



Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe

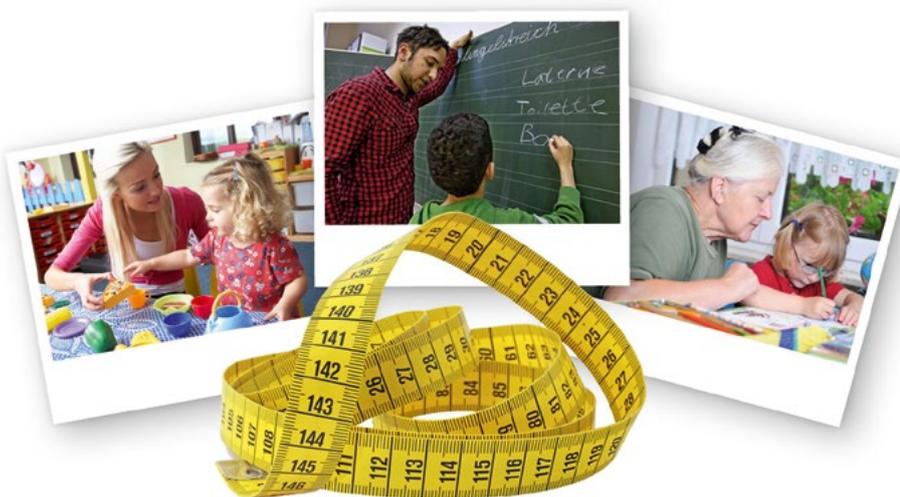
Civic commitment: measuring, assessing and acknowledging the value of volunteer work

Editorial

Volunteer work is a common practice around the world, yet despite its un-
contested achievements, volunteering organisations continue to face chal-
lenges in fully capturing the value of the volunteer workforce. This is often
traced back to the fact that reliable information on the size, scope, distribu-
tion and impact of volunteering is quite scarce, and little comparable data
is available. Under these circumstances, the question of measuring volunteer
work becomes crucial. The main aim of measurement is to assess the true
contribution of volunteer work in order to better enforce decisions that aim
to encourage and manage it. Get an overview about why measuring volun-
teer work is worthwhile, what political initiatives have been started to sup-
port volunteer measurement, especially in the European Union, what tools
and methodologies already exist and finally, how they prove themselves
in practice.

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Volunteering in the European Union: measurement on the agenda

Anke Böckenhoff,
Birgit Sittermann-Brandsen

In the aftermath of the European Year of Volunteering 2011 it was recognized that there is not enough data available for reliable conclusions on volunteering in Europe. There are various national studies but they apply different methods and definitions of volunteering. This complicates direct comparison. One of the differences is that some studies examine formal volunteering whereas others focus on informal volunteering.

The European Year of Volunteering 2011 brought the issue of volunteering to the forefront of European interest, but at the same time it also showed that knowledge about the nature and extent of volunteering in Europe is limited. Although a few countries do carry out national studies on volunteering – for instance the survey on volunteering (Freiwilligensurvey, FWS) in Germany –, individual national studies are difficult to compare, and no reliable statements can be made about volunteering in Europe as a whole due to lack of data. In 2011, therefore, a Communication of the European Commission¹ recommended that Member States should collect statistics on volunteering, for instance on the basis of the Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work published by the International Labour Organization (see the three other articles in this issue for more information).

Measuring volunteering is also on the agenda of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): experts speaking at a public hearing² in June 2013 presented the opportunities and challenges of such statistical efforts. Based on the findings of the hearing, the EESC will soon be publishing an own-initiative opinion on the same topic.

And yet, the concept of measuring volunteering is not entirely new. In Germany, the first survey on volunteering (FWS) was carried out in 1999. Since then there have been two further studies (2004 and 2009). The German Centre of Gerontology (DZA)³ is planning the next survey for 2014. In the last survey (2009), more than 20,000 people were asked about their voluntary activities and about the contexts in which this activity takes place.⁴

Austria is another country that collects statistics on volunteering. In 2012, continuing the work begun in a supplementary survey of the 2006 micro-census, the Institute for Empirical Social Studies (IFES) surveyed some 4,000 people on their formal and informal volunteering, on the extent of their volunteering activity and their motives for volunteering as well as their reasons for not volunteering.⁵ The Austrian study therefore covers a slightly broader range of topics, but at the

The authors

Anke Böckenhoff and Birgit Sittermann-Brandsen work for the cooperation project "Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe". Anke Böckenhoff is a Policy Officer for the German Association for Public and Private Welfare e.V. in Berlin, which is one of the project partners; Birgit Sittermann-Brandsen is employed as a Research Officer at the Institute for Social Work and Social Education e.V. in Frankfurt.

- 1 *EU Commission (2011): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Cross-border Voluntary Activities in the EU. COM(2011) 568 final.*
- 2 *The programme and the presentations of the hearing can also be found online at <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-statistical-tools-volunteering>, last consulted online on 25 September 2013.*
- 3 *Cf. also <http://www.dza.de/en/research/fws.html>, last consulted online on 27 September 2013.*
- 4 *Funded and commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, cf. also (in German) <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Service/Publikationen/publikationen,did=165004.html>, last consulted online on 27 September 2013.*
- 5 *Funded and commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, cf. also <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/index.php?id=CH1074>, last consulted online on 27 September 2013.*

same time its sample is also significantly smaller in size, which considerably complicates any comparison between Austrian and German volunteering activities. There are overlaps, of course – for instance in the scope and extent of volunteering and in the relationship between volunteering and socio-demographic characteristics –, but the equally significant civil society aspect of informal commitment is measured only in the Austrian survey. The term “informal volunteering” refers to support provided to others outside the framework of any organisational structure, e. g. in the context of neighbourly help. The German volunteering survey focuses only on “formal volunteering”, in other words, volunteering in organisations.

These differences between the German and Austrian studies are good examples of the comparability problems involved. The next article offers a more detailed overview of survey methods; more importantly, it presents good reasons why voluntary activity should be measured.

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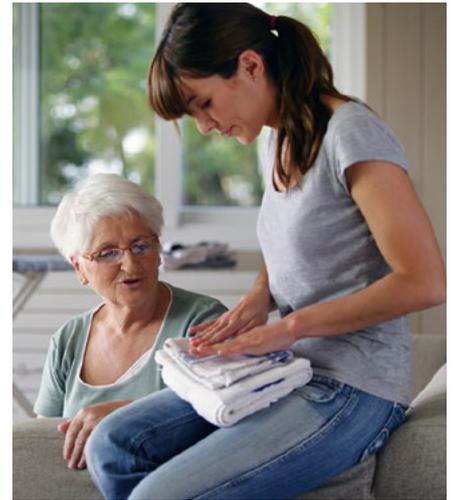
The German Volunteer Survey (FWS)

The German Volunteer Survey (Freiwilligensurvey, FWS) is a representative survey on honorary work, volunteering, and civic engagement, targeted at people aged 14 and over. The study is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ).

Actual volunteer work and the willingness to volunteer are recorded in telephone interviews, the results of which can then be broken down by population groups or regions. The interviews focus on the following topics in particular: volunteering in general, the most time-consuming voluntary work, the context of the commitment, other features of civic activity, and personal characteristics. The German Volunteer Survey thus constitutes the basis for social reporting on volunteering in Germany.

Until now, volunteer surveys have been carried out in 1999, 2004, and 2009. The 2014 survey is currently being prepared. The German Volunteer Survey is managed by the German Centre of Gerontology (DZA). Interviews are carried out by the infas Institute for Applied Social Science (Institut für angewandte Sozialwissenschaft). The questionnaire for the current survey has been extended so as to describe changing and new forms of volunteering as well as differences between persons who volunteer and those who do not. Data from previous surveys and detailed documentation material are available to researchers from the DZA Research Data Centre (FDZ-DZA).⁶

Author: German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth



Neighbourly help is a form of informal volunteering.

⁶ See <http://www.dza.de/en/fdz>, last consulted online on 19 November 2013.

State of the World's Volunteerism Report

Chapter 2: Taking the measure of volunteering

This article is an abridged version of chapter 2 of the first State of the World's Volunteerism Report published by the United Nations Volunteers programme in 2011. The original version of the chapter and the whole report can be found online: <http://www.unv.org/en/swvr2011.html>

Assessing the dimensions and value of volunteerism, including its economic value, is essential. More important are however the advantages the systematic measurement of volunteerism has for the different stakeholders, e. g. the volunteers themselves, organisations that deploy volunteers, or national governments. Despite an increasing number of international and national studies and projects dealing with this issue, there are still considerable challenges.

Why take the measure of volunteerism?

(...) Interest in understanding the scale of volunteerism has grown in recent years, as evidenced by various studies at national, regional and global level. In this chapter, we attempt to take the measure of volunteerism, looking also beyond the numbers. Calculating the dimensions and value of volunteerism, including economic value, is obviously important. Yet numbers are not the whole story. Some argue that putting a figure on volunteering detracts from its intrinsic values in terms of its impact on communities and causes and on the volunteers themselves. Others would say that the main contribution of volunteerism, its true value, lies in creating harmonious societies marked by high levels of social cohesion and well-being, also factors which are very hard to quantify. (...)

It is important for the volunteers themselves that the impact of their actions be recognized. Documenting the time and efforts expended by many millions of volunteers helps to provide recognition and to stimulate the desire to engage. In the process, others may be motivated to participate when they see the contribution of volunteer action and appreciate that volunteering is a normal part of civic engagement.

For volunteer involving organizations, measuring helps them to gain new perspectives on their programmes. Moreover, with facts and figures at hand they can enhance their public relations efforts, increase accountability, expand their options for resource mobilization, and provide volunteers with an overall picture of the sum total of their efforts.



The publisher

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organisation that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide. The programme is based on the idea that volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development, and it benefits both society at large and the individual. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilising volunteers.

On another level, if national governments are to take volunteering into account in national policy, they have to be convinced of its value, including its economic value. Too often, governments are unaware of the extent of volunteering, the different segments of society that it includes, and the value it creates. Once they are convinced of the benefit of factoring volunteerism into decision-making, governments need reliable data to develop appropriate strategies. This ensures that this resource is properly nurtured and harnessed for the overall well-being of the country. (...)

Diverse measures of volunteering

Recent country-level studies, largely in developed countries, of the size and composition of volunteering have proven a solid basis for discussions of many aspects of volunteerism. For example, the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering



and Participating, conducted by Statistics Canada, recorded a total of 2.1 billion volunteer hours with both an increase in the number of volunteers (5.7 per cent) and volunteer hours (4.2 per cent) from 2004 (Hall et al. 2009).

Beyond economic data, there is ever more research into the nature and motivations of volunteers. These include studies that look at student volunteering in 12 countries (Hustinx et al. 2010); senior well-being in Europe (Haski-Leventhal 2009); people in Israel on welfare benefits who volunteer (Cohen 2009); the role of religious organizations in promoting volunteerism in Latin America (Calvo 2008); and volunteerism policies and legislation globally (ICNL 2009). (...)

Pursuing a global measure: highlighting international measuring initiatives

Notwithstanding these positive developments, few countries have taken on the task of systematically and recurrently measuring volunteerism with a view to incorporating results into policy. This is partly due to the absence of internationally recognized standards for defining and measuring volunteering. This limits comparisons between countries based on official statistics. However, a number of independent measuring initiatives are under way which offer a global perspective of volunteerism.

In a recent effort to devise a comprehensive measurement of volunteerism, the **European Commission (EC)** commissioned a **study** as part of the European Year of Volunteers 2011. The aim of the study was to help it to consider ways in which the voluntary sector could be further promoted and to examine how volunteering could help the European Union to achieve its wider strategic objectives

Few countries have taken on the task of systematically and recurrently measuring volunteerism with a view to incorporating results into policy.

(EAC-EA 2010). The intention was to aggregate national data on volunteerism. However, a review of national and regional studies, surveys, reports, and the views of key stakeholders on volunteering in each EU Member State revealed considerable discrepancies. These prevented the drawing up of a statistically accurate comparison across the European Union. Some of the challenges and lessons related to this study are described below as they represent a microcosm of the state of measuring volunteerism.

Complexity of the institutional landscape: responsibility for country data on volunteerism was not coordinated by one public body. Rather, it was managed by different ministries on a “sector-by-sector” basis and sometimes supported by various sector-specific umbrella voluntary organizations. “In practice this means that ministries dealing with issues such as justice, education, finance, sport, health and social affairs, and interior and foreign affairs can all be involved in volunteering and it was not possible within the scope of this study to consult every single ministry” (EAC-EA 2010, p. 41).

Difficulties in comparative quantitative analysis: analyzing quantitative information on the number and profile of volunteers was challenging because national studies were conducted at different times, using different definitions, methodologies, survey samples and target groups, and focusing on different types of volunteering. The finding that an estimated 92 to 94 million adults volunteer in the EU, around 22 per cent of Europeans over 15 years of age, with most volunteers aged 30 to 50 years “should be seen as indicative only” (EAC-EA 2010, p. 43).

Limited statistics on voluntary organizations: many EU countries have a national registry of not-for-profit associations or organizations. This is normally managed by a public body and updated regularly. This is a valuable data source when associations are obliged to register with the relevant public organization. Weaknesses include the fact that databases do not distinguish between associations relying entirely on paid staff and those fully or partly dependent on volunteers and that organizations may not necessarily give notice if they cease activities. A further weakness is that in some countries, registration is not compulsory and voluntary organizations have no incentive to register.

Lack of consensus on economic data: voluntary organizations are developing tools and instruments to monitor the economic value of their volunteers’ contributions. However, national statistical offices vary greatly in terms of data collected and their interest in measuring the economic value of volunteering. Efforts are hampered by the aforementioned difficulties arising from the inconsistency in approaches to quantifying volunteer numbers, time dedicated and activities undertaken. Where calculations have been made, there is usually no consensus on estimated economic value due to differing ways of valuing volunteer work. (...)

Social and cultural impacts of volunteering: national reports highlighted many social, economic and cultural benefits beyond economic value. “However, in practice benefits often vary considerably between countries as well as between different volunteers, local communities and amongst the direct beneficiaries of voluntary activities and services” (EAC-EA 2010, p. 138). (...)

In summarizing the current situation, not only for national studies but also for the measuring of volunteering in general, the Report states: “The extent to which each national report relies on primary and secondary data sources varies, depending on the availability of data and reports, the number of stakeholders that could be consulted and the specific context of each country” (EAC-EA 2010, p. 44).

The methodological challenges encountered by the EC are even more pronounced for the developing world where statistical data are at times less comprehensive. Nevertheless, it remains essential to attempt to reach an understanding of the size and extent of volunteering. We shall refer briefly to four attempts that cover both industrialized and developing countries: the Gallup World Poll, the World Values Survey,¹ the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, and the CIVICUS Civil Society Index. All four employ different measurement approaches and definitions of volunteerism. Unsurprisingly, they produce very different findings.

The Gallup World Poll and the World Values Survey are cross-country population surveys that seek to profile behaviours and opinions of people through nationally representative samples. Given the broad range of topics covered, few questions can relate to volunteering. Additionally, given the diversity of terminology and understanding of volunteerism, certain questions are open to different interpretations by respondents (Salamon et al. 2011). Nevertheless, the surveys have wide global reach and can be regularly repeated to provide longitudinal trends as well as comparative data.

The **Gallup World Poll (GWP)**² (...) found that 16 per cent of adults worldwide volunteered their time to an organization. People in North America, Australia and New Zealand were the most likely to volunteer, followed by those in South-East Asia (specifically Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines) and Africa. The lowest levels of volunteerism were in the Middle East, North Africa and East Asia, i.e. China, Japan and South Korea. (...)

The **World Values Survey (WVS)**³ found that people in East Asia were most likely to report doing “unpaid voluntary work”, followed by people in Africa, North America and the Pacific region. The lowest levels of voluntary work were found in Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The **Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP)**⁴ provides a common survey form to participating countries with suggested questions and examples of the kinds of activity about which respondents would be asked.



The social and cultural impacts of volunteering were highlighted in national reports.

It remains essential to attempt to reach an understanding of the size and extent of volunteering.

- 1 Descriptions of these two studies and their findings are drawn from the unpublished SWVR-background paper “Estimating the scope and magnitude of volunteerism worldwide: A review of multinational data on volunteering,” prepared by Gavelin, Svedberg & Petoff, 2011.
- 2 The GWP surveys representative population samples of at least 1000 people (increased to at least 2000 people in large countries such as China and Russia) aged 15 and older in over 150 countries, covering around 95 per cent of the world’s population, on a range of topics such as business and economics, education and families, environment and energy, government and politics, and citizen engagement. The data are commercially available but can also be accessed for free, by country and variable (see: GWP – Gallup World Poll (2011): Gallup world poll. Retrieved 31 May 2011 from <https://worldview.gallup.com/>).
- 3 The WVS, an offshoot of the European Values Study, is an ongoing longitudinal and cross-cultural survey covering public attitudes and behaviours and undertaken on a five yearly basis. The minimum sample size is 1000 but larger sample sizes are desirable. The WVS employs face-to-face interviews in the interviewees’ own environment. Survey findings are publicly available on the study website (see: WVS – World Value Survey (2011): World Value Survey. Retrieved 29 May 2011 from <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>). The 1999-2004 study was the most recent WVS wave employing a detailed questionnaire on volunteerism.
- 4 The CNP project aimed to document the civil society sector through national studies, to explain differences among countries, and to evaluate the impact of civil society organizations on the wider society. (...)The study was launched in 1992 in an initial set of 12 countries and has since expanded to 45 countries representing a wide range of social, economic, and religious contexts. The CNP collects data on organization-based volunteering through specially commissioned standardized surveys (...).

In (...) [the] 36 [participating] countries, volunteers comprised 44 per cent of the work force of civil society organizations representing the equivalent of 20.8 million full-time workers. Using a “replacement cost” approach, CNP calculated the economic contribution of volunteers in the 36 countries to be 400 billion US dollars annually. This represented, on average, 1.1 per cent of GDP in these countries. However, in developing and transition countries, volunteer work represented a somewhat smaller 0.7 per cent of GDP. In developed countries, volunteer work represented 2.7 per cent of GDP (Salamon 2008). (...)

CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI)⁵ creates 72 indicators on different aspects of civil society. The indicators are then grouped into five dimensions: Civic Engagement, Level of Organization, Practice of Values, Perception of Impact and External Environment. Together they present a comprehensive picture of the strength of a country’s civil society, expressed visually through the Civil Society Diamond. (...)

The CSI findings show interesting regional variations in volunteer participation rates between socially focused CSOs [Editor’s note: Civil Society Organisations] and CSOs with an activist orientation. The percentage of people undertaking voluntary work on a regular basis for socially-focused CSOs is far higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region with Latin America, Eastern Europe and the CIS following. Activism-oriented NGOs also record the highest participation rates in sub-Saharan Africa. However, here Eastern Europe ranks ahead of Latin America, followed by the CIS. (...)

The Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has made a valuable contribution to standardizing measurement of volunteerism by preparing and launching a Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work (ILO 2011). Developed by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, at the request of the ILO, and supported by the United Nations Volunteers programme, the manual outlines a standardized set of measures of volunteering to supplement country labour force surveys. Its main objective is to facilitate estimates of the economic value of volunteer work. (...)

Conclusions and discussions

Volunteer action is found the world over and is huge. Taking the measure of volunteerism, in all its diversity and rich expressions, is occurring in many places and in many different ways. However, it is still at a very early stage and presents considerable challenges. The range of studies mentioned here points to the diversity of issues covered as well as the absence of common approaches. Due to the highly variable definitions, methodologies and purposes among national, regional and global initiatives, it is not yet possible to provide a composite picture of the dimensions of volunteerism by country, region or any other categorization. However, the purpose here is not, in any way, to curtail current and new initiatives aimed at measuring volunteerism. These meet specific needs. They

⁵ The CSI is a participatory action research project aimed at creating a knowledge base and momentum for civil society initiatives. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and other partners collected data from 35 countries between 2008-2011 (see CIVICUS (2011): CIVICUS civil society index: Summary of conceptual framework and research methodology. Retrieved 29 June 2011 from <http://www.CIVICUS.org/csi>). (...)

help to add to the knowledge base on volunteerism. As such, they should be encouraged and supported, especially in the developing world. National studies of volunteerism are of particular importance to “ensure that consideration of the is-



ssues regarding volunteering is based on a sound appreciation and analysis of the parameters, profile and trends of volunteering in the particular country context” (United Nations General Assembly 2002b, p. 5).

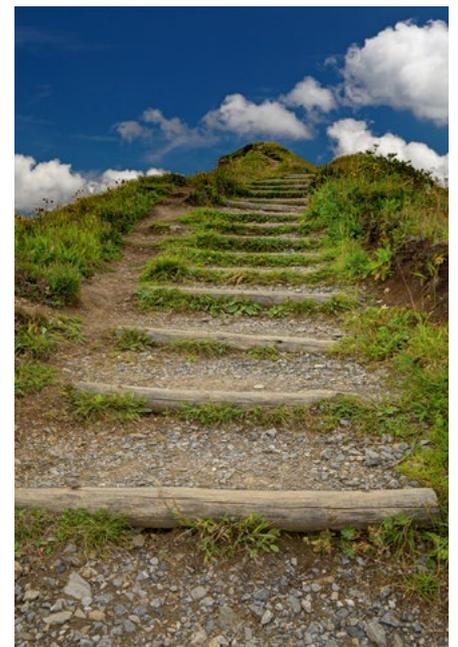
Effective policies to support volunteerism cannot be put in place without understanding its dimensions and profile. Yet national studies are not enough. There is a pressing need to compare and benchmark volunteerism at regional and global levels. Notwithstanding the inconsistency of existing measures, a common approach has to be pursued.

There are concrete steps that can be taken to begin establishing the field of volunteer measurement. Sector-based approaches to involvement in volunteerism by government, civil society and businesses are relevant to ensuring the benefits of volunteerism nationally. However, one public body should be held responsible for coordinating the measuring of volunteering in a country. Globally, these coordinating institutions, along with national, regional and global volunteering stakeholders, need to agree on a minimum standard quantitative data set and methodology for gathering data on volunteers and volunteerism suitable for use in comparative cross-national analysis. Since volunteer involving organizations provide a basic common data source for volunteer measuring, there should be internationally agreed practices for ensuring reliable databases.

Similarly, there is a need for agreed methods for placing a value on volunteerism, such as those proposed in the ILO *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*. Funding sources need to be generated and mechanisms created to encourage research in order to build a knowledge base. Countries should be encouraged to fulfill their commitments in intergovernmental legislation with regard to encouraging and supporting national studies and assessments of the economic value of volunteerism. It is accepted that measuring the contribution of volunteerism in economic terms represents only one piece of a much larger array of benefits that volunteer action brings to communities and societies. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need to move forward with this aspect of the measurement agenda.

Excerpt from:

United Nations Volunteers (2011): State of the World’s Volunteerism Report. Universal Values for Global Well-being. Chapter 2: Taking the measure of volunteering, p. 13–23. Available online at http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2011/SWVR/English/SWVR2011_full.pdf.



Concrete steps can be taken to begin establishing the measurement of volunteering.

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The ILO Manual for volunteer measurement: providing an evidence base for EU volunteering policies

Gabriella Civico

Finding a common approach to the measurement of volunteering across the European Union has become a priority for a number of volunteering stakeholders. The development of the Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its implementation in various countries are some first steps towards achieving this goal. Yet, further efforts are needed in order to increase the comparability of data.

Volunteering creates social and human capital and promotes growth

Volunteering is a crucial renewable resource for social, economic, and environmental problem solving in Europe, particularly in such a period of crisis.

The impact of volunteering can be felt on:

- The volunteers themselves and the society in which they operate especially in terms of quality of life and the employability of the volunteers,
- The beneficiaries of the activities,
- The organisations through which some of the activities are carried out.

The European Year of Volunteering in 2011 (EYV 2011) resulted in a substantial number of policy documents from a variety of stakeholders recognising:

- The role that volunteers and volunteering plays in promoting the values of the EU,
- The contribution of volunteering to the development of social capital and socio-economic cohesion in the European Union.

The lack of comparable data hampers the development of volunteering

Unfortunately, despite its enormous contributions, volunteering is often marginalised in policy circles and public debates. In Europe, despite the important achievements and the impact of EYV 2011 there is still a lack of concrete action to support and develop volunteering in a European dimension.

One reason for this slow progress is the general lack of solid and reliable information on the scope, scale, distribution, and impact of volunteering. Most European countries have no reliable data on:

The author

Gabriella Civico (having a degree in Social Policy and Education as well as a Master's in Education in E-learning) was project manager for the EVY 2011 alliance before becoming the director of the European Volunteer Centre in 2012. The European Volunteer Centre (Centre européen du volontariat, CEV) is the European network of over 80 national, regional, and local volunteer support agencies across Europe.

For further informations:

<http://www.cev.be>

- The amount, character, and impact of volunteering,
- The demographic profile of people who volunteer or their area of activity,
- The differences in volunteer engagement across countries and different regions.

In addition, the existing data is not comparable. Without such data it is impossible to assess the true contribution of volunteer work or to make decisions about how best to encourage and manage it. The lack of comparable data has been identified in the European Commission study on “Volunteering in the EU”¹ as one of the main challenges for the volunteering sector, and raising awareness about the value and importance of volunteering was an objective of the EYV 2011. The lack of comparable data on volunteering was identified as a major challenge in policy documents issued during and after EYV2011 as well as in reports on the implementation of the European Year.



The lack of comparable data has been identified as one of the main challenges for the volunteering sector.

Political support for volunteer measurement

Throughout the past two years, a number of European volunteering stakeholders, such as the EYV2011 Alliance, EU institutions,² and Member States have been calling for a common approach to the measurement of volunteering in Europe. This is necessary “in order to provide a foundation for evidence-based policy making, improved data collection concerning the value and impact of volunteering in Europe”.³ The approach recommended by all the related policy documents in 2011–2012 is the one developed in the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*.

In recent years EU institutions have developed a growing recognition of the importance of measuring the impact of volunteering as well as an appreciation of the value of the methodology described by the ILO Manual as the most effective way to achieve this.

There is however a gap between these policy recommendations and the actual implementation of the ILO Manual. This is largely due to the budgetary pressures on statistical offices at the present time and the inadequate appreciation of the contribution that volunteering makes especially to employment and well-being. CEV and other stakeholders believe that it is time to instigate a systematic and coherent data collection effort in EU Member States that can pave the way towards better understanding of, and support for, volunteering at the EU and national levels.

¹ See the “Study on Volunteering in the European Union” (February 2010) by GHK contracted by the European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf

² Policy documents recommending EU Member States to measure volunteering have been adopted by the European Commission, the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, and the European Economic and Social Committee.

³ European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011 Alliance, *Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe* (P.A.V.E.)

An International Standard for Measuring Volunteering

In 2011, the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued a *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* (ILO Manual) establishing an internationally sanctioned definition of volunteer work and a uniform method for generating regular and reliable data on the amount, character, and composition of volunteer work. Prepared by the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies in cooperation with the ILO and an International Technical Experts Group, with support from United Nations Volunteers, this Manual represents the first-ever internationally sanctioned approach for official statistical agency use in gathering basic data on volunteering that is comparable across countries and capable of providing an indication of the economic value of volunteering in Europe.

A central goal in the development of the ILO Manual work was to integrate the measurement of volunteer work into official national statistical systems. This approach was taken in order to institutionalise the measurement of volunteer work rather than to continue having its measurement dependent on intermittent fund-raising by private research entities.

Five criteria at the core of the ILO Manual that would also encompass the measurement of volunteering impact are:

1. Comparability. In the first place, the Manual was designed to permit the generation of truly comparable data on volunteering across countries and time. This required extensive work to formulate a definition that was broad enough to encompass many different national usages but still precise and understandable enough to differentiate volunteer activity from both paid work and leisure.

2. Feasibility. Comparability is of only limited value if too few countries participate. Accordingly, the preferred approach had to be implementable in the widest possible range of countries. This implied an approach that was sensitive to regional and cultural traditions and differences in language, as well as not beyond the technical or financial capabilities of the broadest set of statistical agencies.

3. Cost-effectiveness. A potential barrier to the use of surveys is cost. Accordingly, cost-effectiveness had to be a prime consideration in designing a recommended approach to measuring volunteer work. Since stand-alone surveys are expensive and time-consuming, this argued for using a supplement to an existing survey platform.

4. Efficiency. Utilising an existing survey platform is only feasible if great care is taken to avoid over-burdening the platform. This called for a strategy of maximising the information gathered with the minimum number of questions, and exercising discipline in the range of topics to be covered.



The fact that surveys incur costs is a potential barrier to the use of them.

5. Reliability and Objectivity. Finally, the chosen approach to measuring volunteer work had to be capable of yielding reliable results. This meant that the definition and indicators used had to be objective and capable of being operationalised and that the survey platform had to have sufficient coverage of the population, a reliably large sample of respondents, and a trustworthy technical content standpoint. Because volunteering occurs in many different settings, including informal person-to-person settings, surveys of individuals rather than of organisations seemed to offer the best hope of reliably capturing the full extent of this phenomenon.

Soon after its release, the ILO Manual gained institutional recognition and was recommended in policy documents issued by European institutions, the United Nations and civil society as the tool to be used by countries to systematically collect comparable data on volunteering. By giving a common definition and a clear measurement methodology, this manual represents an ideal conceptual and analytical platform that can guide the work of statistics offices in gathering data on volunteering.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) also deals with the development of statistical tools for measuring volunteering and other activities of benefit to society. In the “Draft Opinion on the Measurement of Volunteer Work” the EESC makes reference to the ILO Manual and explains that:

“The methodological approach is based on an operational definition of the phenomenon referred to as “volunteer work” in the manual. This is not based on a specific term or terms uniformly used for research in the countries surveyed, but is, rather, a descriptive definition which highlights fundamental features. Volunteer work is defined as actions which:

- a) involve productive work,
- b) are unpaid,
- c) are non-compulsory, and
- d) outside the own household.

The ILO Manual contains many additional explanations, which help resolve any potential doubts over the interpretation of the criteria. Official translations of the Manual are available in French, Spanish, Italian, and Montenegrin.

By adding supplementary questions to the volunteer work module, it is also possible to analyse the motivation of volunteers, reasons for not getting involved in volunteering, etc. Efforts are underway to develop standards for adding these supplementary questions to get at the additional variables”.⁴



Volunteer work means: productive work, which is unpaid, non-compulsory, and outside the own household.

⁴ European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) (not yet published): Draft Opinion on the Measurement of Volunteer Work.

Next Steps

A number of European countries (Poland, Hungary, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Ireland) have already implemented the ILO Manual and others, such as Germany and the UK, are exploring ways to make their already quite systematic data gathering on volunteering comparable with the ILO methodology in order to increase the possibilities for comparable analysis across the EU. The European Parliament is exploring possibilities to implement a Pilot Project on volunteer measurement using the ILO Manual in several European countries. Through the Network of European Foundations (NEF), the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the King Baudouin Foundation have provided financial support to this process.

The next steps for the development of a complete evidence base for volunteering in Europe will involve the elaboration of an agreed methodology for the measurement of the impact of volunteering. CEV together with other volunteering stakeholders will work in more detail on this subject if adequate funding can be identified. The definitions of work currently under review by the ILO to include all non-paid work will also provide additional opportunities to collect further comparable data on volunteering and improve the evidence base for volunteering policies.

For further reading: <http://www.cev.be/policy-advocacy/value-volunteering/>

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The Polish experience with the international methodology of measuring volunteering

Aleksandra Krugly

In 2011 the Polish Central Statistical Office, as the first such institution in the EU, conducted an official survey on volunteering in Poland according to the methodology developed by the Johns Hopkins University and the International Labour Organization and described in the *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*. In addition to the results, one advantage has been the lessons that have been learned during the process of planning and conducting the survey.



The European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 was a time of focused attention on volunteers and their contribution to the society and the economy. The European perspective of that occasion led to comparisons of the situation of volunteering in the then 27 Member States and, in consequence, made the shortage of comparable data clearly visible. A closer look at the methodological side of volunteering measurement at national level showed that there were serious differences in such crucial aspects as the definition of volunteering, the reference period of the questions asked, or the time of year the survey was conducted in.¹

The Polish experience was similar. There were no official or regular data surveys that tried to capture more complex information on the nature of social engagement in Poland. Most research was performed by the voluntary organisations themselves² or by various research institutes, and their results referred mainly to the institutionalised, formal form of volunteering for NGOs or for public or religious institutions.³

The author

Aleksandra Krugly is a chief expert at the Department of Public Benefit at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Poland, which was a national coordinating body of the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship 2011 in Poland. The Department supports the development of non-governmental organisations, social economy and volunteering in Poland. For further informations: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl>

- 1 See the "Study on Volunteering in the European Union" (February 2010) by GHK contracted by the European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf
- 2 More in: Przewłocka (2011) and reports from earlier research on social engagement in Poland by Klon/Jawor Association.
- 3 A collection of research reports from various surveys on non-governmental organisations and volunteering in Poland is available online at <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/>.

Volunteering measurement – international methodology on Polish territory

A great opportunity for a more precise measurement of the social and economic dimensions of volunteering developed from a project run by Johns Hopkins University and the International Labour Organization, which in 2011 published a *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work* (ILO 2011). The publication gave thorough instructions on how to incorporate research on volunteer work into already existing public statistics about the labour force or other household surveys.

The Polish Central Statistical Office (CSO) was the first such institution in the EU Member States that conducted a survey on volunteer work based on the Manual,⁴ adding a separate module to the Labour Force Survey. A pilot survey providing a background for the main measurement was conducted in March 2010, and the main survey took place between January and March 2011.⁵ The Volunteer Workforce Module consisted of 13,460 interviews with respondents aged 15 years and older.

Following the instructions presented in the Manual, Polish statisticians adopted a broad, descriptive definition of volunteering, focusing on non-compulsory activities and work performed without pay in a person's free time and outside their own household for the benefit of others or the environment, either directly or through an organisation or institution (Nałęcz et al. 2012, p. 14; ILO 2011, p. 13). The questionnaire itself was based on the ILO model and referred to the period of the last four weeks before the interview;⁶ however, the form and order of questions was designed to take the Polish cultural context into account. Additionally, the scope of the survey was extended to include a question concerning membership in various organisations. The research covered unpaid work performed both directly (for family, friends, neighbours, strangers, or the environment) and in an organised form (in structures of organisations, institutions, groups, or communities).⁷

Lessons learned⁸

The pioneering survey conducted by the Polish CSO was not only a source of valuable data on volunteering in Poland, but also a practical test of the solutions proposed in the Manual.

Among the most important conclusions to be drawn from the overall research is a need to ensure proper conditions for the interviews, for instance real access to household members (proxy answers given by another household member on behalf of a respondent less frequently indicate involvement in unpaid work than direct answers) and proper motivation of both respondents and interviewers, who are often overloaded with a lot of surveys conducted at the same time. Another crucial condition for gathering reliable data is the construction of the questionnaire, which should be adjusted to the cultural background of the surveyed

- 4 It is important to note that as the Polish volunteer survey had been prepared in the initial phase of the ILO methodology development, there are some significant differences between its shape and the structure recommended in the current version of the Manual. Nevertheless, the results are still comparable.
- 5 Both the methodology and results of the Polish survey are presented here according to the final report by the CSO (Nałęcz et al. 2012). Parts of the publication, including tables, are translated into English.
- 6 In the case of unpaid work for organisations/institutions, there was a separate question referring to the last calendar year (Nałęcz et al. 2012, p.19).
- 7 Apart from the implementation of the ILO Manual in the public statistics, it is worth mentioning that the same methodology was also applied in a smaller-scale survey of the Social Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) carried out in April 2011. The questions asked were almost the same as in the CSO's Volunteer Workforce Module, and the results were very similar. See: <http://erw2011.gov.pl/static/upload/komunikat-2.pdf>, <http://erw2011.gov.pl/static/upload/komunikat-1.pdf>. CBOS also conducted a similar survey in 2012.
- 8 A thorough presentation of the major lessons learned from the whole process of planning and conducting the CSO's Volunteer Work Module was given by Mr. Sławomir Nałęcz, PhD, co-author of the final research report, in Rome on 19 April 2012 during a Technical Workshop on ILO Manual implementation: <http://evmp.eu/2012/06/26/phase-1-wrap-up-conference-2/>, last consulted online on 22 October 2013. The source of the presentation: <http://evmp.eu/wp-content/uploads/Lessons-Podgorica-GUSISP.pdf>

population. The questions should contain descriptive definitions supported by examples, and their sequence should take into account respondents' cognitive abilities, starting from more familiar elements and progressing to less frequently encountered forms of unpaid work.

Overview of the results

Data collected during the Volunteer Workforce Module 2011 survey analysed together with the results of Social Cohesion Survey 2011 gathered in the same period drew a detailed picture of volunteering in Poland. The reference period was the four weeks before the interview. During this time, Poles were moderately active in helping others, most often



Among young people in Poland, institutionalised support was more popular than informal volunteering.

individually and directly (26%), less frequently by engaging in unpaid work under the auspices of organisations or institutions (10.3%). Better educated Poles were more active in volunteering, both formally and informally. In terms of age, institutionalised support was more popular among young people aged 15–17. People aged 45 to 64 tended to prefer direct help.

The average time devoted to supporting institutionalised initiatives was 12 hours, whereas direct help took approximately 19 hours of respondents' time. However, as much as half of the total number of respondents reported no more than 4 hours of institutionalised and 8 hours of direct unpaid work.

The most popular type of volunteer activity was personal care, amounting to 53% of the total volunteer work performed in 2010. It was also quite obvious that activities requiring more specialised skills and qualifications (e.g. providing legal advice, organising meetings, events) were more often performed in organised structures. Help with household chores was an especially frequent form of work undertaken directly.

Volunteering viewed from an economic perspective

The data collected by the survey made it possible to try to estimate the economic value of the work of volunteers. It has special importance for demonstrating to decision-makers all the contribution volunteers make to the country's development. As stated in the final CSO report (Nałęcz et al. 2012, p. 16), relating volunteering to money is a complex issue, as helping others usually has the added value of emotional engagement, which is so difficult to describe in numbers.

On the other hand, work performed without pay can be less professional and not as well organised as the same activity performed under the conditions of regular employment. The CSO researchers had this complexity in mind during their survey, as they were following the ILO instructions, which suggested a reference to the replacement cost of the same work performed by a paid employee. Analyses of the data collected according to this approach showed that the value of unpaid work amounted to PLN 41.1 billion (approx. EUR 10.65 billion). If volunteers' contribution was included in the GDP, it would account for 2.8 % of it!⁹

Future of volunteering measurement in Poland

The outlook for regular and systemic large-scale research on volunteering in Poland seems to be very good, as the Central Statistical Office plans to conduct a Volunteer Workforce Module survey as a part of the Labour Force Survey every four years. The second edition of the research will hopefully be conducted in 2015.

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The research reports listed above and other reports from various surveys on non-governmental organisations and volunteering in Poland are available online at <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/>.

⁹ This short description of some of the results is just a minor part of the information that was derived from the database gathered thanks to the Volunteer Workforce Module survey. More complex analyses are available in the final report published by the Polish Central Statistical Office in 2012 (Nałęcz et al. 2012).

Background

Background information

The following links will provide additional information about the measurement of volunteering:

Center for Civil Society Studies of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Health and Social Policy

Information about the Johns Hopkins Volunteer Measurement Project, including a link to the ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work (in English).

<http://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/volunteer-measurement/about-volunteer-measurement>

European Volunteer Measurement Project

<http://evmp.eu/> (in English)

European Commission

Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognising and Promoting Cross-border Voluntary Activities in the EU. COM(2011) 568 final (in English).

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1311_en.pdf

European Commission

Report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the 2011 European Year of Volunteering (EYV) 2011. COM(2012) 781 final (in English).

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/eyv2011_final_report_en.pdf

Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Hauptbericht des Freiwilligensurveys 2009 – Zivilgesellschaft, soziales Kapital und freiwilliges Engagement in Deutschland 1999–2004–2009 (Main Report of the 2009 Survey on Volunteering – civil society, social capital and volunteering in Germany between 1999 and 2004) (in German).

<http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Service/Publikationen/publikationen,did=165004.html>

EYV 2011 Alliance

Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe (P.A.V.E.) (in English)

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

European Commission

GHK Study on "Volunteering in the European Union" (in English)

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf

United Nations Volunteers (UNV)

<http://www.unv.org/en/swvr2011.html> (in English)

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Hans-Georg Weigel
E-mail: anna.waldhausen@iss-ffm.de

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Agencies responsible for the Observatory are:

Frankfurt Project Team:

Institute for Social Work and Social Education
Postal Address: POB 50 01 51
D-60391 Frankfurt am Main
Office Address: Zeilweg 42
D-60439 Frankfurt am Main
Phone: + 49 699 57 89 0
Fax: + 49 699 57 89 190
E-mail: info@iss-ffm.de
Internet: www.iss-ffm.de

Berlin Project Team:

German Association for Public and Private Welfare
Michaelkirchstr. 17/18
D-10179 Berlin, Germany
Phone: + 49 3062 98 0
Fax: + 49 306 29 80 140
E-mail: kontakt@deutscher-verein.de
Internet: www.deutscher-verein.de

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