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INFORMATION SHEET VOLUNTEERING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

CYPRUS



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1. Volunteering of young people in Cyprus

Give an overview on volunteering of young people (13 – 30) in your country on the national and regional level (in federal states) answering the following questions:

- Are there official national/regional recommendations (policies) concerning volunteering of young people?

On national level: **YES**

On regional level: **NO**

The only official policy concerning volunteering in Cyprus in general is The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council Law¹. This Law gives the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council a legal framework for its establishment, functioning and operation. It is a comprehensive law with provisions for the role and competences of the Council, the structure, administration, representation, etc of the voluntary sector/NGO sector. The law recognizes the PVCC as the supreme coordinating body of volunteerism in the Republic of Cyprus.

- Is volunteering usually paid? **YES**

Under the framework of the “*Youth in Action*” program (*Action 2 – European Voluntary Service*)², volunteers usually receive a reimbursement for their daily expenses. For other programs, volunteering is not paid.

- Is there any National voluntary service? Y/N

The only National Voluntary Service of Cyprus is the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council.

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

In Cyprus, unfortunately, there isn't any legal security status for volunteers. This means that they don't enjoy any financial, tax or insurance benefits.

¹ www.volunteerism-cc.org.cy

² www.youth.org.cy

2. Main actors and networks

- Who are the main actors (institutional and NGOs) in the field of volunteering of young people on the different levels?

Level	Actor	In original language	Web-site
National:	1. Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council	Παγκύπριο Συντονιστικό Συμβούλιο Εθελοντισμού	www.volunteerism-cc.org.cy
	2. Cyprus Youth Council	Συμβούλιο Νεολαίας Κύπρου	www.cyc.org.cy
	3. Cyprus Scouts Association	Σώμα Προσκόπων Κύπρου	www.cyprusscouts.org
Regional:	N/A		
Local:	4. Municipal Youth Councils	Δημοτικά Συμβούλια Νεολαίας	N/A
	5. Cyprus Youth Centers Organization	Κυπριακός Οργανισμός Κέντρων Νεότητας	www.cyco.org.cy

- Are any organizations in this field specifically targeting youth (as participants in [voluntary activities and voluntary services](#))?

All the above actors and their members (except for the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council) are specifically targeting youth. Their members are young people (aged 14-35 approximately) and all their projects address young people.

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

The only actual network for supporting volunteering of young people in Cyprus is the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council.

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

Unfortunately, in Cyprus, organizations promoting volunteering are not recognized as such by law. Therefore, their legal status is either the one of clubs or the one of non profitable companies. Their only benefit is the exemption of paying VAT.

3. Promotion of volunteering of young people

- Which methods among the one listed below are the most used to promote volunteering of young people in your country?

By national policies:

- Advertisement campaigns
- Education
- Youth information centers
- funding of NGOs
- Other:
- None

By NGOs:

- Advertisement campaigns
- Education
- Youth information centers
- Other:
- None

Explain and provide examples for each of the box ticked.

The Education system of Cyprus promotes volunteering to pupils indirectly³. At the Secondary Education curriculum, there isn't any specific lesson promoting volunteering. Its promotion is carried out through the existence of voluntary groups that are activated several times throughout the year. A program that gives an extra promotion to volunteering is the "Youth and Volunteerism" program that is organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council. Under the framework of this program, schools from all over Cyprus participate in a competition and the best voluntary projects are awarded accordingly. Also, at the beginning of December, all schools organize the "Volunteerism Week" and during these five days each school takes a different initiative (e.g. cleaning of villages, trees planting, visits to child hospitals, initiatives for poor pupils etc)⁴.

The Youth Information Centers are run by the Youth Board of Cyprus. One of their main goals, apart from providing information and counseling, is the promotion of young people's participation in several voluntary activities organized by the Youth NGO's. Within the Centers, many voluntary activities are advertised (by posters, flyers, web-pages etc) for free and in this way visitors have the opportunity to come in contact directly with the organizers of each event, under the assistance of the Centers' staff.

Funding of NGO's is a major promotion method of volunteering. The financial support of NGO's for organizing voluntary activities is very important to them and gives them undoubtedly the ability to involve even more young people. For example, the Youth Board of Cyprus⁵ runs the "Youth Initiatives" Project, which is entirely a funding project referring exclusively to initiatives taken by youth NGO's (similar to the "Youth in Action" program, but on a national level).

³ www.moec.gov.cy

⁴ www.schools.ac.cy

⁵ www.youthboard.org.cy

Furthermore, the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council operates several projects targeting the development of volunteering, such as:

- The Cyprus Volunteer Centre: Official coordinative centre for the promotion of volunteerism in Cyprus. It promotes, organizes and coordinates voluntary service and matches need and demand at national level. It furthermore raises awareness on national and cross-national volunteer opportunities when such opportunities exist.
- National Volunteering Portal⁶: Internet based software application for facilitating volunteer service, promoting volunteering and for matching need and demand. The project's specific objective is to provide an improved internet-based volunteering environment for young people and citizens in general as well as vulnerable groups and NGOs/voluntary organizations.
- News Service: The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council News Service disseminates, on a regular basis, various information on national / EU development and practices. This also includes good/practice youth volunteering projects, events, EU funding (Youth in Action Program) in order to promote youth volunteering either at national or EU level (cross-border).
- Volunteerism-Social Inclusion-Equal Opportunities: An Interactive Multimedia informal Learning Tool (DVD) for school-age children. This tool is a digital game for elementary school age children. It aims to help the children to develop a healthy personality through volunteerism as well as positive and critical thinking on contemporary social issues, on equal opportunities and on social inclusion.
- Training Program for Voluntary Service: The Mobility training projects, that are implemented by the PVCC since 2005, give the opportunity to professional staff or volunteers employed in voluntary organizations/NGOs, to exchange, among others, good practices in promoting volunteering projects (nationally or cross-border). The training program also includes study visits to local volunteer organizations, which enhances networking and future collaborations on volunteer projects

The NGO's usually advertise their campaigns either by printed promotion material, or by the Medias or by the internet. This depends on the target group of each campaign and the financial resources. Lately, the most frequent and preferable method is the internet.

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

- European Youth Pass
- Certificates
- Credits in the formal education system
- Awards
- Incentives
- They are valued in the CV
- Other:
- They are not recognized

Explain and provide examples for each of the box ticked.

⁶ www.ethelontis.net

The European Youth Pass in Cyprus is given to volunteers from the “Youth in Action” Program National Agency, which is under the Youth Board of Cyprus. As in all other countries, in Cyprus all participants in an approved project of Action 1.1, Action 1.2, Action 2, Action 3.1, Action 4.3 (Training courses) and Action 4.6 under the Youth in Action Program have the right to receive recognition for their participation and learning.

Certificates are given by various public authorities for participating in voluntary activities. This, of course, doesn't have any truly significant impact in the certificate holders' future life, since it isn't really recognized as something with added value. For instance, if someone applies for a work position in the public sector, he/she will never be asked to present any kind of certificates other than those the position demands (e.g. diploma, Bachelor, MA etc). The situation is more or less the same at the private sector too.

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

1. The compulsory military service⁷: all male persons in Cyprus, who don't face any serious health problems, must join the National Guard for their military service for a period of 24 months, after they finish secondary school (at the age of 18). This means that almost half of the active population at the age of 18, for 2 years, is exclusively obliged to a specific cause, therefore the involvement in any voluntary or other social activity is nonexistent.
2. The country's location⁸: Cyprus' geographical setting is not very convenient in order to facilitate a young person to volunteering. As an island, the only fast way to move to another country is by air. The travelling costs are of course a factor that puts obstacles to a young Cypriot, in comparison to a young person living in Europe.
3. The society's culture: the lack of actual volunteering mentality in Cyprus is probably one of the major reasons for the so low interest on behalf of young people. People in Cyprus haven't really developed a genuine volunteering way of thinking and this is quite obvious between both elder and younger generations. The society's main goals are mostly the highest possible education and employability and thus no extra space for volunteering is left. There are various socio-political reasons for this, such as the relatively young democracy (only 51 years old), the rather small and closed society (only 800,000 people), the educational system etc.
4. Absence of recognition of non formal education: the fact that there in Cyprus there is no recognition actually of the non formal education, plays a vital role in the non development of volunteering. Had there been some sort of recognition in any way of the non formal education, it would be a strong incentive for young people to be much more familiar with volunteering.

⁷ www.mod.gov.cy

⁸ www.cyprus-maps.com

4. Mobility of young volunteers

- Is there any national monitoring of how mobility of young volunteers takes place? **NO**
- What are these monitoring mechanisms? If yes, please explain.

There isn't any national monitoring mechanism of mobility of young volunteers in Cyprus, unfortunately.

5. Sources of information

Web-pages:

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| I. | Youth Board of Cyprus | www.youthboard.org.cy |
| II. | Ministry of Education and Culture | www.moec.gov.cy |
| III. | Schools Support Portal | www.schools.ac.cy |
| IV. | Ministry of Defense | www.mod.gov.cy |
| V. | “Youth in Action” program | www.youth.org.cy |
| VI. | Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council | www.volunteerism-cc.org.cy |
| VII. | National Volunteering Portal | www.ethelontis.net |
| VIII. | Cyprus Youth Council | www.cyc.org.cy |