

## Youth Partnership

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



# CONTRIBUTION OF NON-PROGRAMME COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

## ALBANIA CHAPTER I I: VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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## Contents

2.1 GENERAL CONTEXT.....	3
2.2 ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING.....	4
2.3 NATIONAL STRATEGY ON YOUTH VOLUNTEERING.....	4
2.4 LAWS AND REGULATIONS ON YOUTH VOLUNTEERING.....	6
2.5 YOUTH VOLUNTEERING AT NATIONAL LEVEL.....	9
2.6 CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY PROGRAMMES.....	10
2.7 RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT YOUTH VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES.....	12
2.8 SKILLS RECOGNITION.....	13
2.9 CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS.....	14
GLOSSARY.....	14

## 2.1 GENERAL CONTEXT

The notion of volunteer work is not unknown to the Albanians, yet, they were introduced to some of the most negative forms of it during the communist regime. Anyone who was a teenager in the 1990s can still remember well how volunteer work was organised. Volunteer actions were happening every Sunday, and anyone from children to the elderly would gather in their neighbourhoods, villages, cities, and express their solidarity through free labour. The production of collective property and goods both in agriculture and industry, obligatory labour during official holidays in different sectors, longer shifts at work, etc. were the very common traits of volunteering at the time. All these were, in fact, the forms of forced labour that are stuck in the mind of Albanians up to now.

Solidarity among each other has also been at the core of the Albanian people, especially in times of crises, in natural disasters, or even very much seen towards foreigners. For any Albanian to be open and welcoming to strangers, to feed them, help them and show humanity has always been a value and an appreciated characteristic. This has also remained and is treasured today.

After the fall of the communist system in Albania, many civil societies were established. Several of them started developing positions on volunteer work, especially among young people. But whoever dared to promote volunteering would get a very strange look and a definite refusal from any individuals. If youngsters told their parents they would like to volunteer for any organisation, school or project, it would again raise a big debate. Parents would try to convince you that someone wanted to use you as a cheap labour force, while they were making a profit out of your work. Whenever confronted with volunteering, most of the citizens would remind of the forced labour. This brought the negative connotation to volunteering in the country and it took two decades to break down.

Until 2016 Albanian did not have any national regulation on volunteering. Non-structured forms of volunteering were still being implemented by many organisations, mostly in terms of projects and campaigns.

Tirana is the first and only city to have established a programme on structured volunteering during 2011. The Beyond Barriers Association,<sup>1</sup> with the collaboration of the South Eastern European Youth Network (SEEYN)<sup>2</sup> through the financial support of Instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA) Funds, established the Local Volunteer Service of Tirana. The programme run by Beyond Barriers is the first known form of structured volunteer work that exists in Albania and at present has been set on hold due to the complications arising from the Law on Volunteering. This initiative also involved the preparation of a Draft Law on Volunteer Work in Albania, which

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<sup>1</sup> [www.beyondbarriers.org/new](http://www.beyondbarriers.org/new).

<sup>2</sup> [www.seeyn.org](http://www.seeyn.org).

was prepared and consulted with several organisations, young people, experts and ministries but never managed to pass in parliament due to the political change at the time.

In April 2016 the Albanian Parliament approved the Law 45, [Law on Volunteering](#). As per procedure, the law entered into force 15 days after its publication in the official journal, even though amendments and by-laws have not been published yet by parliament nor have the structures of management been created. Therefore the law implementation is at present stuck.

## 2.2 ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

For the first time in 26 years, Albania has an approved Law on Volunteer Work, which seeks to define the basic principles, conditions and criteria for conducting and implementing volunteer work. Law 45/2016 also aims to boost the civic engagement and participation of citizens in community development. It was enacted by the parliament in April 2016, and therein was effective immediately. The law approval was also one of the fulfilments of the nine priority areas as identified in the 2015 [Road Map for Albanian Government Policy Towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development](#).

The monitoring and implementation role of the law on volunteering in Albania has been passed to the ministry in charge of labour issues. When approved on 28 April 2016, the ministry in charge was the [Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth](#). In June 2017, Albanian went to elections and the cabinet changed, with some ministries being merged with others. The above-mentioned ministry was taken off the cabinet and now the [Ministry of Education](#) has taken over the youth sector as well, under the new name, Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. Yet, it is not clear and confirmed which is the responsible ministry for the Law 45 implementation since the amendments have not been published yet and the governmental structural changes might influence the law implementation responsible bodies.

As stated under [Article 25 of the Law on Volunteering](#), the [National Employment Service](#) (NES) is responsible for collecting data on volunteering organisations and volunteers and issue the volunteer's booklet for the volunteers who go abroad to volunteer. Article 26 states that NES is also responsible for issuing the volunteer's booklet for Albanian volunteers. Through the law, it is the Council of Ministers and the ministry in charge of labour issues that are mandated to issue the by-laws, six months after the law approval.

So far, no by-laws have been issued and no implementation steps have been taken by the institutions in charge.

## 2.3 NATIONAL STRATEGY ON YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

There is no actual youth strategy on youth volunteering in Albania. The structure and the strategies are expected to be established with the new developments and the implementation of the volunteering law. Albania has adopted the National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 (Plani Kombëtar i Veprimit për Rininë 2015-2020) which was proposed by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth with the support of UNFPA and adopted by the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 383 dated 6 May 2015. The National Youth Action Plan (NYAP) is in line with the Government Platform for Young People, the [National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020](#), the [EU Strategy for Youth – investing and empowering](#), and the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the [SEE Regional Strategy \(2014-2020\)](#).

The aim of NYAP is to develop and co-ordinate cross-sectoral youth policies in education, employment, health, culture and youth participation enhancement in social life and decision-making processes. A participatory approach in decision making and social welfare, along with support and integration of youth in the labour market through job creation and entrepreneurship ideas, are among the highlighted challenges that the NYAP seeks to promote through its general and specific objectives. The novelty of this document is the cross-sectoral approach, which has not been so highlighted in the previous National Youth Strategy adopted in 2003 and National Youth Strategy 2007-2013.

The mission of the National Youth Action Plan is the improvement of youth quality of life and the enhancement of their status, through the creation of more opportunities for education, employment, health, culture and the increase of full youth participation in society and decision making.<sup>3</sup>

The NYAP is composed of six general objectives and 29 specific objectives, where the sixth one is dedicated to culture and volunteering. Each of the specific objectives is designed in line with the respective activities, qualitative and quantitative indicators and approximate budgeting. Seventy-six per cent of the total cost for implementation of NYAP will be covered by the state budget and the other part is designed as uncovered costs to be covered by different donors.

The six general objectives are based on the following:

1. Youth promotion and participation in democratic processes/decision making
2. Youth employment promotion through effective labour market policy
3. Health, sport, and environment
4. Youth education

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<sup>3</sup> National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020, p. 9.

5. Social protection
6. Culture and voluntarism

The strategic objective number 6 is divided into specific objectives and activities. The specific objective 6.3 refers to the “Development of Law on Volunteerism”<sup>4</sup> and three activities have been foreseen for this section.

- 6.3.1 – Consultation on the volunteerism draft law with youth groups and other stakeholders.
- 6.3.2 – Development of the infrastructure for the drafting of the legal framework on the law on volunteerism.
- 6.3.3 – Establishment of bonuses/incentives of the credit system for youth engagement in volunteer work/activities.

Until the present, there has been no monitoring of what has been done and to what extent these objectives have been reached, besides the fact that the law itself was enacted in 2015.

Volunteering is also vaguely mentioned in one of the priority areas identified in the [National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020](#), under point 3, where it is only stated as “the boosting of volunteering and citizens participation in the development of the community”.<sup>5</sup> It is to be mentioned that volunteering is linked mostly to the civil society sector and is treated as such by the above-mentioned policy documents and strategies.

## 2.4 LAWS AND REGULATIONS ON YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

The [Law on Volunteering \(Law 45\)](#), enacted by the Albanian Parliament in April 2016, seeks to regulate volunteer work and relations in the territory of Albania. The law defines basic principles, definition, conditions and providers of volunteering. It is divided into five main chapters and it contains a total of 30 articles. The following are the chapter’s headlines:

- Chapter 1 – General provisions
- Chapter 2 – Volunteer contract
- Chapter 3 – Rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteer providers
- Chapter 4 – Registration and monitoring of volunteers
- Chapter 5 – Transitional and final provisions

In this law, volunteering is defined as Article 4, point 1 – “*Volunteering is the investment of a volunteer’s own free time, knowledge and skills to complete activities or services, to the benefit of the provider and/or the beneficiary of the volunteer work*”. Article 4, point 2 – “*Volunteering is*

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<sup>4</sup> National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> [www.mod.gov.al/images/PDF/strategji2016/SKZHI\\_FINAL\\_QBZ.pdf](http://www.mod.gov.al/images/PDF/strategji2016/SKZHI_FINAL_QBZ.pdf) , p. 82

*done free of charge, without a compensation or any other material gain, besides the cases when the law defines it differently”.*

By following this principle the law has maintained the three main characteristics of volunteering known at European level, where volunteering is associated with: free of charge, free will and for the benefit of the community. Nevertheless, the last definition leaves space for interpretation and is not very clear.

A volunteer in this law is defined as: *“a) Any Albanian or foreign person with the ability to act according to the laws of the country and with their free will; b) any person with disabilities who can undertake volunteer activities, according his/her abilities and physical and mental development; c) any minor of the age 15-18 years old, as defined by the Article 6 of this law.*

Point B of this article raises the issue of positive discrimination, while there is a specific article in the law that actually refers to non-discrimination. Experts of volunteering and those of the field of disability in Albania would argue that this specific point referring to disabled people must not be in the law. This issue will be elaborated and discussed in Chapter 2.9 of this document.

The law itself targets youth volunteering since it states the minimum age of 15 years old and it actually defines that minors aged 15-18 can only undertake volunteering activities according to the law in force and under special regulations. Special regulations are here referred to the parents or guardians’ approval, and protection from work exploitations and other forms of abuse of minors known by the Albanian laws.

Article 7 and 8 refer to the volunteering of foreign citizens in Albanian territory and Albanian citizens abroad. None of the two articles elaborates anything specific besides stating that respective citizens can volunteer abroad or in Albania and must follow laws respectively (i.e. working permission, living permission in the country).

Article 9 of the law speaks about the volunteer provider where it states that *“Volunteer provider can be a public body, religious organisation or non-governmental organisation. Volunteer providers can be an Albanian or foreign juridical person, who offer volunteering according to this law does not seek any profit-making activity”.* By these definitions the law addresses volunteering as an organised activity and it still links it directly and mostly to the non-governmental organisations and other public bodies recognised by law. Nevertheless, it also gives space to juridical bodies, in this case also businesses to provide volunteer activities while having to guarantee that they are not a profit-making body. There are no terms on how this fact will be secured and monitored so it is expected that the Law Amendments will regulate this part.

This chapter of the law closes with the definitions of working hours where it states that a volunteer can work not more than five hours per day and not more than 25 hours per week. The last two articles refer to protection against any type of discrimination and one article refers to the volunteer’s personal protection. The last one explicitly mentions the protection against any action that constitutes a sexual concern for the volunteer.

The second chapter of the law is entirely dedicated to the contractual obligations of the volunteer provider and the volunteer. It defines terms and conditions under which the volunteer contract is signed and what its content must be. It also defines under what circumstances the volunteering contract can be dismissed at the request of one party or the other and the time frame when it becomes effective.

The third chapter refers to rights and responsibilities of volunteers and volunteer providers. It defines rights and obligations for each party and how they interlink with each other. In general, this part is complete, besides that Article 22 is the “hot spot” of the law which is actually under discussion and debate among CSOs) in Albania. Article 22 refers to volunteer insurance and the law states that the volunteer provider is obliged to provide the volunteer with insurance in case of accidents and/or diseases that can happen, as long as the volunteering contract is eligible. This clause has faced discussion while the law was being publicly consulted but despite strong public reaction, , the article was passed as such. Thus the volunteer providers are bound to provide insurance for every single volunteer, which is absolutely right to do, but the state does not subsidise any financial support for this case. This is also one of the big issues of the law implementation, since the law does not mention the financial package and/or obligations of the government at all. The law states that volunteer expense must be covered by the volunteer provider, but it does not offer any type of support at national level. Most of the organisations in Albania will not be able to cover volunteer expenses and insurance, therefore the biggest volunteer provider sector risks being left outside the volunteer field if the government does not secure some type of financial support scheme at national level.

Chapter 4 of the law refers to registration and monitoring of volunteering. It defines that the National Employment Service (NES) is responsible for issuing the volunteer’s booklet for any volunteer in the territory of Albania and in case of an Albanian volunteer going to volunteer abroad. The form and content of this booklet are not specified and fall under the responsibility of the minister in charge of labour issues in the country. NES gathers all data related to volunteer providers and volunteers in the country. This chapter contains the second “hot spot” of the law in which administrative procedures are complicated by the last articles where volunteers are required to register at NES themselves. This would be not only a loss of time and energy of the volunteers but would only complicate the work of this institution in collecting all the data. The registration of the volunteers and their booklet must be prepared by the volunteer provider, and the last should then provide the data to NES.

The last and fifth chapter contains the transitional and final provisions where the Council of Ministers is requested to produce the by-laws six months after the law becomes effective.



## 2.5 YOUTH VOLUNTEERING AT NATIONAL LEVEL

There is no national volunteering programme in Albania. Several organisations, especially those working in youth, education, culture, arts, and environment and sports do engage volunteers in their daily work and they manage them through their internal systems.

The only recognised programme operating under the structured volunteer management cycle was the [Local Volunteer Service \(LVS\)](#) of Tirana, established in early 2011 by Beyond Barriers Association (BBA). This programme was supported by the funding of the European Delegation to Albania in terms of Instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA) Funds and was implemented in collaboration with the [South Eastern European Youth Network \(SEEYN\)](#). The aim of this programme was to promote structured volunteer work through the promotion of values and the benefits of volunteering at the local level. During its first year of implementation, the project managed to co-operate and host volunteers in 14 centres, institutions and organisations of disability, environment and health issues in Tirana. During 2011 only, around 350 volunteers were engaged in one of the six programmes designed by LVS, and the data were administered through an offline internal database that BBA used. This local programme had a great impact, also because it engaged with all city high schools where local volunteers, the staff of the organisation and European volunteers organised info sessions in order to promote the values and benefits of volunteer work to other young people. Through an agreement with the Ministry of Education at the time, LVS could get access to inform youth in high schools and promote volunteer work with the aim of erasing the negative connotation it had gained due to the past. From 2011 until 2015 the programme information reached about 3 000-3 500 youngsters each school year.

After the funding of the project was finished in December 2011, BBA managed to continue its programme for a few more years until it achieved a complete zero budget. The programme has so far been put on hold due to lack of financing and the lack of clarity of the law of volunteering with the issue of insurance and volunteer expenses.

So far, volunteering mentality has changed, although it is mostly done by young people and mostly provided by associations. Only during the last few years, volunteers were also engaged by public bodies such as the [Youth Centre of Tirana](#), Korca and Vlora which are under the National Youth Service of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. At local level, the Municipality of Tirana engages young people aged 18-30 years old in the so-called [network of Tirana volunteers](#).

In the publication of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), [Albanian Youth: “Slow change, Internet dependency and ...EU trust!](#)”, published in 2015 the research found that: “One in five Albanian young people reports to have been engaged in a voluntary activity in the year 2014, signalling a slight increase from the survey in 2011 where this number was just 16 percent. The usual activities and initiatives in which young people engage as volunteers are ‘cleaning up public and green spaces’ but there is an increase also in the volunteering to give free lessons of

computer and technology use. The main reasons that motivate volunteering for youth are the desire to feel active in society and the feeling of commitment and dedication.”

There exists some type of misconception or misinterpretation of the two terms, volunteer activity and volunteering, in general among the youth population in Albania. Youngsters report being engaged in volunteering activities, happening sporadically and not following any concrete criteria of structured volunteering or the volunteer management cycle. On this behalf, there are several organisations around the country who engage youth in daily or weekly events. Sometimes youngsters are lured by the idea of participating in the activities of the organisations, being promoted as volunteer work, which actually is the biggest mistake being made and creating the mishmash of what is volunteer work and what is participation in events, activities, workshops, etc.

## 2.6 CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY PROGRAMMES

The cross-border volunteering opportunities for young people in Albania first started with the Peace Corps programme of the US in 1991. Later in 2005, the YOUTH programme of the European Commission gave accessibility to youth in Albania to participate in the European volunteering programme abroad through the European Voluntary Service. The programme continues to be open to Albanian youth to access the benefits of volunteering abroad, in the current Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020<sup>6</sup> and from 2018, known under the name of Volunteering Activity.

### **Peace Corps**

Among the oldest cross-border mobility programmes directly related to volunteering in Albania is the US programme [Peace Corps in Albania](#). The first programme was established in 1991 with the request of the Albanian government to the US. The first group of volunteers arrived in Albania in 1992 committed to teaching English in secondary schools and universities. During the first five years through 1992-97, a total of 166 Peace Corps volunteers had served throughout Albania. The US evacuated all Peace Corps volunteers in 1997 due to concerns related to the civil unrest the country was experiencing at that time. In 2002, the Albanian government requested that the US re-establish the Peace Corps programme. Since September 2003, 756 volunteers have come to work with local governments, NGOs, schools and health institutions in three project areas: Community and Organisational, Development, Health Education and English Teaching.

### **European Voluntary Service (EVS)**

Albanian associations accredited under the European Voluntary Service of the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020 of the European Commission continue to offer opportunities to Albanian youngsters to volunteer. The volunteering projects under this programme are between two

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52011PC0788> , accessed on 6 December 2017

weeks and 12 months, also called short- or long-term projects, and can be individual or group projects. At present there are [20 organisations accredited](#) that can act as sending organisations (SO) for youngsters aged 18-30 years old. All organisations wishing to take part in the EVS project must be accredited by [SALTO SEE Resource Centre](#) based in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Every year there is an increased interest in EVS, but a problem remains in the limited projects that have availability to host youth from the Western Balkan, so-called partner countries. The fact is that programme countries through their national agencies of the Erasmus+ programme give very limited opportunities for co-operating with youth organisations from the Western Balkans window in terms of exchanging EVS volunteers.

Therefore, projects can only be applied by the Albanian organisations at the centralised level in [EACEA](#), and this remains the only opportunity to provide Albanian youth with a chance to take part in EVS. At the same time, the visa regime for projects longer than three months is again a restriction, also a factor that influences the co-operation of the programme countries with the partner countries. Nevertheless, EVS remains the most used cross-border volunteering programme for young people, also because it covers all costs and has been promoted more in the last five to six years, while also the approach and mentality towards volunteer work has also improved positively among society.

No concrete statistics are given on how many youngsters have participated in the programme. EACEA publishes the results of the approved projects but does not produce data on how many volunteers are exchanged. These data remain with the sending organisations themselves and the SALTO SEE that provides the volunteer training cycle for the EVS when they return from the service.

The other programmes that provide cross-border volunteering opportunities of a differing format, such as the work camps, are through the involvement of Albanian organisations in two networks: [Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations](#) and [Service Civil International \(SCI\)](#).

[Beyond Barriers Association](#), through its membership in [SEEYN](#) network, which is part of AEVSO, can act as a contact and sending organisation for youth wanting to participate in the work camps.

[Projekte Vullnetare Kombetare \(PVN\)](#) is part of the SCI and provides anyone aged 18 years old and over participation in work camps and/or long-term volunteering through the SCI long-term programme.

These two programmes are being used by youth, but they are not accessible for everyone since they require the volunteer to cover some of their financial costs. The financial aspect makes it hard for youth, especially those from marginalised target groups, to take part in these activities as sometimes the expenses required can be quite considerable for the pocket of a young person.

## 2.7 RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT YOUTH VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Especially in the last five to six years, there have been a considerable number of activities, campaigns and movements from different organisations, institutions and other stakeholders at national level contributing to the promotion of volunteering at national and international level.

The Local Volunteer Service of Tirana, the programme run by Beyond Barriers Association in Tirana and its surroundings during 2011-15, has given access to information on volunteer opportunities, the values and benefits of volunteering to hundreds of youngsters. From 2011-15 the programme information reached about 3 000-3 500 youngsters each school year, by promoting volunteering, civic education, youth participation and international volunteering opportunities such as EVS into the city's high schools and universities. BBA has also been a [Contact Point of the Erasmus+ Programme in Albania](#) from 2011, and in this role they actively promote the participation of youngsters in the programme. Yearly they organise several info sessions and campaigns online and offline to promote the European Voluntary Service and motivate young people to use the opportunity and see it in the perspective of a growth experience, where their attitudes, skills and knowledge get boosted and their intercultural dimension gets expanded. The second Contact Point of Erasmus+ in Albania, [Centre for Youth Progress](#) based in Kukes, also promotes EVS opportunities for the northern region of the country, through different activities during each year and local projects where they engage their local volunteers.

From 2011, Beyond Barriers Association has marked the biggest event organised on International Day of Volunteers, the 5 December, where yearly hundreds of youngsters gather to celebrate volunteering.

[Fondacioni Fundjave Ndryshe](#) (Different Weekend Foundation) is a charity organisation established in October 2015 with the mission to gather efforts and support the poorest and those in need. Each weekend young people volunteering in the foundation, with the financial or in-kind support of various companies, individuals, corporates, businesses, etc. knock on people's doors and bring them food and clothes, build them homes or secure their medical assistance when needed. In only two years, the movement has spread not only the helping of many families in need in the most remote areas of the country but also has increased the level of awareness among citizens to donate and volunteer during the weekend actions. The DWF has a clear charitable aim in its mission but is also contributing to promoting values linked to volunteering, civic engagement and participation.

[Green Line Albania](#), an association based in Tirana and part of the [Let's Do it World](#) movement focused on environmental issues and cleaning up the country, is also involved in the promotion of volunteer opportunities. Besides the educational projects and other activities, the association organises one main clean-up action once a year where thousands of people of all ages volunteer to clean up the prior identified spots all over the country. The action is co-ordinated and

organised in co-operation with different stakeholders from the ministries, to education directorates and other organisations, schools and individuals all over Albania.

In the educational system at high school level, there is a curriculum dedicated to community work that pupils are obliged to receive, and they must perform some “volunteer work” in order to receive the credits for this curriculum. This is also used by teachers to promote volunteering, though it goes against the three main elements of the definition of volunteer work. On the other side, based on projects, different organisations in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth are given access to schools and universities to use extracurricular hours to promote volunteering activities mostly.

The main yearly date also used to promote volunteering remains 5 December, known as International Volunteer Day. During this day there are usually activities with a focus on promotion and celebration of volunteering and volunteer work all over the country, mostly organised from associations and institutions, either individually or in co-operation. This day also receives some media attention, mostly when ministries are involved directly. It is to be stated that all the above-mentioned stakeholders make contact with the media on these specific activities or days, though the media attention towards volunteering promotion remains rather low.

## 2.8 SKILLS RECOGNITION

Skills recognition in the volunteering field still remains a blank space when it comes to formal recognition of the skills developed through volunteer work. There is no national system or certificate that recognises the non-formal learning of young people participating in volunteering programmes. The idea of having a Law on Volunteering was that it would also help to create this system and give validation of learning and skills development through volunteer work. The Volunteer Booklet as foreseen by the law will allow youth to register their volunteer experiences and use this as a working experience when they get to the labour market, with the hope that the private sector will recognise it as a valuable tool for future employment. Chapter 2 of the law regulates the contractual obligations with the Volunteer Contract containing terms and conditions for all parties involved. The contents and forms of these documents are still to be established by the Council of Ministers once the by-laws, action plan and other regulations have been produced and enacted for the law to be applicable.

The [Youthpass](#) certificate which youngsters receive from participating in European Voluntary Service is also not formally recognised at country level. This certificate with a focus on the eight key competencies has the potential to be a very well-appreciated form of recognition, but lots of work is still needed in these regards in order to promote it at country level and convince the private sector and administration to fully recognise it as a skills recognition form for those who possess it.

[International Volunteer Day](#) (IVD), recognised by the UN General Assembly each 5 December, is the biggest activity day at country level that gives credit and recognition to volunteer work and efforts. From 2012, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports (now Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth) established the award of Volunteer of the Year and Volunteering Organisation of the Year. This event, organised in co-operation with the different stakeholders, used to award a few youngsters and associations in different fields for their contribution and achievements in volunteer work. The event took place only for a few years and it has now stopped being organised. In the last few years, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has started another event called Youth Week. It is usually organised between 1-10 December each year with five days of activities, with a highlight on 8 December known as the Youth Day in Albania. The activities of this week are mainly organised by the civil society organisations and promoted by the ministry as a full five days' calendar of events.

In this way, the skills development and recognition still remain in the hands of the volunteering providers, organisations or institutions themselves. They organise this part individually and recognise volunteer engagement through providing certificates of participation, recommendation letters, or monthly/yearly events to celebrate volunteer work.

## 2.9 CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

At the end of 2017, a discussion was raised by the [Agency for Support of Civil Society](#), while reviewing the [Road Map for Albanian Government Policy Towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development](#), where one of the priority areas (Area 9) refers to volunteering law. Since the law was approved, but is not functional, the ASCS after a set of public consultations in several cities has now also launched an online consultation where anyone can react on the nine priority areas of the Road Map, by providing feedback and recommendations. This process is expected to review the Road Map and create an action plan for its implementation, with clear activities and steps designed to be taken in order to reach the results desired for each priority area. The issue of the Law on Volunteering remains a concern and some reaction from the civil society actors is expected in these regards.

## GLOSSARY

Alliance of Voluntary Service Organisation – is an international non-governmental youth organisation which represents national voluntary organisations that promote intercultural education, understanding, peace, democratic participation and equality, in the spirit of respect for universal human rights.

EACEA – The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency or EACEA is an agency of the European Union located in Brussels, Belgium. It manages parts of the Union's programmes in education, culture, and audiovisual fields.

European Commission – is the institution of the EU’s politically independent executive arm. It is alone responsible for drawing up proposals for new European legislation, and it implements the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) – includes all not-for-profit and non-governmental organisations and structures in which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), professional associations, community-based organisations, farmers’ associations, environmental groups, independent research institutes, universities, faith-based organisations, labour unions, and the not-for-profit media, etc.

Contact Point for Erasmus+ – CPs are organisations based in the Western Balkans, working in the youth and education fields that are contracted by SALTO to support project planning and implementation in each country of the region. They support organisations and people interested in organising projects in the youth field within the Erasmus+ programme.

Voluntary service – structured activity during a fixed period of time, based on an agreement that provides all the parties involved with an appropriate framework of rules and procedures that inform all the partners about their duties and rights; usually implemented by specialised voluntary service organisations that people can join in order to respond to their personal wish for volunteering.

SALTO YOUTH – SALTO stands for Support for Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities and is a network of eight Resource Centres. It is working within the Erasmus+ Youth programme and the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport.

Service Civil International (SCI) – is an international volunteer organisation dedicated to promoting a culture of peace by organising international voluntary projects for people of all ages and backgrounds.