

NATIONAL REPORT – SWEDEN

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1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN SWEDEN

1.1 History and contextual background

Sweden has a long tradition of volunteering and active citizenship among its population which dates back to the 1600s. Much later, in the early 19th century, the British concept of private philanthropy as a solution to social needs began to be adopted in Sweden and charities offering support to the needy were set up. Later in the 19th century, popular mass movements began to appear, inspired by those in other countries. These movements were established with the aim of instigating change in society.

Sweden's welfare state was formed in World War I and became more advanced after World War II. It has been suggested that the comprehensive provision of social services funded by the state could imply that volunteering has less of a role to play in Swedish society but a number of studies have affirmed that this is not the case. In fact, the welfare state and the tradition of active citizenship are considered to be complementary to one another¹. Voluntary activities are also considered to be an important driver in the process of democracy and political mobilisation within Sweden.

The general pattern of volunteering is characterised by a focus on membership. This is a consequence of the prevalence of the popular mass movements – which have been encouraged by state policy - within Swedish society.² Indeed, a very high percentage of the Swedish population are still members of voluntary organisations (it has been estimated that the figure was as high as 90% in the year 2000). This means that “voluntary activities” have traditionally, and are still, to a great deal directed at the internal, democratic and political life of NGOs or have at least been performed within the framework of an organisation³.

However, this is now beginning to change and traditional membership-based voluntary work is slowly beginning to decline. Swedish people now prefer to determine their own level of involvement and seek a ‘freer’ relationship with the voluntary organisation⁴. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the amount of voluntary activities aimed more at helping other people have grown. There are several factors that may have contributed to this growth, including a desire to contribute to society without necessarily supporting a whole “ideological programme”, the need to decide more freely and individually when time can be allocated for voluntary activities and the restructuring and privatisation of parts of the welfare state⁵ (although it has been suggested that as many as 86% of volunteers are still members of the voluntary organisation where the activities are performed⁶).

A new phenomenon on the Swedish volunteering landscape is the National Volunteering Agency (*Volontärbyrå*) and local volunteer centres (see section 2 for more detail). This new infrastructure offers individuals the opportunity to identify volunteering tasks which match their availability and skill set, without the need to become affiliated to an

¹ Lundström, T and L Svedberg (2003), The Voluntary Sector in a Social Democratic Welfare State – The Case of Sweden, *Journal of Social Policy* [online]. 32 (2), pp. 217-238

² Ibid.

³ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009

⁴ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

⁵ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009

⁶ Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving*. Report to the central government

organisation.⁷ However, volunteering which takes place through the centres remains a small proportion of the total volunteering effort in Sweden⁸.

1.2 Definitions

There is no official definition of volunteering in Sweden. However, across the literature the generally accepted definition seems to be: *'Time and effort that is freely given; unforced and unremunerated, by individuals to voluntary and public organisations'*.

Although the definition makes reference to volunteering being unremunerated, there may however be a 'symbolic' compensation or payment for voluntary work⁹. Furthermore, voluntary activities can be carried out within or outside voluntary organisations¹⁰.

A clear distinction is made between 'informal' work which is said to be unorganised and 'voluntary' work, which is carried out under the auspices of an organisation.

Furthermore, there is no official definition of the voluntary sector as a whole or the organisations which make up the sector¹¹. The voluntary sector is also sometimes called the *ideell sector*. *Ideell* is hard to translate into English but refers to the concept of the public good¹².

Although there are no established legal definitions, voluntary organisation and voluntary efforts are generally agreed to be the following:

- *"Voluntary organisations:* organisations or associations that are founded on the basis of common ideas or interests, that have some sort of public character and organisational form, that can be established and dissolved without decision from public authorities, that build on voluntary commitment and [most often] personal membership of some kind and are not looking for private financial gain.
- *Voluntary efforts:* efforts of work without remuneration, that are freely chosen and are carried out in and organisational framework. This organisational framework would be voluntary organisations, or the public sector."¹³

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Total number of volunteers

The 2009 population survey found that approximately 48% of Swedish people aged 16-74 carry out voluntary work. This equates to over three million people¹⁴. The results are based on a survey conducted by Statistics Sweden and based on a random sample of 2 000 Swedish citizens. The survey was carried out by telephone and generally achieves a response rate of 70%¹⁵.

⁷ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

⁸ Interview: Lars Svedberg, Professor and Research Director, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

⁹ Information from interviews with a representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, and from an Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

¹⁰ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009.

¹¹ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

¹² Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. (1995) "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden." *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

¹³ Ibid, with updates suggested by Lars Svedberg, Professor and Research Director, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

¹⁴ Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving*. Report to the central government

¹⁵ Interview: Lars Svedberg, Professor and Research Director, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

Trend

The figure of around half of the population engaged in voluntary activities has remained stable over the past two decades (as demonstrated in the table below). The 2009 figure shows a very slight decrease on figures from the 2005 population survey, which found that 51% of Swedish people carry out voluntary work¹⁶. However, the 2005 figure was an increase on the 1992 figure of 48%.

Table 1: Level of voluntary work in Sweden in 1992, 1998, 2005 and 2009: percentage of the adult population (16-74 years) involved in any unpaid voluntary work during the previous year.

Year	1992	1998	2005	2009
Percentage engaged in voluntary work	48	52	51	48

Source: Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

Gender

Across the literature, the gender balance of volunteers is reported to be roughly equal, with a slightly higher proportion of Swedish men engaged in voluntary work than Swedish women. Figures from 2009 show that approximately 54% of the male population and 43% of the female population, aged 16-74, engage in voluntary activities¹⁷.

Age groups

Literature suggests that Swedish people are more likely to volunteer as they get older¹⁸. However, survey findings suggest that the predominant age group for volunteers is between 30 and 44 years¹⁹. Involvement in volunteering falls after the age of 75. This is confirmed by the data presented in the table 2 below, which also shows that in 2009 men of all age groups were more actively involved in voluntary activities than women.

Table 2: Volunteering by age group in 1998, 2005 and 2009

MEN	1998	2005	2009	WOMEN	1998	2005	2009
16-29	50	39	40	16-29	47	43	39
30-44	55	59	64	30-44	57	60	54
45-59	62	55	56	45-59	53	48	36
60-64	54	56	54	60-64	38	45	38
65-74	45	56	51	65-74	45	37	44
75-84	-	32	38	75-84	-	24	32

Source: Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

The number of older persons who volunteer has grown over time, especially the number of older women. This may be for a number of reasons. It has been suggested that this is due to the older age-groups now representing a greater proportion of the population or because older people now enjoy better health and are more active²⁰.

¹⁶ Ersta Sköndal University, Sköndalinsitutet (2005) *Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället*.

¹⁷ Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

¹⁸ Ersta Sköndal University, Sköndalinsitutet (2005) *Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället*.

¹⁹ European Round Table of Charitable Social Welfare Associations, *Sweden National Report*. Internet: <http://www.etwelfare.org/uk/projects/Country/S-Nat.html>

²⁰ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

Geographical spread of volunteering

The geographical spread of volunteering in Sweden is unknown. However, voluntary activity in Sweden appears to be greater in small and medium-sized towns / cities and in rural areas than in larger cities²¹.

Education levels

Research conducted in 2004 by the Swedish National Board for Health and Welfare identified a correlation between the level of education and volunteering - individuals with a higher level of education are more likely to carry out voluntary work²². Further research carried out in 2007 showed that the level of the individual's education is one of the primary decisive factors affecting voluntary activities. A lower level of education correlates with inactivity in voluntary sector organisations and it is primarily those with a higher level of education who are active. However, this applies primarily to women²³ – only 30 % of women with only elementary education are volunteers, compared to 60% of women with university degrees²⁴.

This correlation is partly explained by the fact that individuals with a higher level of education and who participate in the labour market have access to different social arenas²⁵.

Volunteer involvement by sectors

The most common sectors in which volunteering takes place are identified in the table 4 below. It shows that the largest share of voluntary activities is carried out in the sport and recreation sector, followed by the welfare sector. Since 1992, sport and recreation has increased in popularity slightly, while the involvement in voluntary activities in the welfare sector has slightly decreased.

Table 4: Voluntary work in Sweden in 1992, 1998, 2005 and 2009. Percentage of the adult population (16-74 years) involved in specific subsectors in the previous year

Year/Subsector	1992	1998	2005	2009
Sports and recreation	16	19	20	20
Welfare ²⁶	17	18	16	15
Housing cooperation	5	5	8	8
Culture	7	7	5	5
Trade Unions	6	5	5	4

Source: Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

Volunteering is less common in the provision of social services, compared to other EU countries, although the voluntary and non-profit sector does provide services in particular niche areas such as supporting victims of domestic abuse, working with the homeless and people with addictions. The Swedish Red Cross (*Röda Korset*) and Save the Children

²¹ Interview: Lars Svedberg, Professor and Research Director, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

²² Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

²³ Olsson, L-E (2007), *Delvis ensam - En studie av människor som inte deltar i föreningslivet*. Ersta-Sköndal högskola: 2007

²⁴ Ersta Sköndal University, Sköndalinsitutet (2005) *Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället*.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ For example, organisations working with social causes such as children at risk, the disabled, substance misuse, criminals and victims of domestic violence, as well as humanitarian organisations and those for retired persons.

Sweden (*Rädda Barnen*), for instance, run national and local projects working with young offenders, young refugees and vulnerable young people²⁷.

Gender has some influence on the individual's choice of volunteering activities. Men tend to volunteer more for sports, outdoor activities, motorsports and housing. Women take part in more religious, public and social volunteering activities²⁸. Age can also have an influence on the activities chosen: social support seems to be most common among pensioners and least common among students. Older people volunteer in pensioners' societies and in humanitarian, religious and cultural areas. They normally carry out practical activities such as cleaning, maintaining property and baking²⁹.

Profile of volunteers by employment status

There is no complete information on the employment status of volunteers. However, employed people are more likely to volunteer than unemployed people in Sweden and across the literature it is found that people with higher income levels are more likely to carry out volunteering work.

In fact, studies have shown that for both men and women, there is a relationship between the level of income and the propensity to carry out voluntary activities. Studies have also looked at the correlation between membership in different trade unions and volunteering and have found that trade union members are more likely to volunteer than non-members. Members of the LO (*Landsorganisationen i Sverige* - a predominantly blue-collar trade union) are less active in volunteering than members of the white-collar TCO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees) or SACO (Central Organisation of the Workers of Sweden)³⁰.

Time dedicated to volunteering

Studies have shown that over 50% of the Swedish population aged between 16 and 85 carry out some form of voluntary work for at least 14 hours per month. These contributions equate to 400,000 full-year equivalents³¹.

Further information on the number of hours volunteered per month by men and women is shown in table 5 below. It also illustrates that the amount of time dedicated to volunteering has remained relatively stable in the last two decades.

Table 5: The number of hours volunteered per month by men and women, 1992, 1998 and 2009

Year	Men	Women
1992	14	12
1998	15	10
2005	14	13

Source: Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

Definition of voluntary organisations in Sweden

²⁷ Youth Partnership, 2008. *Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Sweden*. Internet: <http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Country/2007/Sweden.pdf>

²⁸ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Olsson, L-E (2007), *Delvis ensam - En studie av människor som inte deltar i föreningslivet*. Ersta-Sköndal högskola: 2007

³¹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>.

There is no official definition of a voluntary organisation and the only reference to voluntary organisations in the legal framework is in relation to rules on taxation. In Sweden, it has been very important up to now *not* to regulate voluntary organisations and any attempt to formalise volunteering in law has always been abandoned (this is discussed further in section 3)³².

The research identified that the question of terminology to describe voluntary organisations and the voluntary sector in Sweden is complex. As explained below, there are a number of terms which can be used for the sector and the individual bodies which are part of the sector. For the purposes of this study, we have adopted the terminology used in the most recent government publications on this topic. That is 'non-governmental organisation' or 'NGO' to refer to individual organisations and 'NGO sector' to refer to the sector as a whole.

Most literature on volunteering agrees that a voluntary organisation is defined as an organisation which has emerged from common values, ideas and interests. It is of public character and can be created and disbanded without any government intervention. The organisations are based on voluntary commitment and most often on a personal membership of some sorts, and do not aim for economic profit³³.

Thus, membership and the idea of working towards the public good are two important concepts in defining the Swedish non-profit sector. However, the non-profit sector is very diverse and it is difficult to find a single term which applies to all organisations within the sector. In fact, a survey carried out in 1993-1994 found that none of the major concepts used in Sweden (e.g. popular movement, interest organisation, voluntary sector, *ideell* sector) applied to more than half of the organisations in the sector. Occasionally, terms such as civil society, social economy, informal network, or leisure sector are also used, although these concepts often refer only to subgroups³⁴. This is still the case today, although two dominant collective nouns are 'popular mass movement' and 'social economy'³⁵. The recent agreement between the government, the idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions defines the voluntary, non-profit and idea-based sector as: "*all types of idea-based organisations, i.e. popular movements, but also foundations, faith organisations, and associations, e.g. those that operate free schools*"³⁶.

The agreement also provides a definition of voluntary organisations: "*Voluntary organisations aim to promote their members ideella or other interests. This activity may be of an ideell or economic character. To establish a voluntary organisation, it is required that there are statutes and that a board has been elected. There is no general legislation on voluntary organisations although voluntary organisations that engage in trade shall be registered in the trade register*"³⁷.

³² Interview: Lars-Erik Olsson PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

³³ Frivilligt socialt arbete- kartläggning och kunskapsöversikt, SOU 1993:82

³⁴ Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden." *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

³⁵ Svedberg, L. and Olsson, L-E, Voluntary Organisations and Welfare Provision in Sweden - Is there such a Thing?" in A. Zimmer & A. Evers (eds) (2010) *Third Society Organisations Facing Turbulent Environments: Sports, Culture and Social Services in Germany, Italy, U.K., Poland and Sweden*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag.

³⁶ Wijkström & Einarsson, 2006, et al, cited in Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

³⁷ Hemström 2005, Wijkström & Lundström 2002, cited in Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector

Some suggest that there are around 180 000 voluntary organisations in Sweden. However, several Swedish stakeholders have confirmed that no exact information on the number of voluntary organisations per sector is available.

The lack of comprehensive or completely accurate statistics on the voluntary sector is mainly because of the difficulty of classifying non-profit organisations in Sweden. This is because the statistics generally do not distinguish between actors with profit and non-profit purposes. Furthermore, there is no information on the number of ideell associations (*ideell förening*), as such an association can be formed without any contact with the authorities. Once a club has more economic activity, they are however incorporated into the statistics. As a result, although there is some data about the voluntary associations, it may be insufficient³⁸.

The following list shows the proportion of [paid] employees per field of the voluntary sector. Although many voluntary organisations in Sweden do not have paid employees, this data can be taken as indicative of the share of voluntary organisations per sector / field. The list shows that the sector with the greatest number of employees is culture and recreation, followed by social welfare and education and research.

Table 6: Share of employees in the voluntary sector 2002 (including the Swedish church)

Sector	Share
Culture and recreation	27%
Social welfare	20%
Education and research	16%
Religion	14%
Employment	8%
Politics, identity and interest	5%
Regional development and residency	3%
Health care	3%
Environment	1.5%
International activities	1.5%
Philanthropy	0.5%
Other	0.5%

Source: Einarsson Torbjörn, and Filip Wijkström, "Från nationalstat till näringsliv – Det civila samhällets organisationsliv i förändring", Stockholm School of Economics, 2006

Trend

There is no precise information available in relation to this question. The traditional organisations based on participation are decreasing in size, while there is a trend for Swedish people to take up time-limited volunteering with a focus on single issues³⁹.

Furthermore, while local branches of the popular mass movements may be in decline, there are new types of organisation appearing as well. For example, there are some new organisations based on project delivery and are set up in collaboration with local municipalities. These organisations are 'hybrids' between the public sector and the non-

³⁸ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

³⁹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>

profit sector. They undertake social activities such as visiting elderly people, supporting disabled people, supporting ex-offenders etc⁴⁰.

Types of organisations engaging volunteers

In Sweden, organisations that engage volunteers operate primarily in the voluntary (*ideell*) sector; volunteering in public and private sectors is marginal. As earlier discussed, there are many different organisation types within the Swedish non-profit sector. There are also many different terms for the various organisation types, some of which may overlap. Definitions of each term vary across the literature and each individual organisation “*defines itself and its mission in the community*”⁴¹.

NGOs can be defined as those which are outside of the state and the business sector. As discussed earlier, they do not make a profit and have some form of ‘general human mission’. They are self-governing, have voluntary elements and tend to be run with ideological awareness⁴². An important characteristic of many organisations is that they are membership-based and have a democratic structure. Also, many organisations play an advocacy / lobbying role rather than providing services.

Two organisation types of particular importance are the associations (*ideell förening*) and foundations (*stiftelse*)⁴³.

Ideell associations are created by a number of individuals (or legal entities), wishing to cooperate towards a common objective. Members must not make any personal economic gain from their membership⁴⁴. It is common for associations to be controlled by the members and for each member to have one vote⁴⁵. Associations tend to have relatively few paid employees⁴⁶.

Legislation was introduced with respect to foundations in 1993 and 2005. According to the 1993 legislation, a foundation is created through the permanent designation of a certain property to be administered autonomously for a clearly specified purpose⁴⁷. A foundation has a specific purpose and is governed by that purpose⁴⁸.

There are also other terms used for organisations that engage volunteers. As previously noted, it is important to note that the various terms may overlap (as is the case for Popular Mass Movements, which are formed when *ideell* associations come together).

⁴⁰ Interview: Lars-Erik Olsson PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

⁴¹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

⁴² Wijkström & Einarsson 2006, Wijkström & Lundström 2002, Blennberger 1993, et al., cited in Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

⁴³ Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. “Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden.” *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

⁴⁴ European Round Table of Charitable Social Welfare Associations, *Sweden National Report*. Internet: <http://www.etwelfare.org/uk/projects/Country/S-Nat.html>

⁴⁵ Hemström 2005, Wijkström & Lundström 2002, cited in Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

⁴⁶ Olsson, L.; Nordfeldt. M.; Larsson, O.; Sweden: When strong third sector historical roots meets EU policy processes

⁴⁷ Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. “Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden.” *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

Popular mass movements (folk rörelse) are based on “a strong bond and mutual trust between the movement and the general public”⁴⁹. These are the dominant type of organisation in all sectors and include sports, education, cultural, political and trade union organisations. Even the Swedish branches of international charities such as Save the Children and the Red Cross are organised in this way. *Ideell* associations come together to form Popular Mass Movements⁵⁰.

There are some charities in active in the area of social welfare, especially in the field of homelessness⁵¹. However, the term ‘charity’ has some negative connotations in Swedish and few organisations, not even Swedish branches of international charities, class themselves within this category⁵².

Interest organisations are important in Sweden and play an important role in influencing the government. This category includes labour unions and farmer federations, as well as organisations representing disabled people for example.

Community organisations can be defined as large established organisations which are democratically organised, durable and have the aim of changing society. These organisations can be local, regional or national. Newer network-based movements also fall within this term⁵³.

Registered churches / religious groups also fall within the ‘voluntary’ sector.

Cooperatives are understood in Sweden to be a cooperative company that is owned and operated by its members. Cooperative activity is founded on the principle that members together are able to create better conditions than they would be able to create on their own. Cooperative companies are usually operated in the form of economic associations but may also be, for example, limited companies. Consumer cooperatives and work cooperatives are different examples of cooperative companies⁵⁴.

New cooperatives is an umbrella term for small local economic associations. Small organisations in new co-operation are one of the most expansive fields of the social economy⁵⁵. They can deliver services within the public sector such as childcare or care for the elderly⁵⁶.

Multiple umbrella organisations are also important and play a key role at national level. These are organisations which were either created by a number of smaller organisations coming together, or were formed by larger parent organisations⁵⁷.

Many Swedish people are involved in housing or ownership associations. These are organisations which bring together people living in the same building for example. Tasks involved include taking care of practical arrangements to being the spokesperson for contact with the landlord.

⁴⁹ Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. “Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden.” *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

⁵⁰ Interview: Lars Svedberg, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

⁵¹ Interview: Lars-Erik Olsson PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

⁵² Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. “Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden.” *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

⁵³ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

⁵⁴ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁵⁷ Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. “Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden.” *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

There is no information on the share of volunteers and paid employees in voluntary sector organisations. Some organisations rely mainly on members and volunteers, whereas others work mainly through employed staff, with elements of volunteering⁵⁸.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

According to the population survey carried out in 2009, volunteers undertake the following activities. It shows that participation in boards and administrative work is the most 'popular' form of volunteering as four out of five volunteers carry out such activity. This is indeed supported by wider literature which state that volunteering activities in Sweden tend to focus on advocacy / lobbying rather than the delivery of services. Voluntary organisations act as pressure groups to influence government to provide services in response to need. As a result of this, there are close ties between the Swedish government and the voluntary sector⁵⁹.

Table 7: Voluntary activities, 2009

Activity	
Education and Leadership	33%
Board membership or administrative work	80%
Information / campaigning	26%
Direct social efforts	19%
Other	12%

Source: Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *the 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

Table 8 shows that there has been an important increase in the number of volunteers carrying out 'social efforts' – this term encompasses all types of social efforts, not only in socially oriented voluntary organisations but also in sports organisations, trade unions etc. Social efforts can be understood as social support of different kinds and, to a lesser extent, social services⁶⁰. Even activities such as a 'telephone chain' run by a pensioners' organisation would be considered as social support.

Table 8: Percentage of volunteers doing social efforts

Year	1992	1998	2005	2009
Percentage of volunteers doing social efforts	12	12	12	19

Source: Svedberg, Jegermalm and von Essen, (2009), *The 2009 national study of volunteering, informal help and care giving. Report to the central government*

Within the different sectors of volunteering, volunteers take on a number of different roles. For example, in sport, volunteers carry out both leadership and practical volunteering activities. In education, some 'study circles' rely on volunteer lecturers. Volunteers also run many local branches of large trade unions (the head office and district offices have paid staff).⁶¹ In the social sector, volunteers undertake practical work such as manning help lines, delivering support and counselling, as well as activities related to prevention, opinion-

⁵⁸ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

⁵⁹ Lundström, Tommy and Filip Wijkström. "Defining the Nonprofit Sector: Sweden." *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 16 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, 1995.

⁶⁰ Svedberg, L. and Olsson, L-E, Voluntary Organisations and Welfare Provision in Sweden - Is there such a Thing?" in A. Zimmer & A. Evers (eds) (2010) *Third Society Organisations Facing Turbulent Environments: Sports, Culture and Social Services in Germany, Italy, U.K., Poland and Sweden*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag

⁶¹ European Round Table of Charitable Social Welfare Associations, *Sweden National Report*. Internet: <http://www.etwelfare.org/uk/projects/Country/S-Nat.html>

building and policy. They also provide emergency services e.g. for victims of domestic abuse⁶².

Board work is also an important area of volunteering and organisational boards tend to be made up of volunteers but often supported by one or many paid staff⁶³. In fact, the 2005 population study found that traditional types of association activities such as being on a board and management, information / campaign work and education / leadership is remarkably stable, with the exception of being on a board and administrative activities which have increased. The proportion of volunteers who collect money in public places seems however, to have declined over time, as has the sale of lottery tickets. This seems to be in favour of more "professional" collection methods but also by public support through money order / bank transfer or cash rewards via websites. The proportion who say they do "other actions" have however, increased dramatically and now appears to stabilise at a high level.

Many of the 'other' actions are non-traditional voluntary activities, such as driving children or senior citizens, arranging entertainment, washing clothes for sport clubs, etc. and temporary voluntary work⁶⁴.

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

Main public body responsible for volunteering

Policy on NGOs and popular movements was established in 2001 as a separate policy area in the central government budget. At that time, the current goal was also adopted – that people should have the best possible opportunities to organise themselves and take part in NGOs and popular movements of various kinds.

Policy on NGOs and popular movements focuses on encouraging and supporting people's organisation in associations and similar groups and on helping to provide a favourable climate for these organisations to operate and pursue their activities.

Policy on NGOs and popular movements includes:

- general matters concerning the terms and conditions for NGOs and popular movements;
- general matters concerning grants to NGOs and popular movements;
- the dialogue of the Government and its executive agencies with NGOs and popular movements; and
- statistics, research and knowledge creation about NGOs and popular movements and their activities.

The Division for Youth Policy and NGOs within the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality is responsible for this policy. However several other policy areas have close contacts with NGOs within their own sector and are responsible for the distribution of grants etc. to these organisations⁶⁵.

Responsibility for volunteering in different sectors is therefore spread across the different ministries. This was exemplified in the agreement between the government, the idea-based

⁶² Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁶³ European Round Table of Charitable Social Welfare Associations, *Sweden National Report*. Internet: <http://www.etwelfare.org/uk/projects/Country/S-Nat.html>

⁶⁴ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009

⁶⁵ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009

organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. This agreement was a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality which is responsible for general NGO-policy and the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs which is responsible for the sector specific policy⁶⁶.

- The direction and scope of the NGO policy and the work of the Division for Youth Policy and NGOs at the Ministry of Integration and Equality, is outlined below⁶⁷. The terms and conditions for the work of the non-profit sector and the opportunities for individuals to become organised and participate in this sector will be developed;
- The policy on NGOs and popular movements will be developed through the introduction of a bill on civil society which is due to be approved in autumn 2009;
- All three parties to the agreement between the Government and the idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions will undertake annual follow-ups of their undertakings and actions. The Government also intends to engage in dialogue to strengthen the ability of the idea-based organisations to contribute to introduction for those newly arrived in Sweden. This dialogue may also be extended to other areas in the future.
- Central and local government will continue to provide financial support to NGOs, for example in the form of grants. Financial support will be distributed in line with the fundamental values of the independence and autonomy of the organisations, both in relation to the public sector and the business sector. Appropriate use of tax revenue will also be taken into account.
- The social economy will be supported to develop, among other things as a sphere for entrepreneurship, voluntary commitment and for employment.
- The aforementioned report *Rörelser i tiden* (SOU 2007:66), recommended the implementation of a multidisciplinary research programme on civil society. This recommendation has been accepted by the Government Offices and a research programme will now be implemented.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

There are also several government agencies which at the national level are responsible for the distribution of grants, information and advice and the implementation of policies toward voluntary organisations within different sectors. Examples of such agencies are; The National Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*), The National Board for Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), and The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (*Tilväxtverket*). Municipalities also give support to different types of voluntary organisation.

For example, the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) allocates government funding to voluntary (*ideell*) organisations for certain areas of operation or certain fields of work. These areas include HIV / AIDS, social work, prevention of alcohol and substance misuse, organisations for persons with disabilities and other organisations within specific spheres. The government provides direction to *Socialstyrelsen* regarding the allocation of funding⁶⁸.

The National Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*) awards support to youth organisations, independent women's organisations, organisations representing national

⁶⁶ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

⁶⁷ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>

⁶⁸ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

minorities, national organisations for ethnic minorities and national non-profit organisations for homosexual, bisexual and transgender people, on behalf of the government⁶⁹.

Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information

An infrastructure for volunteering (regional volunteering centres and a national online 'matching' service) has emerged only in the last 15 years⁷⁰. This infrastructure is still relatively small in terms of the amount of volunteering it generates when compared with the activities of the popular mass movements.

There are now around 80 **regional volunteering centres** in Sweden, which are either run by the municipalities or by large volunteering organisations such as the Red Cross⁷¹. These were defined by the National Board of Health and Welfare in a study on the centres as '*an information office, a contact point between people who wish to engage in voluntary actions and those looking for volunteers (i.e. Organisations or individuals). It aims at promoting voluntary work in local areas and raising awareness on the importance of volunteering; it should facilitate the conditions so that organisations, groups and individuals can take action in the local area and function as a complement to the public and the private sector*'⁷².

By offering volunteering opportunities which are not tied to membership of an organisation, the volunteer centres offer a new way for Swedish people to volunteer. Centres run activities (generally social activities) within the actual centre and also arrange volunteering work outside of the centres. They tend to work mainly with elderly people⁷³.

The National Forum for Voluntary Social Work (*Forum för Frivilligt Socialt Arbete*) is responsible for **Volontärbyrån**, the volunteer matching database. *Volontärbyrån* was established as a pilot project in 2002. It provides a matching service through an online database, where individuals seeking voluntary work can find vacancies with organisations in need of volunteers and vice versa. In the first 4.5 years after it was set up, *Volontärbyrån* matched over 10 000 tasks for over 700 voluntary organisations. Volunteers who use the matching service are generally younger (64% are between 15 and 35) and also many are new to volunteering (72% of people who volunteer through *Volontärbyrån* do so for the first time)⁷⁴.

The **Folkrörelseforum**, was established in 2002 as a forum facilitating dialogue between the government and its executive agencies on one hand and on the other hand, representatives of organisations and other actors in the non-profit sector. Its aim is to ensure the democratic heritage of these organisations is recognised and protected⁷⁵. *Folkrörelseforum* has since been used as a label for the continuous contacts between the above mentioned parties, and encompasses different types of meetings and forms of meetings such as larger conferences and smaller meetings.

⁶⁹ Swedish National Board for Wealth Affairs, About the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. Internet: http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/ad2/user_documents/wwwUSINFOBroschyrENG.pdf [Accessed 09.09.09]

⁷⁰ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

⁷¹ Stakeholder interview: Lars Svedberg, Professor, Ersta Sköndal University College and representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁷² Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

⁷³ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁷⁴ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

⁷⁵ Svedberg, L. and Olsson, L-E, Voluntary Organisations and Welfare Provision in Sweden - Is there such a Thing?" in A. Zimmer & A. Evers (eds) (2010) Third Society Organisations Facing Turbulent Environments: Sports, Culture and Social Services in Germany, Italy, U.K., Poland and Sweden. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag.

There is also a large number of independent NGO umbrella organisations in various fields, that *work with* volunteering rather than organisational forms created to *promote* volunteering. In fact, NGOs themselves carry out the majority of promotion activities in Sweden. They rely on volunteers and therefore carry out activities to engage more people in their work⁷⁶.

Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks

The National Forum for Voluntary Social Work (*Forum för Frivilligt Socialt Arbete*) is a member of the European Volunteer Centre (CEV).

Non-profit organisations in the sphere of social welfare are members of the European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD) and the European Mutual Help Network (EMNA)⁷⁷.

2.2 Policies

National strategy/framework for volunteering

Volunteering is a priority on the political agenda. The government is currently [in 2009] preparing a new policy on civil society (*den ideella sektorn*). In addition, an agreement, or 'compact' between the Government, voluntary organisations within the social sector and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions has already been signed. This shows that volunteering (or rather civil society) has a high place on the political agenda. A similar agreement is underway regarding the integration policy area⁷⁸.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

There are no targets in Sweden relating to volunteering. The focus is on the organisation rather than on the individual. The focus is more on how the public sector should relate to civil society and voluntary organisations: how to organise dialogue, share roles and duties, promote the independence of the sector, etc⁷⁹.

However, in the agreement between the Swedish government, idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), the parties have agreed on six principles for the future relations between the parties. In addition the idea-based organisations (as well as the government) have created their own action plan which will be followed up annually by the idea-based organisations themselves⁸⁰.

The national population survey is used to collect data on volunteering. This survey is financed by the government and is carried out by *Ersta Sköndal* University College. The study has been going on for 17 years.

All funding which is distributed to the voluntary sector is subject to directives from the government. For example, the funding distributed by the National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*), and the National Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*) the government or parliament agrees on directives that identify the goals and results organisations should work towards if they are to receive funding, including reporting requirements. These vary from one to another.

Not all state aid to non-profit organisations is based on legislation. The percentage of state aid that does have constitutional support has however increased between 2003 and 2009⁸¹.

⁷⁶ Youth Partnership, Questionnaire "Voluntary Activities", Sweden

⁷⁷ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁷⁸ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁷⁹ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁸⁰ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

⁸¹ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

International policies

Activities are organised by a number of NGOs and municipalities on the UN International volunteer day, focusing on the positive contribution to society by volunteers in Sweden.⁸²

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

Swedish policies in the field of volunteering focus on voluntary organisations rather than on individual volunteers⁸³. As we have seen in the description of government policy above, there has been a drive in recent years to increase collaboration between the government and the non-profit sector.

The government provides significant support for volunteering through the provision of funding to the sector. Approximately 21 government agencies provide in total approx. 7.2 million SEK per year in grants to NGOs⁸⁴. Volunteer centres also receive state funding and many are run by the municipalities. As we have seen, the government also funds studies and research into volunteering.

One example of these grants is those which are distributed to youth organisations. As we have seen, support to youth organisations is provided through the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs. In addition, government support has been allocated to specific projects, such as a project to develop methods for the recognition of non-formal learning within the youth NGOs⁸⁵.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level

Autonomy for the regions and municipalities in Sweden is very important and they develop their own policies and programmes within the framework set up by the Parliament and Government⁸⁶. As a result, different approaches to promoting volunteering can be found across the country. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) has participated in the process of dialogue with the voluntary organisations and is party to the agreement (Compact) with the idea-based organisations and the government. SALAR is party to the agreement but does not have its own specific action plan, as its role in the dialogue was to represent the independent regions and municipalities. The SALAR will now support any regions or municipalities which develop their own action plans or policies, inspired by the agreement.

The regional volunteer centres (run either by municipalities or by large voluntary organisations) also stimulate volunteering at regional and local level.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level

The Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (CIU) runs youth exchanges with several different countries. The Centre runs a database called *MyTellus*, which offers information on voluntary opportunities (and opportunities for paid work or education) abroad⁸⁷.

⁸² The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (2006), *Key priorities for youth policies answers on voluntary activities*. Internet: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Voluntary_activities/Iceland_2006.pdf.

⁸³ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

⁸⁴ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009

⁸⁵ Youth Partnership, Questionnaire "Voluntary Activities", Sweden, Internet: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Voluntary_activities/2008/Sweden.pdf.

⁸⁶ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

⁸⁷ Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange website: <http://www.ciu.org/in-english/>

There has also been a greater interest in the opportunities offered by the European Union, since Sweden joined in 1995. For example, there are approximately 250 organisations which send or receive full-time volunteers, many of these within the framework of the European Voluntary Service. The total number of places has been estimated at approximately 1 000 for Swedish young people working in Sweden or abroad and between 250 and 300 for foreign volunteers coming to Sweden⁸⁸.

There are many Swedish voluntary organisations involved in international development. SIDA (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) is the main agency in Sweden for international development and cooperation. SIDA also provides funding for a number of development aid organisations also offering volunteer work and exchange programmes.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 General legal framework

Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering

In Sweden, it has been very important up to now not to regulate voluntary organisations and any attempt to formalise volunteering in law has always been abandoned. This is because the independence and autonomy of the sector are considered a priority. Although the question of adopting legislation for non-profit associations has been raised several times in Parliament, there has been only small support for this. Legal conflicts relating to NGOs and volunteers are therefore solved through case law.

Thus, there is no specific legal framework with respect to volunteering. However, the right for every person to create and participate in any form of association, the freedom of association, is a constitutional right - the right to establish a club or society, without outside interference, and to participate in clubs and societies, is guaranteed⁸⁹.

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

There is no code of conduct but in line with the tradition of popular movements, voluntary organisations in Sweden are self-regulating. Once an association (*ideell förening*) has adopted a constitution and elected a board of directors, it becomes a legal entity⁹⁰. Swedish youth organisations, for example, are granted a great deal of freedom in the organisation of their work and activities. The main criteria for the distribution of government grants to these organisations are the size of the organisation and the scope of its activities. This ensures that the organisations are able to maintain their autonomy⁹¹.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

Provisions for specific categories

There is no particular legislation regarding volunteers and they are not assimilated into other categories. In certain cases volunteers are treated as being equivalent to either students or to employees⁹². For instance, voluntary service (*“full-time project-based*

⁸⁸ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

⁸⁹ Swedish Sports Confederation (*Riksidrottsförbundet*) website: <http://www.rf.se/>.

⁹⁰ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

⁹¹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

⁹² Youth Partnership, Questionnaire “Voluntary Activities”, Sweden, Internet: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Voluntary_activities/2008/Sweden.pdf.

*activities that are carried out on a continuous basis for a limited period of time*⁹³) is considered to be a form of non-formal learning and therefore these volunteers are considered to be students⁹⁴.

Since there is no law to establish the legal status of volunteers, they have no legal right to social benefits. Their entitlement is determined on their legal status within other categories, such as students or the unemployed.

For unemployed persons who do carry out voluntary activities, there are a number of conditions which they must comply with in order to continue to receive their benefits. Under the Law on Law on Unemployment Insurance (1997:238), Point nine outlines the conditions which must be met in order to receive unemployment benefits. These include a requirement to be available to work three hours per day, or on average 17 hours per week, and to be available to start work unless obstacles to doing so have been declared. This could prevent the unemployed from undertaking volunteer work on a full-time basis. However since long-term/full-time volunteering is uncommon in Sweden, this currently does not present a significant issue⁹⁵.

Individuals in receipt of other social insurance benefits, such as the long-term sick, can also risk losing these if they carry out voluntary work. This is only the case however if the voluntary work is considered to be equal in effort to paid employment. Providing a number of conditions are met, such as maintaining the number of voluntary hours contributed below one eighth of normal working hours, it is still possible for such individuals to carry out voluntary work. This policy tends to impact disabled individuals who take on a board position for an organisation for disabled persons⁹⁶.

Family allowances can still be claimed, providing the volunteer activity does not mean that they are unable to comply with the requirements under Swedish Social Security Law⁹⁷.

However, a 2005 study of volunteer activities among young people found that young people who volunteer [full-time] as their main occupation do not fall within any of the groups that are entitled to social security benefits. They are sometimes treated in the same way as students, or employees but the lack of clarity within the current legal framework means that there is a risk that volunteers are being inconsistently assessed.

According to the study, these problems relate to most security systems, such as social insurance, unemployment insurance, and the pension system, as well as other benefits such as parental insurance. Some young people who carry out voluntary work alongside regular employment or study are also affected in this way⁹⁸.

Support schemes and incentives

There are no support schemes and incentives to engage individuals in voluntary work. However, as described above, the government does provide significant financial support to the sector, which is considered to be a way of encouraging voluntary work. Furthermore, the social and personal benefits of undertaking voluntary work (e.g. to make contacts, to enhance the individual's CV) are widely recognised and therefore could be seen as an incentive.

⁹³ According to the definition used in this report, voluntary service can take place at home or abroad.

⁹⁴ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2003), *Legal Status of Volunteers: Country Report Sweden*.

⁹⁵ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2003), *Legal Status of Volunteers: Country Report Sweden*.

⁹⁸ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers

Taxation of volunteers is not specifically defined in Swedish legislation. Overall national authority in this respect lies with the Swedish Tax Agency (*Skatteverket*).

Individuals are entitled to claim expenses from the organisation for costs associated with the voluntary activity they carry out. If the individual is in receipt of an income from the organisation, they can claim a tax deduction on these costs (e.g. travel expenses) in the same way as an employed person can. If they are not in receipt of an income from the voluntary organisation, they are not able to claim a tax deduction on their expenses⁹⁹.

With regards the reimbursement of expenses for volunteers, individual organisations decide their own policy. For example, the Swedish Red Cross in principle covers all volunteers' expenses. Local branches establish an agreement with the volunteer, depending on the solvency and performance of the branch.

These practices also apply to full-time volunteers. In practice, reimbursement of expenses may include food and lodging but there is no obligation for the organisation to cover these costs except for volunteers who carry out European Voluntary Service (EVS), who all receive pocket money, board and lodging.¹⁰⁰

Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

Rewards or fees for individual volunteers are to be declared and considered as fully taxable income. Benefits and other compensation for employment are to be taxed at full value. Fringe benefits should be valued at market value¹⁰¹.

However, a volunteer is entitled to the same general deduction as any other taxpayer, which is approximately 18 200 SEK per year (2009 figures). Therefore, for an annual income up to this amount there is no tax to be paid – beyond this point tax must be paid. Furthermore, the volunteer may deduct costs incurred in acquiring and maintaining income. Living costs are explicitly excluded. For the most common types of costs, there are standard deductions; for example for travelling and increased living expenses incurred in the course of the taxpayer's work and/or for use of a private car in employment¹⁰².

Benefits and allowances for European Voluntary Service volunteers are exempt from tax¹⁰³.

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

There is no specific legal framework for associations (*ideell förening*). For foundations (*stiftelse*) and religious societies (*registrerat trossamfund*) there is a legal framework: *Stiftelselagen* (SFS 1994:1220) and *lag om trossamfund* (SFS 1998:1593), respectively.

With regards taxation, NGOs are generally taxed in the same way as other legal entities in Sweden, such as for example limited companies. However, there are specific regulations for associations which are considered to be acting for the public good (*allmännyttig*). In such cases the liability to pay taxes is limited and the association is only liable to pay taxes on some of its income. The liability to pay tax varies, depending on the type of organisation (organisations which are considered to be *registrerat trossamfund* and associations (*ideell förening*) are treated differently to foundations (*stiftelse*)).

⁹⁹ Interview: representative of the Swedish Tax Agency (*Skatteverket*), 2009

¹⁰⁰ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2003), *Legal Status of Volunteers: Country Report Sweden*. Internet: http://www.cev.be/data/File/Sweden_legalstatus.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Information provided by representative of the Ministry of Finance

¹⁰² Information provided by representative of the Ministry of Finance

¹⁰³ Youth Partnership, 2007. *Questionnaire "Voluntary Activities" Sweden*. Internet: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Voluntary_activities/2008/Sweden.pdf

Four conditions must be met in order for an association or religious organisation (*registrerat trossamfund*) to be identified as being of benefit to the public for the purposes of tax exemption. These are:

- 1) The main purpose of the association must be of benefit to the public. Such purposes may be religious, political, athletic or cultural.
- 2) The activity of the association must be carried out exclusively, or almost exclusively, to fulfil the purpose identified under point 1.
- 3) The activity of the association must, over a period of several years, correspond to the revenue of the association's assets. In practice, this means that about 80 % of the revenue must be used for the association's activity.
- 4) The association may not refuse anyone membership, unless there are special reasons for this with regard to the nature and extent of the association's activity or its purpose

If the NGO fulfils these four conditions, it is not liable to pay income taxes on capital and real estate and on business income, if such income originates from the non-profit activity of the association. This means that income generated through fundraising or by other non-profit activities may be exempted from taxes¹⁰⁴. If the organisation conducts additional 'business activities' (such as providing services), these may be subject to tax if they are not considered to fall within the organisation's purpose. Each organisation is assessed individually and must submit an annual self-declaration which is reviewed by the Tax Agency to determine whether their income should be taxed or not (although some organisations are permitted to make this self-declaration less often, e.g. every five years, if their status with regards taxation is clear)¹⁰⁵.

A foundation (*stiftelse*) must have a higher grade of purpose for the public good, for example scientific research, charity, care of children and teaching (associations can have these purposes too). However, foundations are never entitled to tax deductions on business income.

The liability to pay VAT also varies, depending on the type of organisation. Foundations (*stiftelse*) do have to pay VAT but for organisations which are considered to be *registrerat trossamfund* and associations (*ideell förening*), if their income is exempted from income tax according to the above-mentioned rules, the non-profit activity that generates that income is regarded to be non-commercial and thereby is exempted from VAT. This may however change in the future, in line with EU legislation¹⁰⁶.

However, individuals are not entitled to a tax deduction for private donations to voluntary organisations ('Gift Aid' in the UK), nor are there tax exemptions linked to establishing non-profit associations.

Finally, the organisations must notify the Tax Agency of the salary paid out to each volunteer per year¹⁰⁷. They must also inform the Tax Agency if a volunteer claims expenses for their voluntary activities¹⁰⁸.

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

There are no legal provisions for private organisations involved in volunteering and there are no specific tax privileges for private companies to accept volunteers or to allow employees to participate in volunteering activity¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁴ Information provided by representative of the Ministry of Finance

¹⁰⁵ Interview: representative of the Swedish Tax Agency, 2009

¹⁰⁶ Interview: representative of the Swedish Tax Agency, 2009

¹⁰⁷ Information provided by representative of the Ministry of Finance

¹⁰⁸ Interview: representative of the Swedish Tax Agency, 2009

¹⁰⁹ Information provided by representative of the Ministry of Finance

However, there has been a new trend, for around ten years, for private companies to allow employees to carry out volunteering within work time. This is offered as a sort of goodwill policy for employees¹¹⁰.

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

There is no legal obligation to provide insurance for volunteers. Individual volunteering organisations decide whether or not to provide insurance for their volunteers and the Swedish Red Cross for instance does provide insurance. Volunteers should provide their own insurance where the organisation does not¹¹¹.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

National budget allocated to volunteering

In 2009, 7.7 billion SEK has been allocated to voluntary organisations as core funding, funding of operations and project funding (*statsbidrag*) to voluntary organisations¹¹².

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

Public sector funds account for only 29% of voluntary (*ideell*) sector organisations' total finances. Over half of funding (62%) comes from membership fees and the organisations' own income-generating activities. Nine percent of funding comes from donations from private companies or persons¹¹³. Organisations in the welfare sector receive 70-80% of their funding from state- or municipality funding.

National state funding:

All national democratic associations are eligible for government grants, regardless of the focus of their activities¹¹⁴. The state provides financial support, in the form of grants, to non-profit organisations in a number of policy areas, including culture, social policy and youth policy and to different types of organisation including women's organisations and organisations promoting outdoor activities. Grants are also provided for premises for public meetings and for sport.¹¹⁵ A significant majority (70%) is allocated to education, sports and aid provided by individual organisations¹¹⁶.

State grants can be:

- Core funding which is not tied to any specific targets;
- Activity grants which are to be used for a specific activity;
- Commission reimbursement, which is for activity which has been agreed upon between the government and the organisation;
- Time-limited project grants; or

¹¹⁰ Interview: Lars-Erik Olsson PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

¹¹¹ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

¹¹² Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare

¹¹³ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare

¹¹⁴ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

¹¹⁵ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures

- Construction grants to build new premises¹¹⁷.

The organisational grants are the highest in absolute number but activity grants form the majority of the total budget. The funds come from several sources, including the state budget, the lottery and gaming company (*AB Svenska spel*) and the General Heritage Fund (*Allmänna Arvsfonden*)¹¹⁸. Public and non-governmental actors who distribute funds include:

- The Swedish Inheritance Fund (*Allmänna arvsfonden*)
- The Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (*Centrum för internationellt ungdomsutbyte*)
- The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- The National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*)
- The Swedish Arts Council (*Statenskultrurråd*)
- Foundation for the Culture of the Future (*Stiftelsen framtidens kultur*)
- The National Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*)¹¹⁹
- National Institute for Public Health
- National Board for Schooling (*Skolverket*)
- National Council for Crime Prevention
- The Swedish Sports Confederation (*Riksidrottsförbundet*)
- The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*)

The National Board for Youth Affairs (*Ungdomsstyrelsen*) distributes grants to youth organisations, independent women's organisations, organisations representing national minorities, national organisations for ethnic minorities and national non-profit organisations for homosexual, bisexual and transgender people¹²⁰. All types of national organisation can apply for the government grant for youth organisations, providing they are run on democratic principles, are independent and have young people represented on their board. About 90 organisations currently benefit from an organisational grant¹²¹.

The Swedish Inheritance Fund supports non-profit organisations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas for developing activities for children, young people and the disabled. Projects must be innovative and those working for gender equality, integration, diversity and accessibility are prioritised. Support can also be granted towards an organisation's premises costs¹²².

Regional and local funding:

Local governments also provide support to non-profit organisations, although they are not obliged to do so. For instance, 70% of the regional volunteer centres are financed in full by

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

¹¹⁹ The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (2006), *Key priorities for youth policies answers on voluntary activities*. Internet: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Voluntary_activities/Iceland_2006.pdf.

¹²⁰ Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (2008), *About the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs*. Internet: http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/ad2/user_documents/wwwUSINFOBroschyrENG.pdf.

¹²¹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

¹²² http://www.arvsfonden.se/Pages/SectionSubPage_15359.aspx

the municipalities, while the other 30% are funded by a combination of municipality and non-profit financing¹²³.

Regional and local funding is not included in the figure given above of 780 million EUR. Total support to voluntary organisations is therefore much higher. However, aggregate statistics are not available¹²⁴.

Municipalities and regions give large amounts of contributions and to an increasing degree contract NGOs as suppliers of services, for example within healthcare, education and welfare, cultural and leisure activities, and the reception of refugees. In 2002 the municipalities were estimated to have given a total of approximately SEK 3.7 billion in subsidies to associations and foundations. They also purchased services for SEK 9 billion from associations and foundations. The county councils gave approximately 1.4 billion in grants to non-profit associations and foundations and purchased services for SEK 400 million¹²⁵.

Lotteries and other games

NGOs, including voluntary organisations, which are considered to be of public benefit, are eligible to generate income through the organisation of lotteries, guessing and bingo games. In order to do so, the organisation must obtain a permit from their municipality, county council or from the Gaming Board (*Lotteriinspektionen*).

Non-profit organisations must act in the main for the public benefit in order to be eligible. They must also meet further conditions in order to gain a permit, such as:

- the payout percentage must be between 35% and 50% (i.e. the prizes should equate to between 35-50% of the total estimated sales)
- the lottery should give the applicant reasonable revenue and this revenue should be used for public benefit¹²⁶.

Around 30 NGOs run national lotteries, including the Red Cross, Save the Children and some environmental and sports organisations. Smaller NGOs also run regional / local lotteries and games. A few also run internet lotteries / games. There are more sports organisations running lotteries than other types of NGOs, although exact figures on this are not available.

Income from the national state lottery is also distributed to NGOs through the Swedish Sports Confederation (which receives 70% of the funding) and the National Board for Youth Affairs (which receives 30%). These organisations then distribute the funding among smaller NGOs.

In 2007, Swedish NGOs' total revenue from lotteries (including income from the national lottery) was 2586 million SEK. Of this total, 1590 million came from the *Svenska Spel* and 996 million came from the NGOs' own lotteries. This income is not subject to taxation¹²⁷.

Private funding:

There are a number of private sources of finance, such as foundations¹²⁸. Personal donations are also a source of funding¹²⁹ and during the last 10-15 years, the amount of funding received from private sources has increased considerably¹³⁰.

¹²³ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

¹²⁴ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

¹²⁵ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

¹²⁶ Gaming Board for Sweden (Lotteriinspektionen) website: <http://www.lotteriinspektionen.se/>

¹²⁷ Information provided by a representative of the Gaming Board for Sweden (*Lotteriinspektionen*)

NGOs have also increased their income from the sale of goods with intrinsic value over the last decade, from 571 million kronor in 1998 to almost 1.2 billion in 2007¹³¹.

There is a mix of methods of allocating public funding. The National Board for Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) for example allocates funding by sector and sub-sector (e.g. to social work, HIV/AIDS and other sector-specific issues) but also transfers funding to regional / local levels, e.g. for domestic violence. The regions and local municipalities can choose how they allocate their funding but they also use a mix of methods¹³². The allocation of public funding is considered to be transparent as it is governed by byelaws (*förordning*)¹³³. Furthermore, the Charity Control (SFI) undertakes quality control of those NGOs with "90 accounts", which serves as a quality label for donors.

A government bill is currently being prepared which will address the tensions which may occur as a result of the fact that voluntary organisations receive grants from different sectors with different criteria¹³⁴.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

Traditionally, the Swedish voluntary sector has played a relatively small role in delivering social welfare and has focused more on advocacy. However, the sector plays an increasingly important role in the supply of services, particularly welfare services¹³⁵. Municipalities and regions give large amounts of contributions and to an increasing degree contract NGOs as suppliers of services, for example within healthcare, education and welfare, cultural and leisure activities, and the reception of refugees.

Data on the share of non-profit organisations delivering SSGIs is not currently available but in the draft government policy on civil society, one possible new measure is to include civil society in the annual public statistics¹³⁶.

The table 9 below outlines the number of employees in the welfare domain (education, health and social care), related to the public sector, the private (for-profit) sector, the voluntary (non-profit) sector and in total in 1990, 2000 and 2004¹³⁷. The table shows that during the 15-year period from 1990 to 2004, the public sector has remained the dominant actor in the welfare domain. These statistics imply that private sector has become increasingly involved, while the voluntary sector involvement has remained around the same.

Table 9: Number of employees in the welfare domain, 1990-2004

	Public sector	Private (for-profit) sector	Voluntary (non-profit) sector	Total
Number of employees 1990	≈ 840 000	≈ 26 000	≈ 32 000	≈ 900 000

¹²⁸ The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (2006), *Key priorities for youth policies answers on voluntary activities*.

¹²⁹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

¹³⁰ Interview: Lars Svedberg, Professor and Research Director, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

¹³¹ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

¹³² Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare

¹³³ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

¹³⁴ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

¹³⁵ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>

¹³⁶ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare, 2009

¹³⁷ Svedberg, L. and Olsson, L-E, Voluntary Organisations and Welfare Provision in Sweden - Is there such a Thing?" in A. Zimmer & A. Evers (eds) (2010) *Third Society Organisations Facing Turbulent Environments: Sports, Culture and Social Services in Germany, Italy, U.K., Poland and Sweden*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag.

Number of employees 2000	≈ 780 000	≈ 72 000	≈ 29 000	≈ 880 000
Number of employees 2004	≈ 900 000	≈ 100 000	≈ 35 000	≈ 1 035 000

Source: Trydegård, 2001; SCB 2006.

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

Income generated through volunteering

No information available.

Economic value of volunteering

In terms of working years, a 2005 of the value of voluntary work in Sweden was 400 000 annual "working years" (årsarbetskrafter)¹³⁸.

Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP

In 2002, the total turnover of NGOs was estimated at 125 billion SEK (5.3% of GDP). It is important to note that although the Swedish church is now a non-governmental organisation, it is not included in these figures¹³⁹. Previous estimates gave the economic value of volunteering at around 4 % of GDP. This implies that there has been an increase in the total turnover of NGOs.

Issues of service substitution and job substitution

It is intended that the NGO sector in Sweden should complement, rather than replace, the public sector¹⁴⁰. Furthermore, a 2005 survey found that more than 60% of respondents thought that voluntary work and volunteers provide something other than paid employees¹⁴¹.

One of the aims of the Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, is to ensure a growth in the diversity of providers and suppliers. This is not considered to be a threat to the welfare state – the voluntary and non-profit sector is seen as a resource to develop welfare rather than a way of cutting costs. The agreement therefore clarifies the role of voluntary players in the social sphere and enables the idea-based organisations to compete on equal terms¹⁴².

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Due to the tradition of the popular mass movements, volunteering is seen above all to enable people to participate in the Swedish democratic society. Voluntary organisations are important representatives of different groups and interests in relation to public administration and decision-making.

¹³⁸ Interview: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare

¹³⁹ Figures from Wijkström and Einarsson (2006), provided by a representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

¹⁴¹ Ersta Sköndal University, Sköndalinsitutet 2005. "Medborgarnas insatser och engagemang i civilsamhället".

¹⁴² Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

For the volunteers themselves, participation in voluntary activities enables them to access a social network and feel a part of their local community¹⁴³. They can influence both their own situation and more general matters relating to the development of society, by joining together in organisations with others.

Furthermore, volunteering can be a learning experience. For example, many students who are volunteers see this as a practical complement to their theoretical studies, and a chance to do a sort of internship¹⁴⁴.

The promotion of voluntary work amongst young people is part of the work to improve young people's employability and to offer opportunities for relevant work experience¹⁴⁵. However, a research report carried out by Ersta Sköndal University College showed that in general, voluntary work does not offer a 'bridge' between private and social life for people from lower socio-economic groups¹⁴⁶.

For beneficiaries, voluntary organisations give them a 'voice'. These organisations help to ensure that those who are affected by public decisions can assert their rights and interests. They also contribute to investigating social problems and developing welfare, for example by highlighting needs in, for example, social services which are not being met¹⁴⁷. Direct beneficiaries also benefit from the provision of certain services in the social and welfare sector by voluntary organisations¹⁴⁸.

Voluntary organisations have different target groups, but many of the persons on the receiving end of voluntary work are the elderly and young people. Therefore building bridges between generations and developing an understanding of each other is considered to be one of the benefits of volunteering¹⁴⁹.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

According to research, the motivation for volunteering is changing from classic altruism to individuals looking at what they can achieve themselves through voluntary activities¹⁵⁰. Voluntary organisations rarely have any regulations concerning how many hours or days a volunteer needs to work and this is perceived by volunteers, as something positive since it gives them a sense of freedom.¹⁵¹

But people do still volunteer because they want to help others or to help the organisation, to make a change or to influence their environment¹⁵². People also volunteer because they wish to be part of the democratic process¹⁵³. Others may volunteer for personal reasons, for example if they or someone in their family who is affected by an issue, they might turn to working for an NGO working with those kinds of issues¹⁵⁴.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Malmö University, www.mah.se

¹⁴⁵ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

¹⁴⁸ Interview: Lars-Erik Olsson PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.frivillig.se>

¹⁵⁰ Sani, M (2008), The Social-democratic model, Volunteering in Sweden. In *Volunteers for Cultural Heritage (2008) Volunteering for Cultural Heritage: Perspectives from other European countries. Section 7 – European Perspectives*

¹⁵¹ <http://www.frivillig.se> and The Red Cross, Malmö

¹⁵² Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

¹⁵³ European Round Table of Charitable Social Welfare Associations, *Sweden National Report*.

¹⁵⁴ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

Individuals' motivation to carry out voluntary work can also be influenced by the 'social arenas' they are linked to. Both the number of social arenas they are involved in and the length of time they have been involved can have an impact and the higher the "social arena-index" a person has, the greater the chance that they will carry out volunteer work. Parents of young children are therefore very active, since they are in contact with schools, kindergartens, maternity care, hospitals etc¹⁵⁵.

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

As volunteering largely takes place within NGOs, the role of volunteering is not specifically recognised in national education and training policies. Furthermore, at the moment, no national regulation exists with respect to validation of non-formal and informal learning. No national system to recognise volunteers' skills and competences is in place either. There have however been government efforts related to this issue. It can be mentioned by way of example that the Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (CIU) has with state funding developed a new method for the recognition of informal learning. The method developed is entitled ELD (Experience, Learning, Description) and recognises learning acquired by young people through international experience. The method may be applied to wider contexts, if the results of the pilot project are positive.

Furthermore, the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) has prepared a report outlining its work on validation and recognition of experience for people active in youth organisations. The report is intended to inspire and support youth organisations in Sweden that are interested in further developing their work with these issues. The report was financed by the government and is mainly concentrated on validation with reference to the labour market¹⁵⁶.

Also, validation can be used to by-pass the regulation that in order to qualify to enter a national upper secondary programme, a student needs to have completed compulsory education with pass grades in Swedish, English and mathematics. Through the validation of prior learning, municipal adult education accepts students without any formal qualifications. The student's previous knowledge and experiences are validated and the student is accepted to enter a course when they see fit. Experience gained in voluntary activities can help some people, although there is no clear evidence to support that volunteering experience is being used for this purpose in practice.

In addition, much emphasis is put on non-formal education and the implementation of EU policies through for example the Youth in Action programme. These activities however take place outside the formal educational system¹⁵⁷.

Finally, the National Swedish Commission on Validation was set up in 2004 to enhance regional cooperation and to explore quality and methodological issues around the topic of validation, although not specifically related to the experience of volunteers.

¹⁵⁵ Public Investigations SOU 1993: 82, cited in European Round Table of Charitable Social Welfare Associations, *Sweden National Report*. Internet: <http://www.etwelfare.org/uk/projects/Country/S-Nat.html>

¹⁵⁶ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

¹⁵⁷ Information provided by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

Many voluntary organisations offer support and subject-specific training to their volunteers as well as for those seeking to work with volunteers in their organisation. Organisations dealing with the recruitment of volunteers and getting them into contact with voluntary organisations are also providers of training. The National Volunteering Agency is such an organisation. The National association for Voluntary Citizens (RFS) also provides education and training for volunteers¹⁵⁸.

In some cases training is provided by folk high schools that can be closely linked to an NGO. The latter applies especially to the training of international volunteers. Colleges and universities offer courses on global issues and so on for people who wish to deepen their knowledge of development aid work¹⁵⁹.

Each voluntary organisation has its own internal system for coordinating volunteers and some are more structured than others. The Stockholm City Mission (*Stadsmissionen*) serves as an example of a more structured organisation – new volunteers are required to undergo an induction over the course of a year before they commence volunteering and are required to meet eight times during this period¹⁶⁰.

7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

Stakeholders interviewed during the research identified an influence from other countries, particularly the other Nordic countries and the UK. For instance, the new 'compact' agreements which have been introduced are based on a UK model¹⁶¹. Furthermore, over the last ten years, membership of the EU has brought about some policy developments which have implications for the voluntary sector. Furthermore, in the north of Sweden, the opportunities offered by the EU have been pursued by the voluntary sector¹⁶² and there has been a greater focus on concepts such as the social economy and the cooperative movement¹⁶³.

With specific reference to youth policy, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is encouraging more organisations to use the European Voluntary Service in order to recruit more young people with limited opportunities¹⁶⁴. As a result of the EU Programme "Youth" and the European Voluntary Service (EVS), volunteer activities have increased in scope and more young people are today interested in this area.

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.volontarbyran.se>

¹⁵⁹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

¹⁶⁰ Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO) and European Volunteer Centre (CEV) (2007), *Voluntary Action in Sweden – Facts and Figures*

¹⁶¹ Interviews: representative of the National Board of Health and Welfare and PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

¹⁶² Olsson, Nordfeldt, Larsson & Kendall, (2009). Sweden: When strong third sector historical roots meet EU policy processes. In Kendall (ed), *Handbook of third sector policy in Europe*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

¹⁶³ Interview: Lars-Erik Olsson PhD, Dean, Ersta Sköndal University College, 2009

¹⁶⁴ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

The agreement between the government, idea-based organisations and SALAR identifies the following challenges for the sector¹⁶⁵:

- At national level, the challenges include the need to further develop policy in accordance with the six principles defined in the agreement, as well as acknowledging the independence and role of the sector, and improving the knowledge about the sector;
- At regional / local level, the view of the national Ministry is that the challenges faced are the same as above, although the regions and municipalities are independent and define their own challenges;
- At organisational level, the conditions of the sector need to be strengthened;
- At individual level, a central challenge is to engage marginalised groups in volunteering, since it is currently mainly the people who are active in several spheres – those with education, employment and a family – who also become involved in NGOs and popular movements. There is in fact an increasing gap between those who take part in NGOs and popular movements and those who do not.

Other challenges include the need to improve and expand information and data, to provide infrastructure, both in terms of physical and digital meeting places, the need to provide sustainable funding to the sector in order to ensure continuity and the need to improve knowledge about the NGOs as a ‘third sector’, to be taken into account by public bodies. Furthermore, practicalities such as insurance and protection for volunteers need to be addressed.

The lack of a specific legal framework for volunteers can create obstacles in relation to questions such as taxation, social protection etc¹⁶⁶. In fact, the unclear formal status of volunteer programmes was found to be the cause of some of the problems identified in a 2005 survey on volunteer activities in Sweden. As indicated above in section 3, young people who volunteer on a full-time basis do not fit into any of the groups that are entitled to social security benefits. Some are treated as equivalent to students, or to employees but the current regulatory system means there is a risk of volunteers are being inconsistently assessed, since it is not always clear how the law should be applied¹⁶⁷. These structural barriers, relating to social insurance, unemployment benefit, health insurance and labour market issues, were also highlighted during the dialogue between the government, SALAR and the idea-based organisations in the social sphere. Another issue raised was the fact that the tax rules are not designed in the same way for all parts of the voluntary and non-profit sector. Finally, the different procurement procedures were also considered to be an obstacle¹⁶⁸.

Actions are already in place to address some of these challenges. For example, in terms of improving information and data, reforms concerning statistics are expected in the proposed

¹⁶⁵ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>

¹⁶⁶ The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (2006), *Key priorities for youth policies answers on voluntary activities*.

¹⁶⁷ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Division for Youth Policy (2007), *The national report of Sweden concerning the implementation of the common objectives for voluntary activities of young people*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/85574>.

¹⁶⁸ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Agreement between the Swedish government, national idea-based organisations in the social sphere and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions

government bill on the civil society (*ideell sektor*). In addition, the bill will describe the establishment of a new ten-year research programme on civil society, which adds about 22 million SEK annually from 2010 onwards. The research programme will focus on the role of civil society and its conditions. The effort includes multi-disciplinary research, applied research and dissemination of research-based knowledge and efforts to develop statistics in the area.

A government bill is currently being prepared which will address the tensions which may occur as a result of the fact that voluntary organisations receive grants from different sectors with different criteria.

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

As we have seen, the level of volunteering in Sweden is already high, with around half of the population engaged in voluntary activities. This stability in the engagement of Swedish citizens, together with the continuing high level of membership, presents an opportunity for the sector. The new trend to become involved in voluntary activities without committing to membership of an organisation could also present an opportunity for increasing voluntary activity within the Swedish population.

With regards the involvement of voluntary organisations in the delivery of social services, the Government has expressed a commitment to increasing the diversity of those performing and supplying services in publicly financed welfare in the future¹⁶⁹. This may present an opportunity to voluntary organisations wishing to join the service delivery sector.

As earlier mentioned, voluntary organisations rarely have any regulations concerning how many hours or days a volunteer needs to work and this is perceived by volunteers, as something positive since it gives them a sense of freedom.

Finally, the various developments outlined in this report (e.g. introduction of the Agreement in the social sphere, the commitment to a research programme) are all significant. The process of dialogue, together with the increased recognition of the sector and the Government's commitment to support the sector to develop, all present important opportunities for the future.

¹⁶⁹ Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2008. *Policy on non-governmental organisations and popular movements*. Internet: <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/11/90/45/db9700f9.pdf>

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