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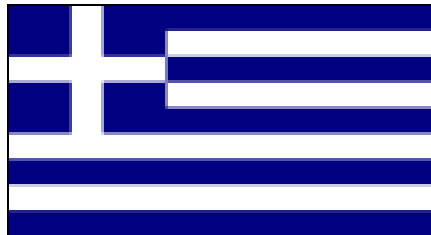
European Union
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Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

INFORMATION SHEET

VOLUNTEERING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- GREECE -



Last updated: 20 April 2011 By: Angeliki MOSCHOU

Briseida DOKOU



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Volunteering of young people in Greece_____	2
2. Main actors and networks_____	4
3. Promotion of volunteering of young people _____	7
4. Mobility of young volunteers _____	12
5. Sources of information _____	13

1. Volunteering of young people in Greece?

Give an overview on volunteering of young people (13 – 30) in your country on the national and regional level (in federal states) answering the following questions:

Are there official national/regional recommendations (policies) concerning volunteering of young people?

- On national level: **NO**

There is no national strategy in place concerning volunteering and there is no specific legal framework in Greece. Though volunteering is regulated by other existing general laws and is included in other key policies areas. For instance:

- Law 2731/5.7.1999 regulates issues related to development cooperation/aid and to NGOs; in addition, it refers to the international organizations of development aid which are financed and monitored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Hellenic Aid)
- Law 3013-1.5.2002 regarding the Upgrading of Civil Protection regulates issues related to the development of voluntary civic service (General Secretariat for Civil Protection).
- Law 1951/1991 establishes the institution of the volunteer fireman (Fire Brigade)

It should be mentioned that developing a national strategy for volunteering requires the coordinated cooperation of several stakeholders (public authorities, civil society and the business world). To that purpose the General Secretariat for Youth, in the framework of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, has launched two parallel activities. The first one is the establishment of a national steering committee consisted from civil society actors, that is meant to serve as a consultative body and an active think tank on volunteering throughout the EYV 2011. The second initiative aims to the formation of an interministerial working group, comprising of representatives of 7 Ministries, that will work on the elaboration of a national strategy on volunteering, preparing thus the ground for the reform of the relevant legal and institutional framework.

Is volunteering usually paid?

NO

What is the legal / financial (fiscal) / social security status of volunteers?

In Greece volunteers do not enjoy a legal status and the absence of a legal definition about their activities make unclear the questions of their rights and their responsibilities. In most cases an agreement between the volunteer and the host organisation is used to regulate different arrangements during their period of volunteering. More specifically, if they are unemployed or

students for example they are covered by the same protections as this part of the population. Concerning their reimbursement of their expenses it is common for voluntary organisations to reimburse their volunteers for costs related to their voluntary activities. Though, there are no national standards or arrangements. Individual programmes and projects have their own arrangements regarding expenses, insurance, living allowances, etc. However, as far as the European Voluntary Service (EVS) is concerned, participant volunteers in the programme are subject to the EU provisions.

2. Main actors and networks

Who are the main actors (institutional and NGOs) in the field of volunteering of young people on the different levels?

- National level

Ministry of Labour and Social Security- Institute for Youth- <http://www.ypakp.gr>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Hellenic Aid- <http://www.mfa.gr>

Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity- <http://www.yyka.gov.gr>
<http://www.minedu.gov.gr/>

Ministry of Citizen Protection- <http://www.minocp.gov.gr>

Ministry of Culture and Tourism- <http://www.culture.gr>

Ministry of Environment Energy and Climate Change- <http://www.minenv.gr>

Municipality of Athens <http://www.cityofathens.gr>

NGOs

- Local Level

Under the 3852 / 7.6.2010 Kallikratis law on decentralized government in Greece, the country is divided into 13 regions (peripheries) forming developed units of state administration.

Region of Epirus (Περιφέρεια Ηπείρου)- <http://www.php.gov.gr>

Region of Central Macedonia-(Περιφέρεια Κεντρικής Μακεδονίας) - <http://www.rcm.gr>

Region of Western Macedonia-(Περιφέρεια Δυτικής Μακεδονίας)-
<http://www.westernmacedonia.gr/>

Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace- (Περιφέρεια Ανατολικής Μακεδονίας και Θράκης)-
<http://www.anatolikimakedoniathraki.gov.gr>

Region of Western Greece- (Περιφέρεια Δυτικής Ελλάδας)- <http://www.pde.gov.gr>

Region of Ionian Nisia-(Περιφέρεια Ιονίων)- <http://www.ionianisia-region.com>

Region of Crete-(Περιφέρεια Κρήτης)- <http://www.pkr.gov.gr>

Region of Southern Aegean-(Περιφέρεια Νοτίου Αιγαίου) - <http://www.notioaigaio.gr/per>

Region of North Aegean -(Περιφέρεια Βορείου Αιγαίου)- <http://www.northaegean.gr>

Region of Thessaly -(Περιφέρεια Θεσσαλίας)- <http://www.pthes.gov.gr>

Region of Sterea Ellada -(Περιφέρεια Στερεάς Ελλάδας)- <http://www.stereaellada-region.com>

Region of Peloponnese - (Περιφέρεια Πελοποννήσου) - <http://ppel.gov.gr>

Region of Attiki-(Περιφέρεια Αττικής) - <http://www.patt.gov.gr>

NGOs

Are any organisations in this field specifically targeting youth (as participants in voluntary activities and voluntary services) ?

Student organizations like BEST, Helmsic (www.helmisc.gr), Youthnet (www.youthnet.gr.blogspot.com), Aegee (www.aegee-athina.gr), Aiesec (www.aiesec.gr), Guide (www.seo.gr) and Scouts (www.sep.org.gr) organisations etc.

Do networks and/or co-operations exist for supporting volunteering of young people in your country?

- The Hellenic Federation of Voluntary NGOs (www.ngo.federation.gr)
- ESYN www.esyn.gr .The National Youth Council's site works to raise the profile of volunteering amongst the Greek youth and ensure that the contribution of voluntarism to civil society is recognised and accounted for. Young people will find that this site brings together valuable information and important announcements.
- TOSYN (www.tosyn.gr) Initiative of the General Secretariat for Youth and the Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-Government, the Local Youth Councils empower the voice of young men and women between 15 and 28, invite them to get active, be heard and have a say over local things. Participation in a Local Youth Council offers them the opportunity for a wide range of activities and initiatives-youth and cultural issues and voluntary activities.
- Indirectly, several Ministries' departments support volunteering via allocations given to associations or NGOs.

What is the legal / financial (fiscal) status of organisations promoting volunteering?

According to Citizens in Deed volunteering and non-profit nongovernmental organisations need to be supported by a clear legal and regulatory framework.

There is no specific definition related to voluntary organisations in Greece. In general, every non-profit NGO is considered a voluntary organisation by simply declaring that the organisation operates by volunteers or unpaid labour offer. In Greece NGOs are exempted from paying tax because of their non-profit activities. A coherent framework of funding rules is also needed as well as new tax regulations for civil society organisations in order to clarify which activities are subject to tax and which are not.

There are four types of entities within the non-profit sector that may benefit from volunteer activity: Associations (*Somatia*); Civil Non-Profit Companies (*Astiki Mi Kerdoskopiki Eteria – MAKE*), Foundations (*Idrima*) and Collection Committees (*Eranos*) - an alliance of at least 5 persons, whose aim is the collection of funds or objects to serve a specific goal of public benefit.

3. Promotion of volunteering of young people

Which methods among the one listed below are the most used to promote volunteering of young people in your country?

By national policies:

- ✓ **Advertisement campaigns:** The promotion of voluntary activities is one of the first priorities of the General Secretariat for Youth. This is done by providing information and/or support to initiatives aimed at linking volunteer work to specific target groups, by co-operating in specific initiatives and further developing the site of “ Bridge of Collaboration for Volunteering” (<http://volunteers.neagenia.gr>) in view of an efficient use and maintenance of the database.
- ✓ **Education:** Seminars and One-day seminars. The Department of Youth Information and the Hellenic National Agency for the EU Youth and Eurodesk Programmes organise regular seminars addressed to the employees of the Youth Information Centres as well as to the members of the Local Youth Councils; an integral part of these seminars is the promotion of the European Voluntary Service

For 2011 the General Secretariat for Youth has submitted a framework-proposal to the Ministry of Education, Life Long Learning and Religious Affairs to adopt “Volunteerism” as the key-theme of a series of possible activities that may be implemented via the educational system, and in particular in primary and secondary education. The first proposal aims at the adoption of volunteerism as theme in the next national pupils’ art competition, specifically in the painting section. The second proposal, refers to the adoption of volunteerism as a theme of essay that will be conducted in the current school year. The theme will be further specified according to needs and particularities of each educational level. The third proposal refers to the possibility to call voluntary organizations’ members to make short presentations on their experience in volunteering in classrooms, with the permission and encouragement of the Ministry.

In cooperation with the Voluntary Corps of Forest Protection of Kesariani, we will publish a manual of environmental education for pupils, which will show how they can volunteer for the benefit of forests, under the guidance of their teachers. The manual will be divided in two sections. The first one will include information on forests and why they are important and the second section will include information on how pupils with the guidance of their teachers can collect , prepare and plant seeds of various forest plants, and mainly oak trees. The goal is not only to inform pupils but also to engage them in the activity of doing something good for the forest. The manual will be distributed to the network of teachers responsible for environmental

education in schools. A helpdesk working under the auspices of the Voluntary Corps of Forest Protection of Kesariani will voluntarily provide support to the programme.

- ✓ **Youth information centres:** Youth Information Centres play a major role in the promotion of voluntary activities. A network of information centres which provide free information on issues of interest to young people, including voluntary activities initiated or sponsored by the General Secretariat for Youth and other governmental or non-governmental organisations is established.
- ✓ **Funding of NGOs:** Several departments of ministries indirectly support NGOs via allocations. For example the General Secretariat for Youth through the “Youth Initiatives Support Program” supports organisations wishing to develop voluntary activities.

By NGOs:

- ✓ **Advertisement campaigns:** The promotion is conducted by tv spots, radio spots, brochures, leaflets, festivals.
- ✓ **Education:** There are held one-day seminars, seminars, conferences.

Which among the followings are methods of recognition of volunteering of young people in your country?

- ✓ **European Youth Pass:** For volunteers Youthpass is the official proof of their active participation in a European Voluntary Service project. They can use it as a reference when they apply, for instance, for a job or an educational course. But a Youthpass also means - more importantly - recognising their own active participation in a project, their mobility experience and emphasising their ability to learn from this intercultural experience and to develop personally and professionally. However, in Greece the European Youth Pass is not officially recognized.
- ✓ **Certificates:** When asked, the organisations, organising the volunteering activities, certify the voluntary action of the young volunteers and the time that they have spent to volunteering programmes. This certificate of attendance can be used for any legal use (i.e. curriculum vitae- special day off during their military service).
- ✓ **Awards:** In every big event and campaign where young volunteers take part the General Secretariat for Youth recognizes young people’s offers in the voluntary activities by giving them certificates of attendance and various awards. The Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity organises annually a social event in order to present awards to volunteer organisations and individual volunteers from all over Greece for their services in the

sectors of Health and Social Care. Many volunteers have received honours by local authorities for their voluntary activities. The President of the Hellenic Republic has presented awards to citizens for their voluntary offer.

✓ **They are valued in CV:** Probably, there is moral recognition of volunteering offer.

- Credits in the formal education system
- Awards
- Incentives
- Other:
- They are not recognised

The Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning Education and Religious Affairs, institution responsible for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece, is elaborating the legal framework for the recognition and validation of informal learning so as the experience and the skills acquired from voluntary activities would be finally officially acknowledged and validated.

What obstacles to young people's engagement in volunteering do exist and how are these faced by national policies?

Obstacles

- Absence of a legislative framework which will cover rights and responsibilities of volunteers and organisations.
- Lack of sufficient and accurate information on volunteering in Greece.
- Absence of adequate incentives on national level promoting volunteerism.
- Absence of one main public body regulating all aspects of volunteering.
- Obstacles to the involvement of the disabled and of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Lack of training modules for persons involved in organising and coordinating voluntary activities.

Another important problem is that the experience and the skills acquired in the framework of volunteering are not acknowledged or validated by any system. The most important example is the European Voluntary Service, whose certification is not recognised by Greek public bodies. The skills developed by the volunteer are not recognised as qualifications, and the problem is even bigger for disadvantaged young people.

Measures

In general, public authorities show more interest for promoting the voluntary activities by rising the funding and by including more and more voluntary activities in their action plans. Additionally, some of the voluntary organisations support volunteers by providing training and supervision in order to overcome these difficulties.

As far as information is concerned, each Public Authority and each NGO organise their own information strategy, which corresponds to the use of different channels for promotion, such as massive, targeted, word-of-mouth and through intermediaries.

Some examples of measures taken in order to overcome the difficulties are:

Dissemination - Access to Information

Young people's voluntary engagement is facilitated through a better dissemination of the relevant information about the opportunities available in the framework of voluntary activities. Here we have to mention that the General Secretariat for Youth constantly organises training seminars for the staff of all Youth Information Centres so as for them to reach a better knowledge of most of the projects that can be used by youngsters on a voluntary basis.

Involvement and participation of youngsters at local level

Local youth councils are a new institution in our country under the initiative of the General Secretariat for Youth in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, Decentralisation and E-Government.

All young people have the opportunity to participate via their Local Youth Councils in the public meetings of their Municipal or Communal Council in order to express their views on issues that concern them. Through that specific institution that is widely known at national level, young people have the opportunity to foster the value of volunteerism through the activities undertaken and the proposals they promote.

In addition, young people participate in several voluntary activities organised by grass root youth organisations and the national platform of the National Youth Council.

Steps for legislative recognition

As mentioned the General Secretariat for Youth through the Interministerial working group has undertaken a initiative as regards the elaboration of a national strategy on volunteering.

The biggest challenge however is the promotion and creation of incentives for volunteering in order to increase the number of volunteers and the cultivation of a volunteering mentality in Greece.

4. Mobility of young volunteers

- Is there any national monitoring of how mobility of young volunteers takes place? Yes/NO

- What are these monitoring mechanisms? If yes, please explain.

As mentioned, there are no national targets to meet in volunteering that's why no formal national reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place. NGOs promote volunteering at transnational level and international development aid and typically they are required and maintain records on the level of mobility of young volunteers. Another example of monitoring mechanism that should be mentioned is the European Voluntary Service.

5. Sources of information

Report on Volunteering in the EU

Study on Volunteering in Greece (University of Peloponnese)

1. <http://www.volunteers.neagenia.gr>
2. <http://www.esyn.gr>
3. <http://www.hellenicaid.gr>
4. <http://www.fireservice.gr>
5. <http://www.anthropos.gr>
6. <http://www.anthropomania.gr>
7. <http://mohaw.gr>
8. <http://www.ngo.federation.gr>
9. <http://www.youthpass.eu>

10. <http://www.minedu.gov.gr/>
11. <http://www.vyka.gov.gr/>
12. <http://www.ministryofjustice.gr/>
13. <http://www.vpakp.gr/>
14. <http://www.mod.gr/>
15. <http://www.minenv.gr/>

16. <http://www.mfa.gr/>

17. <http://www.minocp.gov.gr/>

18. <http://www.culture.gr/>