

QUESTIONNAIRE

“VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES”

THE NETHERLANDS



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1.Types of voluntary activities existing in the country for young people

In the Netherlands, voluntary activities are characterised by a broad definition. Each person places his or her own interpretation on voluntary activities and doing voluntary work. Therefore, there is no general definition of voluntary activities, and further on it is not possible to mention any different fields of activities. Nowadays, a lot of people do some kind of 'temporary voluntary activities', in contrast with the 'traditional' volunteer, who is doing the same work for some years.

In the Netherlands, each year 4.5 million people engage in voluntary work. Most of them are active within sports, social services and welfare. According to the brochure 'youth policy in the Netherlands, 2007,' (www.youthpolicy.nl), approximately 20% of the age group 16 to 25 perform some form of voluntary work. For the purpose of comparison, 34% of those aged 26 to 64 are involved in voluntary work and 39% of those aged 65 and over.

According to a short research carried out by the National Youth Council, youngsters are doing a lot for other people (which they often designate as 'voluntary work'). They do this quite often; 29% of the participants a few times a week, and 31% of the participants a few times a month. 87% of the youngsters, who did something for somebody else, would like to do this again (www.nationalejeugdraad.nl).

2. Kind of voluntary service existing in the country.

Since 2007, the most important kind of voluntary service for youngsters is the obliged social work placement, also called the 'community work experience'. From 2011 onwards this type of voluntary activity is part of the school curriculum and students are obligated to do take part in it..

This is a placement for pupils in secondary school, at which they get acquainted with taking responsibilities within society. In future, the social work placement will be obliged for every level, varying from lower education levels till higher education levels. The placements consist of 72 working hours, which is 10 days. Doing a work placement will become a condition for obtaining a certificate. The young people don't get a salary or compensation for the work they carry out. Youngsters could for instance work at a home for elderly people, a hospital or at a children's farm.

About 481 secondary schools and 7 AOC's (Agrarian Training Centre) already started some kind of social work placement for their pupils. Also, more and more vocational training centers offer students the possibility to carry out a social work placement, mainly in the first year's course. Quite often, students have to search for a placement which does have a certain connection with their future profession. In 2011, this concept of social work placement should have been finalized, and will be part of a pupil's curriculum. Therefore, it is not possible to mention any numbers yet.

There is also the European Voluntary Service programme as part of Youth in Action. It took a long time for this Action to take off in the Netherlands, since there was no tradition of voluntary service. But at this moment around 80 Dutch youngsters per year engage in voluntary service activities abroad through EVS

3. Financial and legal status of voluntary activities

Please explain the financial and legal status of voluntary activities (concerning organisations and volunteers respectively) in your country (funding, tax exemption yes or not, legal provisions)

Financial state

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports has a coordinating and supporting role in voluntary work policy and provides some financial support as well. Therefore, the Ministry subsidizes 2 organizations: MOVISIE (the Netherlands centre for social development) and the association of NOV (Netherlands Organization Voluntary Activities) [www.movisie.nl].

A restricted number of national training and educational centres also receive a subsidy from the Ministry. There are also some funds available for volunteers, for instance the VSB Fund (www.vsbfonds.nl) and Stichting Doen (www.stichtingdoen.nl)

Legal state

The support and policy of voluntary work has been laid down in the Social Support Act (WMO) The Act states that everybody in society, including those in need, should be a fulfilling part of society, as 'everybody participates'. The Act is carried out at local level by the different municipalities. Volunteers increase the possibilities and decisiveness of the organizations they work for. This makes it easier for those organisations to fill the role of partner within the cooperation with the different municipalities. Organisations which offer voluntary activities are not obliged to cover expenses. However, many organizations do cover expenses. Sometimes, the organization and the volunteer make a kind of settlement. In the Netherlands, a national regulation exists in order to make covering expenses more flexible. In 2006, this compensation was 150 euro a month, with a total amount of 1500 euro a year. Sometimes, volunteers receive a little compensation for the work they have done or to cover their expenses. This compensation can be taxed with tax on wages or income tax. The compensation cannot be charged when it is just a compensation for costs. Also, nothing will be charged when a volunteer doesn't receive more than 150 euro a month, or 1500 euro a year. Organizations working with volunteers don't have to comply with the (Dutch) Health and Safety Act, although volunteers are legally protected against risks which could be dangerous for their health. There are some rules for vulnerable groups too, which are underage people and pregnant women.

4. Main actors of voluntary activities of young people on national, regional and local level in your country

In the Netherlands, policy regarding voluntary work is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (www.minvws.nl), as well as the policy relating to voluntary work aimed at young people. Voluntary work is supported at local, provincial and national level by an infrastructure of support organisations which are not affiliated to any particular type of work or economic sector. At the local or regional level, this infrastructure consists of about 130 agencies for voluntary activities through the whole country (www.vrijwilligerscentrale.nl). The agencies mediate between supply and demand, and promote voluntary work in general. Although these agencies target all volunteers, there is often specific attention for young people.

There are also some non-governmental actors, for instance the Centres for Social Development (CMO's within the provinces), the Netherlands Youth Institute (www.nji.nl) and of course the 2 main organizations within the field: MOVISIE and NOV, 2 organizations already been mentioned in the third question.

In 2007 and 2008 the National Youth Council receives funding for the project 'Great Talent' within the framework of the Voluntary Work Temporary Support Scheme by and for youth 2007 – 2008 from the ministry of Welfare, Health and Sports.

Next to that there are many private initiatives in the field to stimulate voluntary activities amongst young people. One example is the Foundation International Award for Young People. The foundation targets youngsters between 14 and 24 years. Young people are active within society for a certain period with the aim to enhance their sense of responsibility for their (local) community. Within their activities the focus is to deliver continuous support for society

5. What is the social protection of young volunteers in your country and are voluntary activities compatible with social benefits?

There are no separate provisions for young volunteers. For more information see question 3.

6. Programmes and plans in the country on volunteering

National level

As the support of voluntary work has been laid down in the Social Support Act (WMO), everybody in society should be able to participate. The Act is carried out at local level by the different municipalities. This has already been mentioned in the third question.

Regional level

The province of Brabant provides a subsidy for organizations which are developing projects leading to expand youth's interest for voluntary activities. Also, the province of Utrecht subsidizes projects who involve youth in voluntary activities, while the province of Gelderland also subsidizes different projects relating to voluntary work. On local level, almost each (bigger) municipality finances support of centers which support voluntary activities.

7. Strategy (plan) or specific measures for the development of voluntary activities of young people in the country

Concerning the development of voluntary activities for young people, a stimulation regulation does exist. The ministry of Youth and Families subsidizes 23 projects with the 'Temporary regulation voluntary work by and for youth 2007-2008'. Due to a successful similar regulation in 2006, the government decided to continue this regulation.

16300 young volunteers are being reached by the current regulation. The projects cover a broad social field; from youth, care, handicapped persons, sport, environment and nature to development cooperation. The regulation has 2 targets:

- expanding knowledge and skills within the scope of the organization
- increasing the number of young volunteers

By this regulation, the government stimulates the local voluntary work with a total amount of 4.7 million euro for 2 years. NUSO Playground Netherlands, YMCA Netherlands and the Dutch Red Cross are some examples of organisations which get a subsidy in 2007 and 2008. The new projects aim at increasing the organisations' strength on local level. The support is given to the organisations to help them to develop new methods to work more effectively with volunteers and to learn how to cooperate with young people at risk (vulnerable youngsters in voluntary work associations)

Also, as it been mentioned in question 2 already the social work placement for young people should be carried out more and more.. The work placement is part of the educational system of secondary schools and the educational programs. Schools are free to set up their own rules, which a certain organisation has to meet in order to be a good practice place for youngsters. The social work placement is not only designed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences, but also by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. This Ministry seeks for placements at which youngsters without an agrarian background get acquainted with animals and nature.

For the coming school year, the Dutch State Secretary from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) distributes about 15 million euro among schools, which they can use for social work placements. With this regulation, each school can get 28 Euro per pupil who is carrying out a social work placement. In 2008, the Ministry of OCW will examine the possibilities for placements in different

fields. The Ministry will do this together with schools, voluntary organizations, municipalities and placement providers.

MOVISIE has set up the 'éjoy' project, which is specifically aimed at involving youngsters in voluntary work. The program ends in December 2008. The targets have been summarized in 3 clusters:

1. Knowledge of working with youngsters within the Social Support Act (WMO)
2. Stimulating networks, knowledge exchanges and research concerning voluntary activities by youth
3. Attractiveness and accessibility of voluntary activities by youth

A number of programmes have started to 'modernise' voluntary work in order to meet the needs of young people. This means for instance short, flexible, changing organisations to become more open, lowering the age of the boards of organisations.

8. Obstacles to volunteering of young people still existing in the country and measures remove them

A main obstacle is that the pressure of study is still increasing. At the individual level, there is a considerable competition between voluntary activities and other ways of filling one's spare time. Therefore, voluntary work has suffered a decline in interest. Especially young people from 18 to 25 years old seem to be less interested in voluntary work. An explanation is that young people nowadays find 'having fun' and financial comfort more important than doing voluntary work. A lot of them have a job after school and during weekends, and therefore less time is available for voluntary activities. On the other hand, more young people are involved in 'informal' care, helping friends and relatives. This has also become clear recently by a little (online) research carried out by the National Youth Council. The research showed that young people don't want to do voluntary work, but would like to do something unpaid for somebody else. This might seem a bit strange, but apparently, young people don't like the word 'voluntary work'. Obviously, young people in the Netherlands do misrepresent voluntary work, and consider voluntary work as working for a charity or within social care. Also, voluntary work is being linked to a sense of duty and caring for others. Although youngsters think is a good initiative, they don't want to participate.

Besides youngsters themselves, there are also some obstacles within organisations working with young volunteers. Many organisations working with young volunteers are not adequately equipped to address the requirements of this target group. The organisations do indeed wish to procure the services of young volunteers, but are often unwilling to amend their existing policy whereby the young people themselves do not feel comfortable with the organisation. Moreover, the organisations are

often not in a position to offer the type of activity which may be seen s relevant to the interests and experience of young people, or may not be sufficiently flexible.

In order to change this and to stimulate youth, the National Youth Council tries to make youngsters aware of the positive sides of voluntary work. Therefore, the Council has launched the 'I Am Great' campaign (Ik ben geweldig). Local, regional and international voluntary organisations are participating in this campaign. Young people can test themselves on the campaign's website

www.ikbengeweldig.nl. The result will provide information about the type of voluntary work one will probably be suitable for.

9. Promotion of voluntary activities of young people in the country, particularly among young people with fewer opportunities.

Information concerning voluntary work for youngsters is mainly provided through the internet, for instance at the website of the National Youth Council and the Dutch organisation of voluntary work (www.nov.nl). On national level, the umbrella organisation MOVISIE seeks to support young people and make them enthusiastic.

Also, some general activities have been set up in order to involve youth more on voluntary work. For instance, the 'MADD' (Make A Difference Day) is been organised each year. Madd offers people the possibility to get to know voluntary activities within their neighbourhood. For a lot of voluntary organisations, MADD can offer a lot of publicity, and they can search for new volunteers. The MADD is being financed by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. Although this activity doesn't specifically aim at youngsters, young people will probably feel addressed as it is a big, sparkling campaign.

Another good example might be the 'National Compliments Day', which is being organised every year. The National Compliments Day 2008 was specifically aimed at (young) volunteers, as volunteers don't often get the appreciation and recognition they should get. On this day, people get the opportunity to thank 'their' volunteer, by giving him or her a national compliment award.

Some examples on local level are for instance the 'For Free Magazine' (www.forfreemagazine.nl), magazine for young volunteers in Amsterdam, and the website www.vrijwilligersgevraagd.nl, which is more or less specifically aimed at youngster who would like to do some kind of voluntary work. A lot of special websites for youth (i.e. Youth Information Point) provide general information about the possibilities concerning voluntary work for youth.

As the social work placement in future becomes obliged, some websites have been launched in order to provide youth information, make them enthusiastic and provide some examples of social work placements: www.vetvrijwillig.nl en www.maatschappelijkstage.nl .

Jopla, the organisation for young handicapped people, makes out a case for young volunteers with fewer opportunities. In 2002, Jopla did some research in order to have a good idea if young people with fewer opportunities have the same chances concerning voluntary work as healthy young people. Due to the research, this wasn't always the case. Therefore, Jopla is constantly lobbying for more opportunities concerning young disabled volunteers.

10. Recognition of voluntary activities of young people in the country.

There is no formal recognition for voluntary work. However, some schools and colleges award study points or exemption from certain courses requirements to those students undertaking voluntary work, whether within the school setting or beyond. Some organisations award certificates to their volunteers, while there are also experiments involving portfolios. However, there is no national or regional system whereby the learning experiences gained through voluntary work are recorded. The possibility of creating such a system is currently being examined.

MOVISIE has developed the procedure 'EVC' (Recognition Achieved Competences). This is an instrument in order to recognize competences earned by volunteers. Volunteers will be able to recognize their earned competences, and will be able to 'offer' themselves better to potential employers.

The social work placement for pupils in secondary school will also be recognized by the EVC procedure.. In 2011, the social work placement will be mentioned at a diploma or list of marks, so from then on it will be more or less a formal recognition of voluntary activities of young people.

Young people who participate in activities supported by the Youth in Action programme receive the Youth Pass, which now also 'counts' for performing their obliged community work experience as part of their school curriculum as mentioned in the first paragraph.

11. Existing co-operations, networks and exchange programmes in the country for supporting voluntary activities of young people

Most of the active voluntary organisations are members of a European network (e.g. European Volunteer Centre) or umbrella organisation, and therefore have partners in other countries.

At national level, the Dutch Youth Council is a member of the European Youth Forum, while at local level some organisations are members of European networks exchanging young volunteers in European Voluntary Services, e.g. SVR (Foundation Voluntary Work) and Foundation Richter in Den Helder, www.richtereu.com

12 Existing collective volunteering projects in the country

There are barely collective voluntary (youth) projects in the Netherlands. Obviously there are numerous events in the field of sports, theatre- and film festivals, music events that are carried out with the help of volunteers, but we do not consider this as collective voluntary youth projects, as volunteering is not one of the aims or focus of the projects.

13 Recent survey or research on the topic of voluntary activities?

In March 2008, the Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) carried out a research, called, 'voluntary cared for' (vrijwillig verzorgd), which deals with voluntary work for those in need and voluntary aid, outside the institutions.