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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

### SPAIN



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Volunteering of young people in Spain _____	1
2. Main actors and networks _____	5
3. Promotion of volunteering of young people _____	8
4. Mobility of young volunteers _____	11
5. Sources of information _____	12

# 1. Volunteering of young people in Spain

*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: YES*

Spanish voluntary movement has been based on different instruments and actions aimed at promoting solidarity and social development of citizen participation. Among them are included the Law 6 / 1996 of January 15, for Volunteering and successive Volunteering State Plans that have covered the period from 1997 to 2009. Volunteering State Plan 2005-2009 set out a number of objectives in three areas of action that respond to major challenges facing volunteerism in Spain, Social awareness and outreach, Support and Coordination:

- Social awareness and Outreach: Provide information to the entire society and collect their expectations about the value, opportunities and the need for voluntary participation, according to the characteristics of each population group, age or social, and the interests of each person mainly to
  - Convince society of the relevance of voluntary movement, with citizen participation and the values they represent.
  - Strengthen voluntary action at school
  - Strengthen voluntary action or consolidate it within different groups and population groups in certain fields.
- Support: Engage the public sector, private for-profit and third sector itself for further modernization of NGOs and their funding, by:
  - Technical and financial support for a better organizational and functional modernization of agencies of the Third Sector.
  - Achieving social involvement of private enterprises.
- Coordination: Strengthen collaboration between all those involved with volunteering, paying special attention to their involvement in regional structures and networks, national and international cooperation.

- Strengthen relationships, structures and mechanisms for coordination among all actors involved in the voluntary, public and private.
- Incorporate voluntary organizations of the international field.

Volunteer State Plan 2005-2009 is in the process of assessment to identify which aspects worked well and which need an adaptation and improvement to meet the new challenges of the future. From the Central Government two projects of action were initiated that should give us a better understanding of the situation of the sector and propose new measures for the future by conducting an assessment and evaluation of voluntary implementation of the Volunteer State Plan 2005 -2009. After identifying the new requirements a new strategy will be defined for promoting volunteerism for the period 2010-2014.

Also, policies promoting volunteering and associations have increased enormously in the regions (Autonomous Communities) governments' plans, and so this requires an adequate institutional consensus to respond to the new organizational situation and promoting volunteerism.

In this situation, the European Year of Volunteering 2011 will be useful to achieve the following objectives:

- Obtain more information on the status of volunteering that will allow us adequate planning of future needs.
- Disseminate in the society the values of participation, solidarity and social change characteristic of the particular service at a time of economic crisis.
- Encourage the collaboration of all social actors involved, including companies, educational institutions and the media.
- Promote education and social recognition of voluntary activity to encourage the promotion of volunteerism, especially among young people.

*On regional level:* YES

The administrative organization of the Spanish state, established in the 1978 Spanish constitution distributes powers of government between the central state and regions (Autonomous Communities), setting a highly decentralized model.

he competence on voluntary services and social affaires is part of the regional governments' field of responsibilities.

Therefore, there exist 17 different models of actual laws, institutions responsible, plans and policies on volunteering. Each region has developed its own legal framework, with the subsequent policies and actions on the issue.

Most regions follow the recommendations established by the central government through the Volunteer State Plan 2005-2009, setting plans for a period of some years, in which all parts are represented and heard, ONGs, associations, municipalities and experts, establishing certain goals that must be reached, making available to the civil society a series of means in order to promote volunteering activities.

*- Is volunteering usually paid? No*

In the vast majority of cases, volunteering activities are never paid.

*- Is there any National voluntary service? No*

Within the central government, the department responsible for voluntary activities is the Ministry for Health, Social Policy and Equality, which carries out the programmes, grants and plans regarding NGOs and voluntary activities. But, according to the administrative organization of Spain, each region has its own law for volunteering.

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

At the national level, the Law 6/1996 of January 15, for Volunteering, establishes the rights and duties of volunteers. But, according to the administrative organization of Spain, each region has its own law for volunteering, and regarding the status of volunteers they follow what the national law says.

Legally, volunteers are members of organizations, and so they act on behalf of them and are protected by them whenever acting under the responsibility of the entity.

The volunteers themselves do not have any fiscal or tax allowance, but individuals who make contributions to NGOs and welfare organizations do have a tax allowance in their income tax.

Volunteers do not have social security but the organisation in which they work must pay insurance for them for any risks in voluntary activities, for them and for others.

## 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:*

-The Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, through its Directorate General on social policy, families and children, is responsible for volunteering at the state level. Its main actions are providing grants to support the work of entities that do voluntary actions; coordinating actions of organizations, the study, analysis and fostering of volunteering among the Spanish society and launching the state plans on volunteering, the latter of which has been set as a period (2010-2014) of reflection and rethinking of the present situation.

-The National Council of NGOs in social action is a collective body with advisory status, which aims to promote dialogue and participation of solidarity organizations in developing social policies. It works as a meeting forum where they discuss, debate and propose various initiatives aimed at strengthening the social action Third Sector. Its functions are advisory and proposal. Its composition reflects a formal representation of the administration of at least 11 members, including the President and First Vice-President, and 26 representatives of NGOs, including the second vice president.

-The Spain volunteering platform is a network that gathers volunteer organizations, as the main representative of this sector at the Spanish state level. Its main goals are to promote, disseminate their achievements and raise awareness of the importance of these actions among society.

-The Spanish Youth Council is a platform of youth organizations, with a public infrastructure. Its members are the regional youth councils operating in Spain as well as other national youth organizations. Its main goal is to promote youth participation in the political, social, economic and cultural development of Spain. Among the organizations that comprise it, there are many who engage in volunteer or volunteers are in their midst.

*Regional:*

-In the regional level, according to the administrative structure of the state, given by the Spanish Constitution, each one of the seventeen regions has developed its own regional systems since volunteering is the responsibility of the devolved administrations: their own budgets, their public organizations on voluntary, their regional laws – basically following the national law on volunteering-, their action plans. Also, the regions make available for associations a number of

resources for the development of volunteering, such as records of voluntary associations, both information and training, and material resources, such as grants, institutional support, facilities, etc.

-Volunteering associations are usually grouped into networks or platforms at national, regional or local level, depending on their scope.

*Local:*

-Local governments have traditionally been more close to issues and problems of residents and from ancient times have had a very active role in the joint cooperation of neighbors (neighbourhood organisations) and in encouraging voluntary actions within the town and even in developing volunteer activities abroad.

This practice is still deeply rooted in administrations and civic organizations locally.

The vast majority of municipalities have some kind of infrastructure to support volunteering in the municipality, and many put up cooperation activities for development in poor countries. The classic figure of the "twin cities" is a way for cities to cooperate with twin cities in developing countries, through which many local residents perform volunteer activities.

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

Young people are not specifically targeted as volunteers, but they constitute the majority of voluntary people. In fact, there are many voluntary organizations established in universities targeting students. Voluntary work is divided and announced based on the area or type of work to which it is devoted, and not to the people it targets.

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

In Spain, volunteering is not organized by age or other criteria referred to volunteers, but by the geographical sphere of action or the group to which voluntary action is directed.

Therefore, there are no specifically youth targeted initiatives, though the average profile of the volunteer is a woman of 40 years, with high educational level.

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

Most volunteers in Spain work in an association or partnership with social purposes.

Associations are defined by law (Organic Law 1/2002) as entities formed by a group of people who join permanently to an end or purpose.

They must be democratic in their internal operations, must be nonprofit, and independent of any power, at least nominally.

All organizations legally recognized as being of public utility are exempt from the corporate tax.

Also, many NGOs receive funds and subsidies of local, regional or national administrations to carry out their projects.

### 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:*

Responsible administrations are the entities that make the biggest effort to support volunteering by different ways. Even though voluntary activities are carried out in most cases by non public organizations, such as good will associations, foundations or NGOs, public funding is behind almost all entities devoted to social actions involving volunteerism.

Promotion of these activities is performed by occasional advertising campaigns made by public administrations promoting social volunteering in general, regardless of age or sector of activity involved.

Youth information centers and youth advisors perform a similar kind of work, which provide other possible types of information, such as professional advising, disseminate voluntary activities, usually on the basis of information provided by NGOs.

*By NGOs:*

Major NGOs carry out recruitment and fundraising campaigns in chosen times. A very common way used by NGOs is street promotion with the aim of fundraising and/or recruiting volunteers for the organization or for a specific campaign. These promotions are developed in places where young people can be found, such as main spots in city centers, major public transport stations or universities.

The primary means by which NGOs are promoting volunteerism in their organizations is by using the Internet and social networking as the main ways, for being more easily affordable, and also, since it is a more popular channel with young people.

At the youth information centers, generally only the bigger NGOs are represented, and they are the ones that provide these centers with information to disseminate it among their users.

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

European Youth Pass

Certificates

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

Voluntary work, although unpaid, has begun to be recognized over the last few years in Spain as a valid professional experience within the career of the person doing it, in case of a professional working on a voluntary or goodwill basis, or it is recognized as an experience for the future professional development of that person, and will count as a distinct value to consider in your CV.

Over the last decades, a new professional profile is developing: the Third Sector, which covers a wide range of occupations in the field of social services and cooperation, both abroad as in Spain. As a result, there has been an important increase of courses, degrees and postgraduate or master's degree in international development cooperation or other related subjects.

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

- The high unemployment rates among the young people keeps most youngsters focussed in job searching activities, such as trainings, internships and short time or low paid jobs which takes a lot of energies out from voluntary work.
- Some entities, although they have the label of "solidarity" organizations, just look for their benefit, using the voluntary work.
- Lack of awareness and organization of the voluntary sector in general, leaving many young people deprived of information.
- The law relating to the voluntary sector is perceived from the very entities that have volunteers within as a handicap, not least because there are no mechanisms to ensure compliance of this legislation.
- A problem of the entire third sector is that it is too dependent on public Administrations as its main source of funding, creating an excessive dependence.
- This leads to distortions within the associations themselves being subject to the dynamics of subsidy, rates of pay of administrations and, therefore, affecting the functioning of associations.

- This funding source also produces a distortion on the objectives of the entities, which are subordinated to the government's, and may even compete with other entities for grants.
- There is a lack of internal democracy within organizations as well as an inequality of resources and opportunities between large NGOs and small organizations.
- External communication of associations is a pending issue; in general, only large organizations can afford a sustained and effective communication of their activities.
- Lack of culture and training in the creation, organization and management of voluntary organizations, what in many cases leads to inefficient operation, loss of energy and resources, leading the social sector into disrepute, especially among youth.
- There is no established official recognition to the volunteer work as part of academic training, or as a recognized expertise in the career
- Inadequate approach, inefficiency and failure in training for volunteers, due to lack of coordination, lack of resources, or other causes

National policies in this field are the Volunteering State Plans that have been happening from the year following the adoption in 1996 of state Law for Volunteering.

These state plans, promoted and coordinated by the central government, through the Secretary of State for Social Policy, consist of a set of actions, which involves all the actors that constitute the main national landscape: regions, municipalities, universities, NGOs, associations and companies.

Government action is limited, given the administrative setup of Spain, and the limited scope of powers it has. In this context lies with the regions a large part of the administrative and regulatory powers in the field of volunteerism. Therefore, in these years the main goals have been trying to coordinate all actors involved, to know the status of the situation and that of creating priorities for action.

## 4. Mobility of young volunteers

*- Is there any national monitoring of how mobility of young volunteers takes place?*

There is no a general monitoring system for the mobility of all volunteers in a state level. But there are two specific organizations regarding mobility of young volunteers:

- The European Voluntary Service
- The International Voluntary Service

The European Voluntary Service is a training service in which, through non formal learning experiences, young volunteers improve or acquire skills for their personal, educational and professional development, as well as for social integration.

The European Voluntary Service (EVS) supports transnational voluntary work for young people. It aims to develop solidarity and promote tolerance among young people, fundamentally to reinforce social cohesion in the European Union. It promotes active citizenship and mutual understanding among young people.

The EVS functions through activities organised jointly between legally established organisations, which send or host volunteers.

The volunteers take part in their activity in a country different from their country of residence. This activity, unpaid and non-profit, is carried out on a full-time basis for a specified period and for the benefit of the community.

The International Voluntary Service (SVI), in Spain is administered by the Spanish Institute for Youth, which in collaboration with regional governments makes it possible to enter the field of volunteering for many young people between 18 and 26 years to develop a short-term volunteer experience in another country.

This is the international exchange of places in work camps for youth, for stays of several weeks, in a different country, with a different culture, and a different language, allowing young people to contribute by bringing their experience, their knowledge to young people from other different countries, while enriching their personal horizons, helping his development as a person.

This experience of sharing and exchange takes place in work camps set out to work on projects devoted to the environment, restoration or conservation, or social issues in which young people work voluntarily.

## **5. Sources of information**

-The Spanish Institute for Youth conducts surveys and studies on various topics related to youth. In 2010 a study on voluntary social action in Spain: Diagnóstico de la situación del voluntariado de acción social en España.

-The Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, through its Directorate General on social policy, families and children, provides information on Volunteer state plans.

-The Plataforma del Voluntariado (Volunteer Platform) is a network that brings together many organizations, as well as other stakeholders. It has support from public authorities, including state and other organizations, including some companies. On their website one can find some old resources on the subject, documents, studies, reports.