culture are exempt from the goods and services tax (VAT). In addition, foundations are exempt from court registration fees while associations are not.

The value of benefits provided by volunteers to legal persons is not considered as taxable income. Thus, legal entities that use such benefits are not obliged to reveal the income generated by volunteering and do not pay income tax. Accordingly, if the beneficiary of volunteered work is a private person or other organisational unit that is not entitled to such benefits in light of the law, the benefits provided by a volunteer are subject to taxation.

Non-profit organisations and other legal entities are also eligible to receive tax deductible donations. This assumes that they are engaged in a range of public activities and that their aims are not financial. In Poland, both individuals and corporations are eligible for tax deductions if the contributions support the following public causes: religious worship, charity, social care, public safety, national security, environmental protection, municipal housing and fire protection units; and scientific, educational, cultural, fitness and sporting activities, health, social welfare, vocational and social rehabilitation of the disabled, construction of roads and telecommunication networks and water supply.

Most of NGOs do not pay a tax from generated income if it is used for their statutory objectives. However, if they carry out an economic activity the income tax has to be paid. Membership fees, donations and financial resources coming from 1% mechanism are not taxed.

### **3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations**

According to Article 42 of the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism, voluntary activities can be performed on behalf of the following beneficiaries:

- NGOs whose statutory goals include the provision of public benefit activities, and who are registered in the National Court Register;
- public authorities (excluding those performing economic activities);
- organisations controlled or supervised by public authorities.

Therefore, private organisations are not permitted to accept volunteers.

In terms of corporate volunteering, apart from the Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering, applicable legal provisions can be found in the Civil Code (23 of April 1964)

and the Labour Code (26 June 1974). In addition, volunteering as such is referred to by a number of specific laws that may also apply to this new phenomenon among Polish business. The most important regulations include<sup>41</sup>:

- the Law of 28 July 1983 on the taxation of windfalls and donations;
- the Act of 7 September 1991 on the system of education;
- the Law of 26 July 1991 on income tax from private persons;
- the Law of 30 August 1991 on the health care premises;
- the Law of 15 February 1992 on income tax from legal persons;
- the Law of 13 October 1998 on the system of social security;
- the Law of 17 December 1998 on pensions from the Social Insurance Fund;
- the Law of 30 October 2002 on the supply by way of accidents and occupational diseases arising in specific circumstances;
- the Law of 12 March 2004 on social assistance;
- the Law of 20 April 2004 on promotion of employment and labour market institutions; and
- the Law of 27 August 2004 on health care benefits funded from public sources, together with executing acts.

### 3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

The beneficiary shall be obliged to guarantee the appropriate personal safety measures determined by the type of benefits provided and related hazards. The beneficiary shall also notify the volunteer of any risk to health and safety stemming from the process of providing benefits, and on the rules of protection against occupational threats and hazards. The beneficiary may cover the costs of health insurance in case that the volunteer is not eligible for health care benefits by any other way<sup>42</sup>.

With respect to health care, it is regulated by Act of 23 January 2003 on common health care insurance in the National Health Fund. In this sense health care is available for Polish nationals residing in Poland and foreigners residing in Poland under a long-term visa with right to work and a permanent or temporally residence card. Foreign students and clergy can be insured freely. Children are automatically covered until they are 18 or up to 26 years if they are full time students<sup>43</sup>.

Volunteers coming from abroad have no coverage in Poland. Therefore volunteers need to pay for any medical treatment and medication. Poland has several agreements concerning urgent medical care with certain countries (e.g. Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria Czech Republic, France, Greece, former Yugoslavia Countries, Luxemburg, Germany, Russia, Slovakia, Hungary, Sweden and United Kingdom)<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Kamosa, P., Dorska, D. (2008) Selected Legal Aspect of Corporate Volunteering. Volunteer Centre Association. Available from Internet: [http://www.wolontariat.biz.pl/var/resources/publications/PORADNIK\\_www.pdf](http://www.wolontariat.biz.pl/var/resources/publications/PORADNIK_www.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Department of Public Benefit. <http://pozytek.gov.pl>

<sup>43</sup> Association of Voluntary Service Organisations AVSO and European Volunteer Centre CEV (2005) Country Report on Legal Status of Volunteers in Poland. CEV & AVSO Project: Legal Status of Volunteers, Brussels. Available from Internet: [http://www.cev.be/data/File/Poland\\_legalstatus.pdf](http://www.cev.be/data/File/Poland_legalstatus.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Association of Voluntary Service Organisations AVSO and European Volunteer Centre CEV (2005) Country Report on Legal Status of Volunteers in Poland. CEV & AVSO Project: Legal Status of Volunteers, Brussels. Available from Internet: [http://www.cev.be/data/File/Poland\\_legalstatus.pdf](http://www.cev.be/data/File/Poland_legalstatus.pdf)

Outside the framework of the Law, the protection of volunteers against risks of accident, illness and third party liability related to their volunteer activity depends on the organisation. If the organisation does not offer insurance, the volunteer should provide it for his or her personal and others security.

A volunteer is also entitled to casualty insurance that should be provided by an organisation benefiting from his/her services when they are provided for a period not longer than 30 days. After 30 days, a volunteer is covered by a national health care insurance system. The Law also allows that a volunteer can exempt the organisations entirely or partially from these obligations.

The liability insurance is not addressed by the Law, which is considered as an important gap, which should be addressed in amendments to the legal framework concerning volunteers. A special legal decree regulates this issue only if volunteering takes place at education and care institutions (*placówki opiekuńczo-wychowawcze*). In such case, the director of the institution must insure a volunteer from personal liability for damages occurred during work.

In the context of corporate volunteering, it is the employer who is responsible for a volunteer (e.g. in terms of providing him/her with insurance).

## 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

### 4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

#### ***National budget allocated to volunteering***

There is no available on the amount of the national budget allocated to volunteering on an annual basis. But over the past years the financial assistance provided to NGOs by local self-governments has been increasing in Poland. Funds transferred by community councils (*gminy*) to NGOs in 2008 were 57% higher than in 2003. At a more local level (towns and cities), the vast part of subsidies is allocated to social welfare. In rural areas sport clubs are the main beneficiaries of such financial assistance representing on average 38% of their income. According to the recent research, financial sources to NGOs during budget year 2006 were provided by 68.4% of community councils<sup>45</sup>.

There is no data available on any tensions between the rules on state aid and the allocation of grants, subsidies and other donations.

#### ***Sources of funding for voluntary organisations***

According to the 2007 Klon/Jawor, sources of funding of NGO activity is as follows:

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

Generally speaking, the average NGO accesses three main sources of income. It is worth highlighting that the growth of public sources (national and international) has increased from 33% in 2005 to 56% in 2007. This growth is largely related to the availability of EU funds. NGOs participate in competition for grants in policy areas related to the labour market, human resources, research and development, science and culture-oriented

<sup>45</sup> Herbst J. (2008) Współpraca organizacji pozarządowych i administracji publicznej w Polsce 2008 – cztery lata po. Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, Warszawa.

components of structural and developmental programmes financed by the EU. In general, the non-governmental sector is to a large extent funded by public money<sup>46</sup>.

In terms of the 1% tax donation discussed above, in 2005 its overall contribution to the third sector amounted to 0.7%. Whilst this contribution has increased over the past four years, by comparison to other countries that have introduced a similar solution, the results are still unsatisfactory.

There are no problems reported that stem from the transparency of funding arrangements. Since the introduction of the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism, almost all public benefit organisations declared that the legal requirements related to reporting have improved transparency and trustworthiness. At the same time, Poland's integration with the EU and ensuing new sources of funding have forced NGOs to keep some standards with regard to professionalism, transparency, financial records etc. to get European funds.

### ***Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)***

There is no information regarding the share of non-profit organisations successfully tendering for the provision of public contracts.

Whereas there is no clear reference to SSGI, according to the latest data organisations that concentrate their activities solely in social services account for 10% (4 500) of the whole third sector. However 15% of organisations declare that one of their main activities is the area of social assistance. In summary, one could deduce that every fourth third sector organisation in Poland operates in social services<sup>47</sup>.

Social assistance in Poland is organised by units of central and local administration in cooperation with organisations such as foundations, associations, the Catholic Church, other churches, religious groups, employers and both individuals of the general public and legal persons. The majority of services are provided by social assistance centres (in municipalities and communes) and district (*powiat*) centres for family support. They are responsible for payment of cash benefits as well as non-financial assistance. Regional social policy centres focus on cooperation with providers and organisers of social assistance (for example NGOs). NGOs provide services such as: shelters for the homeless, homes for single mothers, day-care homes and other support centres, and many others.

The Operational Programme Civic Initiatives Fund aims to increase a share of NGOs and religious organisations carrying out a public benefit activity in realisation of public tasks. However, it appears that NGOs are still not considered as potential partners of public administration providing social services. Moreover, the strategy towards the public social welfare system seems to favour the commercialisation of social services over partnerships between public and non-profit providers in social welfare delivery. According to the research carried out in 2003 by the Institute by Public Affairs, the reluctance among public authorities to contract new or existing social services stems from a range of responsibilities they are obliged to fulfil in this process. For instance, they must specify which of the tasks can be taken over by NGOs; describe the features of the particular service (if new) as well as methods and conditions for its implementation and control. It is also obligatory to prepare a good specification with a range of a particular task and define expected standards of a particular service. Also the procedures and criteria of selection of the best offer remain problematic, as well as the issue of conflict between the price and the quality of a particular service, control and evaluation. It is worth noting that with regard to social assistance there

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<sup>46</sup> Podstawowe dane o finansach sektora (2008), Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor. Zakład Badań Naukowych Polskiego Towarzystwa Socjologicznego (2008) Diagnosis of operating problems in the public benefit organisations - a test report. PTS Warsaw.

<sup>47</sup> Herbst, J (2004) Wewnętrzne zróżnicowanie sektora. Podstawowe fakty o branżach sektora organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce. Pomoc społeczna, usługi socjalne. In: Raport z badania 'Kondycja sektora organizacji pozarządowych w Polsce 2004'.

are no standards for services provided for people in need. The only exceptions are the legally defined amount of financial benefits and the basic norms for functioning of the social assistance centres (Law on Social Assistance).

In general, however, a trend towards gradual commissioning of the provision of public services to non-profit organisations can be noticed.

There is no data available on the share of voluntary labour in SSGIs.

While there is limited data available, according to Klon/Jawor Association survey, the share of Polish population which considers non-profit organisations more efficient in providing assistance than state institution is decreasing. In 2007, 52% of respondents agreed with this opinion, while in 2004 the percentage was 65%. At the same time, however, the number of Polish people who believe NGOs have a role to play in solving problems in local community increased<sup>48</sup>.

The Act on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism (2003) regulates the principles and forms of inter-sector cooperation. It introduced the commissioning of organisations for public sector activity and public benefit organisation as well as extended the category of entities that can offer social services to specific groups and solutions to specific problems. The Law also facilitated the access of certain categories of NGOs to paid implementation of public works and contracting of services. More specifically, it defined the basis for commissioning NGOs for public tasks, and made it possible for NGOs to pursue their own initiatives with respect to tendering for the implementation of such tasks.

There are also new procurement rules that are now being discussed, which address specific situations when public calls for tenders can be omitted. In January 2009, the Council of Ministers adopted a draft law amending the Law on Public Benefit Activity. The draft amendment of the Act provides for facilitating the commissioning of public tasks to NGOs. In cases related to natural disasters, accidents and technical breakdowns it will be possible to derogate from the procedure of open competition for tenders. In accordance with the Act, the Prime Minister will be able to delegate the task to an NGO without an open competition when it is essential for the protection of health or life or significant public interest. In terms of actions on civil protection and rescue, the new rules will also allow the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration to bypass the process regarding specializing associations and the Red Cross. In addition, local authorities will be able to delegate public tasks to NGOs without open competition, where the amount of funding or financing shall not exceed PLN 10 000, and the period of implementation of tasks shall be no longer than 30 days.

Stakeholders did not report any impacts on volunteering stemming from the current rules in relation to SSGI.

## 4.2 Economic value of volunteering

### *Income generated through volunteering*

According to the study carried out by the Johns Hopkins University, in 1997 an estimated 16% of the adult population reported contributing their time to NGOs. This can be translated into employment equivalent to 20 473 full time employees.

In terms of employment levels in NGOs this has increased to 111 460 full-time jobs (paid employees and volunteers), or 1.2% of the total employment in the country. The estimated economic value of volunteering is calculated by multiplying the number of full-time

<sup>48</sup> Available from Internet: [http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont\\_filant\\_internet.pdf](http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont_filant_internet.pdf)

equivalent employees (volunteers) by the average wage in the particular industry. This amounts to US \$150.8 million<sup>49</sup>.

### ***Economic value of volunteering***

According to the VIVA research method, the average ratio of costs to benefits related to the implementation of four programs carried out by the largest public benefit organisations was 1: 2.62. When compared to a study carried out in the UK (based on eight NGOs) where the average ratio was 1: 5.7, it could be assumed the benefit from volunteering is two times smaller in Poland. However, such conclusion offers only a partial illustration of the reality due to the fact there are numerous cases where volunteer activity does not involve any costs and therefore constitutes a full benefit<sup>50</sup>.

### ***Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP***

Volunteer work is considered as NGOs' input and there is no governmental algorithm calculating the income generated through volunteering.

### ***Issues of service substitution and job substitution***

There is no information available on the perceived level of risk that certain volunteering activities are in part replacing services to be provided by the state (service substitution).

With regard to the risk of job substitution, volunteering in Poland has been loosely interpreted as a stage or internship used as an opportunity to gain professional experience. When medical students wish to specialise in a specific medical area, a period of specific training for approximately four years must be completed. Due to limited availability of spaces available for medical students in hospitals, many future doctors perform this period of training for free and are therefore referred to as volunteers. Similar practice occurs in the legal profession where law graduates often spend a period of time volunteering in a court of justice for example. These individuals are also referred to as volunteers<sup>51</sup>.

In general, however, replacing paid employees with volunteers is perceived as existing but marginal problem in Poland.

## **5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING**

### **5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries**

From an individual volunteer perspective, the added value of volunteering enhances social solidarity and shared responsibility for local affairs.

From a community perspective volunteering breaks down the negative tendencies in society and contributes towards building social relations at a micro level (community and family bonds). Volunteering also creates a local network of interpersonal relationships is a way of integrating the local community.

The main benefits from a direct beneficiary's perspective include:

- promoting the organisation in the local community;
- increasing levels of trustworthiness in NGO and public institutions;
- broadening the scope of services provided by the organisation;

<sup>49</sup> Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. 2004. The Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, Maryland. Last updated 10 Mar 2005. Available from Internet: <http://www.jhu.edu/cnp/research.html>

<sup>50</sup> Frieske, K. W. (2006) Economic meaning of volunteering. In Economic side of philanthropy, Expertise for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Warsaw: Institute of Labour and Social Affairs.

<sup>51</sup> Musiała (2004).

- creating new ideas and fresh views on everyday matters;
- benefiting from the motivation and enthusiasm of volunteers; and
- savings on labour costs.

## 5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

A large proportion of the Polish population (60.7%) who participate in volunteering and philanthropy are motivated by their religious, moral, and political views to help others. Other motives reveal a more pragmatic approach towards volunteering. This includes contribution for the reason that it may be reciprocated in the future, for the pleasure of volunteering and helping others, or out of interest<sup>52</sup>.

When divided into age groups, the main inspiration for volunteering differentiates as follows:

- Youth volunteers are more motivated by educational benefits, professional experience, developing their own identity, exploring career pathways and destinations, being engaged in real experiences;
- Middle-aged volunteers are more motivated by factors of self-fulfilment, volunteering as a counter-reaction to stress at work, as an alternative to everyday hardships and as a way to develop/retain an realistic outlook on life;
- Pensioners are motivated by the need to stay active, share experience and knowledge, maintain contact with people and explore new passions and past times.

# 6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## 6.1 Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system

Volunteers' skills and competences are not accredited/recognised within the context of a national educational and training system. Only recently, voluntary experience is becoming recognised and promoted at schools on individual basis.

There is no national strategy to support the recognition of volunteering throughout the different levels of education. Various solutions are implemented independently by schools and universities.

The role of volunteering could be encouraged through various certified courses and/or by awarding credits through the European Credit Transfer System. In some universities volunteering is encouraged as a part of an obligatory internship. There are also pilot programmes being developed by educational institutions that allow volunteering as a choice among non-compulsory courses for students.

## 6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

According to Article 43 of the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism, a volunteer must be qualified and conform to all requirements appropriate in the light of the type and scope of benefits provided (especially when the duty of such qualifications stems from separate legal provisions, e.g. in case of medical services to homeless people). In reality, however, volunteers are not required to hold specific qualifications, professional experience, language or computer skills in order to participate in volunteering activity.

The main (and only) bodies that specialise in providing training for volunteers are the Volunteer Centres in Poland. These centres organise sessions for both volunteers and

<sup>52</sup> Civicpedia. Available from Internet: [http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont\\_filant\\_internet.pdf](http://www.portal.ngo.pl/files/civicpedia.pl/public/raporty/3w-wolont_filant_internet.pdf)

coordinators of volunteering. During the training volunteers are familiarised with the concept of volunteering as well as the functioning of Regional Volunteer Centres. The following issues are usually then discussed:

- definition of volunteering;
- types and forms of volunteer work;
- motivation of volunteers to voluntary work;
- characteristics of volunteer-friendly organisation;
- the Charter of Volunteers, Volunteers Ethical Charter;
- regional activities of the Volunteer Centre and Volunteer Centre Networks;
- legal aspects of voluntary service (in this issue of 'agreement').

Training coordinators are responsible for acquainting people with the relevant principles of volunteering and directing the work of volunteers in the broader context of the organisation and of the Regional Volunteer Centres. Training for coordinators usually includes:

- definition of volunteering;
- types of volunteer work;
- motivation of volunteers to work;
- characteristics of volunteer-friendly organisation;
- recruiting volunteers;
- individual program of volunteering and contract;
- how to reward volunteers;
- legal aspects of voluntary service (in this issue of 'agreement' with a volunteer);
- Volunteers' Ethical Charter.

Individuals who complete the training receive a certificate and are awarded status of 'Coordinator of the volunteers' work'.

## 7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

The involvement of the EU in the third sector is generally accepted among stakeholders.

Through Poland's accession to the EU, third sector social services organisations dealing with employment policy became active social policy agents for long term unemployed clients of public social services<sup>53</sup>. The involvement of the EU in the third sector is generally perceived by its representatives as having a positive influence on the status of the sector.

Action 2 of Youth in Action programme, European Volunteering (EVS), is increasingly popular among Polish volunteers. According to statistical data, the number of EVS volunteers grew from 47 people in 2000 to 1000 in 2009. The most popular countries chosen as destination by volunteers are the UK, Germany, Spain and France. However, a growing interest can be also noticed towards visiting Eastern Europe and Caucasus (e.g. Russia, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia) and Scandinavia.

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted from Krzyszkowski, J. (2008) Third Sector Organisations in Social Services in Poland: Old Problems and New Challenges. Institute of Sociology, Łódź University, Poland.

The programme is directed mainly to youth with lower chances that do not qualify to other European programmes, such as Socrates. The motivation for young volunteers to go abroad is usually their willingness to discover new cultures, to learn a language, to test themselves, etc. Within EVS, they provide their services as social workers, supporting protection of national cultural heritage, at nurseries/social assistance houses, in ecology-related programmes, and in other fields. As for the beneficiaries of their voluntary work (80% of which are NGOs), they underline the value of new ideas, new perspectives, different culture and breaking cultural barriers as main advantages from accepting European volunteers. In addition, the so-called soft competences (e.g. intercultural, social, civil responsibility) that can be developed through European Volunteering are becoming gradually appreciated by some employers (mainly international organisations).

The key challenges observed when implementing the programme in Poland included:

- low preparation of volunteers;
- problems with reaching disadvantaged youth and preferences among beneficiaries to accept more skilled candidates;
- regulation of social insurance for volunteers;
- taxation rules regarding pocket money received by volunteers (it can be taxed);
- lack of special status for foreign volunteers in Poland; and
- short-term enthusiasm on the part of beneficiaries (e.g. discouraged by a necessity to prepare a plan of activities for a volunteer).

The budget assigned to European Volunteering in 2009 was about EUR 2.5 million.

There is no data available on the impact of the EU policies on active citizenship, education and training, the internal market, competition or taxation on volunteering.

With regards to future EU policies, stakeholders feel that it is important to raise awareness about the concept of volunteering, particularly among the societies where this phenomenon/term is perceived as rather new. It is also important to promote partnerships between public institutions and non-governmental organisations.

## **8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING**

### **8.1 Challenges for volunteering**

The greatest obstacle identified by the majority of the NGOs relate to the limitation of financial means at their disposal. Lack of financial resources is also perceived to be a frequent and common problem that impacts greatly on the progress of volunteering and the third sector. In 2005, the revenues of half of all associations and foundations did not exceed PLN 10 000 (EUR 2,350 in October 2009). As a result, the ongoing struggle for funding continues to curtail possibilities for volunteering and narrows the scope of potential activities.

It should however be noted that there exists a group of highly professionalised and financial prosperous organisations within the sector. According to the literature, Poland is facing an 'oligarchization' of the third sector which means that alongside smaller and/or less financially prosperous NGOs, there are large influential organisations that shape the Polish institutional environment according to their interests. These organisations are criticised for their detachment from grassroots and ambivalent linkages with public administration and politicians.

The second most frequently challenge reported by 53.8 % of organisations is the lack of willingness by individuals to work altruistically. Over 50 % of respondents noted the reason

for this social passiveness was to give priority to their own family. Approximately 40 % reported they have not been asked to volunteer.

Other problems encountered by NGOs according to the 2004 survey include<sup>54</sup>:

- overly bureaucratic public administration;
- overly complicated formalities related to benefiting from grants, sponsors and European funds;
- unclear rules of cooperation between the organisations and public administration;
- lack of access to reliable information important for the organisations;
- imperfection or lack of rules regulating the work of the organisations;
- difficulty in keeping good staff and volunteers;
- unfavourable image and lack of trust in NGOs in public opinion and amongst the mass media;
- high taxes;
- lack of cooperation or conflicts among the non-governmental organisations;
- excessive control by public administration; and
- abandoning the mission, for which the organisation had been created.

Future activities in Poland could benefit from:

- Research on the economic value of volunteering to reflect the financial contribution made by volunteers to the national account;
- Tax relief for media who advertise services provided by voluntary organisations;
- Recognising volunteering as job seniority;
- Promotion of volunteering by creation of places/centres which facilitate interaction between volunteers and organisations that need for volunteer;
- Establishing a catalogue of tax relieves for companies and individual persons that support volunteering.

## 8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

The main opportunities for volunteering in Poland relate to the popularity of volunteering amongst young people. Other opportunities and prospects for volunteering include:

- Growing interest in volunteering among local self-governments;
- Creating forms of support for volunteering in local government structures (appointing people responsible for volunteering, funding, promotion);
- Opening up cooperation between volunteers, agencies and local authorities to develop links with hospitals and social assistance centres for example;
- Including volunteering in the school and extracurricular education;
- Volunteering as part of the organisation of sports and cultural events: EURO 2012, Special Olympics);

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<sup>54</sup> Klon/Jawor Association (2004) NGOs in Poland - basic facts. Available from Internet: [www.ngo.pl/files/01english.ngo.pl/public/Basic\\_facts\\_2004.pdf](http://www.ngo.pl/files/01english.ngo.pl/public/Basic_facts_2004.pdf)

- Developing of corporate volunteering; and
- Popularity of European Voluntary Service.

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