INFORMATION SHEET

VOLUNTEERING OF YOUNG PEOPLE

IRELAND
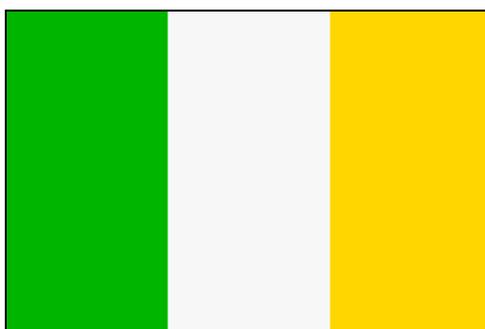
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By: Maurice Devlin

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1. Volunteering of young people in Ireland

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:

On national level: YES

On regional level: NO

[This and subsequent sections relating to policy, legislative and financial aspects are indebted to, and reproduce information from, the Volunteering Ireland *Country Report* for the Volunteering across Europe Research Project (2010)]

Published in 2000, the *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* laid out proposals for the relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector, including but not limited to voluntary activity on the part of young people and youth organisations. Proposals included:

- Formal recognition of the role of the sector in contributing to the creation of a vibrant, participative democracy and civil society.
- Designation of Voluntary Activity Units in relevant government departments.
- Introduction of various consultation mechanisms, including best practice guidelines.
- Multi-annual funding to become the norm for agreed priority services and activities.
- Holding of regular policy fora by relevant departments and agencies.
- A strong government commitment to implement all the decisions in the White Paper.
- Funding for national networks and other federations, community and voluntary infrastructure and supports, Community and Voluntary Fora and a research programme. (Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, 2000)

Not all the proposals in the White Paper have been implemented. However, the state does provide significant funding to the community and voluntary sector through various channels: national government departments, local government and semi-state agencies.
The key government department (since 2011) is the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, which runs a range of funding programmes, including one that offers supports for volunteering. There is a small but growing trend of the state moving away from grant support to community and voluntary organisations and towards the use of service level agreements in which the organisations deliver certain social services on a contractual basis.
Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 recognises the valuable role of the community and voluntary sector and commits to deepening the partnership between statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations:
The Government recognises that community and voluntary activity forms the very core of a vibrant and inclusive society. The great strength of voluntary activity is that it emerges organically from communities. While the Government should not seek to control and be involved in every aspect of voluntary activity, it does have a responsibility to provide an enabling framework to help the sector. Where this involves direct supports, a delicate balance must be struck between having relatively light regulation and maintaining proper accountability. (Department of the Taoiseach, 2006: 70)

- Is volunteering usually paid?
Expenses are paid at the discretion of individual organisations.

- Is there any National voluntary service?
NO

-What is the legal / financial (fiscal) / social security status of volunteers ?
There is no specific legislation that directly promotes or prevents voluntary activity.
Legislation relating to equal status, health/safety/welfare, immigration and many other
issues applies to everyone equally. Paid staff are protected in the workplace through an
extensive body of employment legislation. By definition, volunteers are not employees and
are therefore not afforded such employment rights. Volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses
are not given explicit consideration by the Revenue Commissioners and there are no
specific legal provisions in relation to insurance for volunteers. Persons in receipt of social
welfare benefits are required to seek permission from the Department of Social Protection before
commencing any form of volunteering. (Volunteering Ireland, 2010: 3.3)

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?

National:
As stated above, the key government department (since 2011) is the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government,
While there are numerous organisations involving volunteers (in areas such as culture, sports, environment, social justice, social care, disability, heath, and of course youth), Volunteer Ireland is a national NGO which specifically aims 'to create an enabling environment for volunteering, to develop an ethos of volunteerism across all sectors of society and to be an independent and legitimate voice for volunteering'.

Regional:
Not applicable

Local:
In 2000, Community and Voluntary Fora were established in each local government area as part of the process that set up of country's 34 County/City Development Boards. Public sector agencies are encouraged to consult with these local fora on their local policy proposals.
Volunteer Ireland currently has a network of 23 Local Volunteer Centres. These put people who want to volunteer in touch with community and voluntary or nonprofit organisations seeking volunteers, and provide supports to both volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations

- Are any organisations in this field specifically targeting youth (as participants in voluntary activities and voluntary services)?
The National Youth Council of Ireland is the umbrella body for voluntary sector (NGO) youth organisations.
It is recognised under the terms of the Youth Work Act 2001 (section 24) as the prescribed representative body for the voluntary youth sector. Some of its members place a particular emphasis on voluntary activities and voluntary service by young people, for example
Voluntary Service International, Irish Red Cross Youth, Young Christian Workers' Movement.

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

- What is the legal / financial (fiscal) status of organisations promoting volunteering?
Irish law gives individual adults 'legal status', which affords them recognition in the legal system and offers them a certain amount of legal protection. However, it does not recognise a group of people as having legal status if they do not have a formal legal structure. The process of 'incorporation' confers a separate legal status on a group. The Irish community and voluntary sector comprises both unincorporated and incorporated entities: most are unincorporated associations and companies limited by guarantee without share capital. Most unincorporated associations have a governing document known as a 'constitution' that outlines the

aims, activities and rules for running the group. They tend to be governed by 'management committees'. Setting up an association is relatively easy but affords no legal protection to its individual members. (Volunteering Ireland, 2010: 4.1-4.3; The Wheel, 2007)

The Charities Act 2009 (section 3) set out a definition of charitable purpose for the first time in Irish primary legislation (the full implementation of the Act may take several more years).

Organisations may apply for a CHY (charity) number from the Revenue Commissioners, but are under no obligation to do so. Organisations with a CHY number may not remunerate members of the governing body for their governance role, nor may they have paid staff on their governing body, unless special permission has been granted for this by the Revenue Commissioners.

The granting of a CHY number by the Revenue Commissioners is still only a tax designation permitting limited fiscal benefits; it is not a specified legal status. (Volunteering Ireland, 2010: 3.1; The Wheel, 2007)

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**
The Civic, Social and Political Education programme during the Junior Cycle at second level aims to 'prepare students for active participatory citizenship…through comprehensive exploration of the civic, social and political dimensions of their lives'.
While volunteering is not an explicit objective the CSPE programme makes it possible for students to become more aware and active in relation to a range of social issues. The same is true of the Transition Year Programme. This non-compulsory programme at the start of Senior Cycle 'promotes the personal, social, vocational and educational development of students and prepares them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society' (Transition Year Guidelines, Department of Education). The Civic Engagement in Higher Education project promotes, among other things, voluntary activity and voluntary service among university students (and staff). Project partners include National University of Ireland Galway, National University of Ireland Maynooth, University College Dublin, Dublin City University, and University of Limerick.

☑ **Youth information centres**
The Youth Affairs Unit of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs provides resources for the development of a network of Youth Information Centres. Youth Information Centres provide young people with access to information on rights, opportunities, benefits, health, welfare and other matters. This service also helps those looking for advice and help concerning emigration and mobility within Europe. This Scheme is administered by the Vocational Education Committees on behalf of the Youth Affairs Section of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

☑ **Funding of NGOs**

The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has a funding scheme for national voluntary organisations and offers support for volunteering.
The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has funding schemes specifically for youth organisations and youth projects.

☑ **Other:**
Gaisce, the President's Award invites young people between 15 and 25 years of age to set themselves challenges in four areas of activity, one of which is community involvement.

☐ **None**

By NGOs:

☑ **Advertisement campaigns**
In recent years television advertisements (sponsored by one of the country's major banks) have been used to raise public awareness of the Youth Citizenship Programme run by Foróige (see below).

☑ **Education**
Youth organisations in Ireland for the most part describe their work with young people in educational terms (non-formal and informal education, critical social education). An important part of such work is concerned with promoting the positive interaction and involvement of young people with their communities, often through voluntary activities and community service.
For example, the Youth Citizenship Programme run by Foróige, one of the largest national youth organisations, aims to empower young people to be leaders within their local communities and among their friends through promoting 'awareness, action and evaluation' in relation to a social issue such as the needs of the elderly, facilities, environment, employment and so on.

☑ **Youth information centres**
The Youth Information Centres funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs are run by youth NGOs such as Youth Work Ireland, Foróige and Catholic Youth Care.

☐ **Other:**

☐ **None**

Explain and provide examples for each of the box ticked.

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

☑ **European Youth Pass**
The European Youth Pass is used by some youth (and other) organisations to recognise the learning and skills development that takes place through young people's voluntary activities. An example is the 2011 exchange which brought together young people from County Limerick Youth Theatre and Loimaa Youth Theatre from Finland.

☑ **Certificates**
Individual organisations and institutions provide certificates to recognise voluntary activity. An example is the ALIVE Certificate for Volunteering at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

☐ **Credits in the formal education system**

☑ **Awards**
Many Irish NGOs run 'volunteer of the year' awards, often with specific recognition of the contribution of young volunteers. Volunteer Ireland organises the Ireland Involved awards for people who are active across the entire voluntary sector.

See also above comments on Gaisce, the President's Award.

☑ **Incentives**
Individual organisations and companies offer their employees incentives in the form of time-in-lieu to encourage and enable them to engage in voluntary activity and voluntary service.

The National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007 proposed that research be carried out into new initiatives to facilitate volunteering, such as paid leave and tax incentives for employers and employees (Department of Education and Science, 2003: 19), but there is as yet no nationally-recognised incentive scheme. This matter was also considered in Tipping the Balance: Report of the National Committee on Volunteering (2002):

In the longer term, a more extensive commitment at policy level would be required if the State is to give recognition to volunteering by employees in the public service or if volunteering is to be linked to social insurance. This implies an on-going dialogue between the State and those engaged in, and supporting volunteering. (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002: 66)

☑ **They are valued in the CV**
This is informally the case.
☐ Other:

☐ **They are not recognised**

Explain and provide examples for each of the box ticked.

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

Research has shown that lack of time is the reason most commonly given by Irish people for not volunteering. Young people are even more likely than older people to mention lack of time as an obstacle: while 52% of the total population say they have 'no time', the figure for young women (18-29 year olds) is 66% and for young men 69%. (Ruddle and Mulvihill, 1999; National Committee on Volunteering, 2002: 32-33)

The National Children's Advisory Council's report Research on Youth Volunteering in Ireland (2006) found that:

One of the most important barriers to youth volunteering seems to be peer opinion. This is in turn related to the image and perceptions young people have of volunteering. Other barriers to volunteering are related to structural issues such as the lack of volunteering opportunities, lack of awareness of volunteering, lack of time and lack of transport. (National Committee on Volunteering, 2002: 67)

Recent research for the National Youth Council of Ireland largely bears out previous findings. Lending a Hand: A Report on Young People and Volunteering in Ireland (2011) identified the following as the main barriers to volunteering among young people:

- Not having enough time
- Never thought about volunteering
- Reluctance to 'make the first move'
- Lack of information
- A sense that the young person would not like it
- Perceived absence of any independence or autonomy in the volunteering role
- Too young to volunteer
- Absence of positive volunteering role model and/or peer support
- No transport and concern about perceived costs associated with volunteering (National Youth Council of Ireland,2011: 9)

Research confirms that young people are in fact less likely to volunteer than older people, and that young men in particular volunteer less. The Census of Ireland 2006 (the first ever Irish Census to include a question

on volunteering) shows that the 20-24 age group and those classed as 'unskilled' were most under-represented among volunteers.

Tipping the Balance: Report of the National Committee on Volunteering (2002) puts these findings in context.

> The comparison of volunteering rates across age cohorts creates the impression, however unintentionally, that it is reasonable to expect similar rates of volunteering over different age groups. There is no rationale for this and no such comparison across age groups can reasonably be made. Thus while we may note that certain age groups have a greater propensity to volunteer than others it is done so without value judgement. An important aspect of this is the concept of a volunteering life pattern or life cycle. Repeated across surveys and countries we find rates of volunteering climbing into middle age and declining thereafter. (p. 51)

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.

5. Sources of information

Department of Education and Science (2003) *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003-2007.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs (2000) *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

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http://www.volunteeringireland.ie/docs/ireland_country_report.pdf

The Wheel (2007) *Solid Foundations: A Resource Guide for Building Strong and Effective Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector*. Dublin: The Wheel.