

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy

Key priorities for youth policies answers on
Voluntary Activities



Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work.

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LATVIA, 2005

1 Statistics

1.1 Different types of voluntary activities that exist for young people

	Voluntary activities	Voluntary service	Civic service
Exists?	Yes	Yes	No

1.2 Number of young people who engage in voluntary activities

Total Number	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Female	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Male	N/A <i>persons</i>

1.3 Number of young people who engage in voluntary service

Total Number	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Female	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Male	N/A <i>persons</i>

1.4 Number of young people who engage in voluntary service abroad (excluding European Voluntary Service)

Total Number	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Female	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Male	N/A <i>persons</i>

1.5 Number of young people who engage in national voluntary civic service

Total Number	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Female	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Male	N/A <i>persons</i>

1.5.1 Number of young people who carry out their service period abroad

Total Number	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Female	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Male	N/A <i>persons</i>

1.5.2 Is the national voluntary civic service open to young people from outside the country?

~~Yes~~ No

1.5.3 If yes, number of young people from outside the country participating in your national voluntary civic service

Total Number	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Female	N/A <i>persons</i>
Total Male	N/A <i>persons</i>

1.6 Clarification of the statistics used

Unfortunately there is no statistics available on questions asked, as there is no national centralised youth voluntary service in Latvia # some of organisations and institutions successfully organize volunteer activities, for example, Youth Red Cross, Student Project Initiate Centre, Ziemeļkurzeme (North Kurzeme) Regional NGO's Support Centre, Social Care Service in Olaine, etc. In total there could be between 100 and 300 voluntary services in total. However, it is difficult to estimate the number thereof and the number of young people engaged as the data is not collected by a central body responsible for the sphere. Therefore here and further the only centralized statistics on volunteering of young people refers to European Voluntary Service. Apart from that there is no national voluntary civic service in Latvia, therefore the numbers given in regards to the issue, total to zero.

2 Range of voluntary activities

2.1 Voluntary activities engaged in by young people and approximate number of people involved

	Exists?	Number
a. Community activity	Yes	N/A
b. Participation/self-governance	Yes	N/A
c. Emergency response	Yes	N/A
d. Community peacekeeping	Yes	N/A
e. Social assistance	Yes	N/A
f. Personal assistance	Yes	N/A
g. Children and youth	Yes	N/A
h. Environment	Yes	N/A
i. Human rights, advocacy and	Yes	N/A

	Exists?	Number
politics		
j. Economic justice	Yes	N/A
k. Development aid	Yes	N/A
l. Humanitarian aid	Yes	N/A
m. Religious volunteering	Yes	N/A
n. Education	Yes	N/A
o. Arts/culture	Yes	N/A
p. Sports	Yes	N/A
q. Recreation	Yes	N/A

Other voluntary activities

N/A

3 Finance

3.1 Amount of finance that is annually available for voluntary activities and allocation of this finance

Total : N/A

Explanation

At the given moment voluntary activities are mainly promoted and implemented in NGO sector, sometimes also in municipalities and state institutions, however one has to admit the latter are not as successful as the former. As a result of this situation there is no centralized scheme of financing and financial means are mainly raised by most active NGOs from different national and international foundations. On governmental level no finances were foreseen for the development of voluntary activities until recently. Recently some of the money has been donated from foreign foundations. Moreover, Social Integration Fund established by Latvian government and local authorities has been one of the sources of funding. The State Youth Policy Program for 2005-2009 worked out by the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs foresees financial support for the development of voluntary service. It has been accepted by the government in April 2005 but the sum allocated is not yet known.

3.2 Sources of finance

Recently some of the money has been donated from foreign foundations (the Soros Foundation, Baltic-American Partnership Program, European Youth Program etc.). Social Integration Fund established by Latvian government and local authorities has been one of the sources of funding. A supporter-to-be is Ministry for Children and Family Affairs. Some volunteer activities were partly supported by local entrepreneurs # on an irregular basis.

4 Main Actors



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4.1 Main actors of voluntary activities of young people

Governmental actors

YOUTH Agency for International Programs # management of European Union program YOUTH (European Voluntary Service program). YOUTH Agency is a supervisory authority of the Ministry of Education and Science. Ministry for Children and Youth Affairs since 2004 is responsible for youth policy in Latvia, including youth voluntary activities as well. The State Youth Policy Program for 2005-2009 worked out by the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs foresees financial and methodical support for the development of voluntary service.

Non governmental actors

Latvian Youth Council # an umbrella organization for different youth organizations in Latvia supports organisations and institutions to develop volunteer services organising training for youth organisations and youth leaders. Volunteer Centre # supports organisations and institutions to develop volunteer services, trains organisations to manage volunteers; organizes annual Rewarding event for Latvia's best volunteers; improves legal basis of volunteer work. National and regional NGO's support centres support NGO's and initiate different volunteer activities, for example, "Volunteers# Clubs" in Secondary schools. Student Projects Initiative Centre # a youth NGO, founded on voluntary basis. The organization is developing different local voluntary projects and coordinates International voluntary work camps. Student Projects Initiative Centre is involved in 2 large international Networks (Service Civil International and Alliance of European Voluntary Service), working with YOUTH program # European Voluntary Service program. It also carries out projects, directly involving young volunteer in NGO's and social care institutions.

5 Legal basis/legislation for voluntary activities in general and for young people in particular

5.1 Legal status of volunteers

There is currently no specific regulation of volunteerism or a legal status of volunteers in the national law of Latvia, which can officially produce a number of problems for volunteers and organisations offering volunteer placement. However, Associations and Foundations Act has been adopted in the end of 2003. This legislative act gave a legal definition to volunteerism (#Associations and foundations have a right to employ persons to carry out voluntary work. Voluntary work means unpaid work or service, performed by a physical person, who has no legal employment relationships with associations or foundations, and directed at the consummation of the target set up in the statutes of associations or foundations#.) and allowed a reimbursement of expenses incurred by volunteers in the course of performance of their volunteer work (#A person engaged in voluntary work is allowed to ask for reimbursement of expenses incurred by volunteers in the course of performance of their volunteer work.). However, other aspects of volunteerism are not yet legislated. However, in 2002 Volunteer Centre in association other NGO# s came with an initiative to prepare a Law on Voluntary Work. The Baltic # American Partnership Program donated the project and the Law has reached the government in December 2003. The bill defines the terms



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of the voluntary work and volunteers, as well as the responsibilities and rights of volunteers and organisations and creates a legal framework for voluntary work. The aim of the bill is to develop voluntary work and to expand the limits of present social participation to all spheres # social, political, economical, health, educational, cultural # of integration.

5.2 Taxation/tax exemptions for volunteers and volunteer organisations

As the law currently stands there are no specific legal provisions concerning the reimbursement of expenses to volunteers in relation to their work, except the provision of Associations and Foundations Act. However labour law applies, which requires that any relationship of work between an organisation and individual is based on an employment contract. This contract should include a provision on the value of the work or service performed. Any income related to the work activities performed is subject to taxation. Nevertheless compensation of expenses incurred by the employee in the course of service, e.g. travel expenses etc, are not subject to taxation. Under Latvian law, the non-taxable monthly income is 21 Ls/month (approximately 35 EUR). The European Voluntary Service introduces an anomaly. It is accepted practice within this programme that host organisations are not considered employers, and do not pay any taxes or social contributions on the pocket money, accommodation, food, travel and training expenses received by the volunteer. At the moment the initiative is in the stage of discussion.

5.3 Existence of social protection of volunteers

As there is currently no specific regulation of legal status of volunteers in the national law of Latvia, hence there are no specific regulations for their protection yet. At the moment the conditions as to social protection are as follows: a) Volunteer insurance There is no obligation to provide volunteers with insurance coverage while engaged in voluntary activity. Indeed if an organisation does privately insure a volunteer, it is considered as a benefit and therefore subject of taxation. It also requires that 2 parties enter into an employment contract. EVS is an exception to this rule. b) Entitlement of volunteers to Public and Social protection In the absence of any specific legislation, the general framework for health care, unemployment benefits and family allowance is applied. The healthcare system in Latvia is based on the principle of residence. Minimum healthcare services are afforded to Latvian citizens and permanent residents as well as to nationals of another country having a temporary residence permit. Volunteers performing a long-term service in Latvia must obtain a residency permit and are then entitled to the same level of healthcare. Free emergency medical aid is provided to nationals of countries that have a bilateral agreement with Latvia - Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Estonia and Lithuania. Volunteers from these countries benefit from the same emergency public health and medical treatments as Latvian citizens. c) Unemployment benefits Unemployment benefits are paid to individuals that have paid social contributions for a minimum of 9 month. Benefits are paid for a maximum of 9 month on the condition that a person is seeking a job and available to work. If a person chooses to volunteer abroad for any length of time they automatically lose their right to benefits. If a young person (under 20) participates in the EVS programme, their parents are still eligible for family allowance as it is treated as an educational experience.

5.4 Legal situation of unemployed young people participating in voluntary activities

There is currently no specific regulation of legal status of volunteers as such in the national law of Latvia, hence there are no specific regulations for specific groups of volunteers, such as the unemployed youth. Young people still don't have enough information about the possibilities available. As mentioned before, the structure of voluntary service is poor. Most activities are initiated from individual NGO's. As a rule those NGO's are initiating some training and information campaigns in the frames of different projects. In 2003 Latvian Youth Council created the Policy for recruiting volunteers and working together, which is available on LJP web page, www.ljp.lv.

6 Programmes

6.1 Programmes and plans on volunteering (national, regional, local)

Among the most important initiatives in the sphere is the 2002 initiative of Volunteer Centre, which, in association with other NGOs, came with an initiative to prepare a Law on Voluntary Work. The Baltic American Partnership Program donated the project and the Law has reached the government in December 2003. The bill defines the terms of the voluntary work and volunteers, as well as the responsibilities and rights of volunteers and organisations and creates a legal framework for voluntary work. The aim of the bill is to develop voluntary work and to expand the limits of present social participation to all spheres of social, political, economical, health, educational, cultural and of integration. At the moment the initiative is in the stage of discussion. Moreover, the Volunteer Centre has started the project "INFO punkts", which is intended to sum up the information creating an information system about the possibilities of volunteers and offer it to the future and present volunteers. The results of the project are awaited to be the recognition and promotion of volunteering in Latvia. The project is sponsored by the Society Integration Foundation. The State Youth Policy Program for 2005-2009 worked out by the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs foresees financial support for the development of voluntary service. It has been accepted by the government in April, 2005 but the sum allocated is not yet known.

7 Relationship between different types of voluntary services

7.1 Relationship between military service, civilian service, civic service and voluntary service

As there is no alternative service to the military service in Latvia right now (all men till 28 should finish the military service), there is no Civic service, voluntary service is not structured and developed; there is no possibility to describe the relationship between the subjects mentioned above.

7.2 Perspectives for the creation of a voluntary civic service in countries where it does not exist



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N/A

8 Development of voluntary activities, including standards/instruments aiming at securing and enhancing quality in voluntary activities

8.1 Recent (this year) developments in the area of voluntary activities

At the moment voluntary activities are not discussed and evaluated at national level on the grand scale. It is only recently that a working plan under the egide of the Secretariat of Special Assignment Minister for Society Integration for the development of legislative basis of voluntary activities (of young people) has started to develop in Latvia and unfortunately there are no concrete results yet.

8.2 What are the trends concerning the range of voluntary activities?

Increasing ~~Decreasing~~ ~~Stable~~

Explanation

There is no body collecting data on voluntary activities on national scale that is why there is neither statistics nor analysis available regarding the issue, but as promotion of voluntary work as an experience of non-formal education is getting more active on European and Latvian level, it could be supposed, that the range of voluntary activities is increasing.

8.3 Description of quality standards used in voluntary activities

N/A

8.4 Description of measures to improve the quality of voluntary activities for young people

N/A

9 Removing obstacles to young people's voluntary engagement

9.1 The facilitation of young people's voluntary engagement

Young people's voluntary engagement facilitation is in the hands of NGOs. They deal with the promotion and recognition activities of voluntarism, as well as work out the legal basis thereof and work directly with young volunteers.

9.2 Recent (this year) measures to remove obstacles to young people's volunteering



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Two most important steps removing the obstacles have been: the creation of working group to work out a legal framework for voluntary work in Latvia and planning voluntary work facilitating activities in the frames of State Youth Policy Program for 2005-2009, which are aimed at creating a centralized system of voluntary service on national level in long-term perspective (including the research of the situation, the creation of state financing mechanism and promotion campaigns).

9.3 Existing obstacles

One of the main obstacles is a lack of centralized system of voluntary work on national level, which would ensure availability of information and possibilities to engage in activities to any young person. One more thing to mention is a lack training modules for persons involved in organising and coordinating voluntary activities. Moreover, a considerable obstacle is a low information level about the possibilities of voluntary activities and a low level of support from the society, arising from that.

10 Promotion of voluntary activities for young people

10.1 Information channels and contacts for voluntary activities of young people

There is hardly any information available concerning voluntary activities. NGOs are informing young people about this issue in the frames of different projects # through their individual information channels. However, the Volunteer Centre has started the project "INFO punkts", which is intended to sum up the information creating an information system about the possibilities of volunteers and offer it to the future and present volunteers. The results of the project are awaited to be the recognition and promotion of volunteering in Latvia. The project is sponsored by the Society Integration Foundation.

10.2 Promotion activities for voluntary activities

No centralized information system exists # bits of information are transmitted through individual channels. However, the Volunteer Centre has started the project "INFO punkts", which is intended to sum up the information creating an information system about the possibilities of volunteers and offer it to the future and present volunteers. The results of the project are awaited to be the recognition and promotion of volunteering in Latvia. The project is sponsored by the Society Integration Foundation.

10.3 Initiatives to promote voluntary activities among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

N/A

11 Recognition of voluntary activities of young people



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11.1 Initiatives for recognition 'good practices'

Among the most important initiatives in the sphere is the 2002 initiative of Volunteer Centre, which, in association with other NGOs, came with an initiative to prepare a Law on Voluntary Work. The Baltic # American Partnership Program donated the project and the Law has reached the government in December 2003. The bill defines the terms of the voluntary work and volunteers, as well as the responsibilities and rights of volunteers and organisations and creates a legal framework for voluntary work. The aim of the bill is to develop voluntary work and to expand the limits of present social participation to all spheres # social, political, economical, health, educational, cultural, sphere of integration. At the moment the initiative is in the stage of discussion. More information - www.brivpratigie.lv Moreover, the Volunteer Centre has started the project "INFO punkts", which is intended to sum up the information creating an information system about the possibilities of volunteers and offer it to the future and present volunteers. The results of the project are awaited to be the recognition and promotion of volunteering in Latvia. The project is sponsored by the Society Integration Foundation. More information - www.brivpratigie.lv or Oskars Zigurs, Volunteer Center, Head of the Board, spic@eurodesk.org Ministry for Children and Youth Affairs since 2004 is responsible for youth policy in Latvia, including youth voluntary activities as well. The State Youth Policy Program for 2005-2009 worked out by the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs foresees financial and methodical support for the development of voluntary service. More information - www.bm.gov.lv or Marians Nilenders, Head of the Youth Affairs Department, marians.nilenders@ugf.gov.lv

11.2 Measures of societal recognition

Volunteer Centre # organizes annual Rewarding event for Latvia's best volunteers informing about the event all possible actors in such way improving societal recognition of voluntary activities. Volunteer Centre announced in 2005 competition of best posters imaging youth voluntary work "Voluntary?...Fascinating!". Best posters will be printed as postcards and spread out in public places in order to inform about youth voluntary work and voluntary activities.

12 Co-operations and networks, exchange of volunteers, transnational and international cooperation

12.1 Networks who promote voluntary activities of young people

N/A

12.2 Exchange of information, experience and good practices

Ministry of Children and Family Affairs working out State Youth Policy Program 2005-2007 involved Volunteer Center and Latvian Youth Council in consultations in order to prepare the plan for development and promotion of voluntary service on national scale. Secretariat of Special Assignment of the Minister for Society Integration started to develop strategic working plan in order to develop the legislative basis of voluntary activities (also of young people), Volunteer Center and Latvian Youth Council are actively involved in this process.



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12.3 Exchange for young volunteers: at all levels (transnational, national, regional, between communities)

N/A

12.4 Collective volunteering projects

12.4.1 Collective volunteering projects (where large numbers of volunteers jointly assist in cultural or sporting events, or where they help in humanitarian/natural disaster situations)

Description of projects (including future projects)

Latvian Dance and Song Festival taking place every 4 years - cultural event; Latvian Dance and Song Festival for young people taking place every 4 years - cultural event; The Project FOOTPRINTS originated in May 2002 - a very successfully promoted and recognized environmental and educational project, directed at environmental changes and aiming to achieve a turning point and involvement of the public in solving the issues. In 2003/2004 4000 schoolchildren took part in the project as voluntary workers and put into order 39 territories of Riga and transported more than 1180m³ garbage out of Riga.

Details of programme/project

Latvian Dance and Song Festival for young people, July 2005 - 90 volunteers helping by organizing the event, coordinating activities and participants. www.nacgavilet.lv The Project FOOTPRINTS originated in May 2002 - a very successfully promoted and recognized environmental and educational project, directed at environmental changes and aiming to achieve a turning point and involvement of the public in solving the issues. In 2003/2004 4000 schoolchildren took part in the project as voluntary workers and put into order 39 territories of Riga and transported more than 1180m³ garbage out of Riga. www.pedas.lv

12.4.2 Possibilities for involvement of international volunteers in these projects

N/A

12.5 International solidarity volunteer service

12.5.1 International solidarity voluntary service in the EU and the world (e.g. in human/natural disaster situations, civil protection, humanitarian aid, development assistance, capacity-building etc.)

N/A

Details of programme/project

N/A



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12.5.2 Major NGOs and/or NGO platforms active in the field of international solidarity service in non-EU countries

N/A

12.5.3 The degree of involvement of the government/state institutions in supporting international solidarity service in non-EU countries

N/A

13 Studies & Surveys

13.1 Recent surveys or research on the topic of voluntary activities

There are no specific surveys or research on the topic of Voluntary activities. However Ministry of Children and Family affairs plans to start the research on voluntary activities and non-formal education activities in Latvia in 2006.