Public-Private Obstacles to Voluntary Service and Citizenship

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Abstract

What are obstacles to participating in voluntary service activities for young individuals traveling to other European countries? This paper concentrates on private and public-private barriers to participation in voluntary services by young people. It identifies three barriers, obligations, information, and opportunities, which may deter young people from participating in voluntary service activities. After providing descriptive information about each of these private and public-private obstacles, the paper briefly concludes with recommendations on overcoming these obstacles to promote solidarity and ensuring active European citizenship.

Introduction

What are trans-European obstacles to voluntary activities for young people? To foster young people's active citizenship and solidarity, private and public-private structures and practices must be considered in establishing national and transnational policies of voluntary service. Young persons face considerable obstacles to participating in voluntary services. These obstacles are found in public and private sectors of social life; sometimes these barriers are formed by public-private collaborations. This paper presents categories of private and public-private barriers to voluntary service participation by young people. It then examines survey data and political and socio-economic data to place these categories in a European context. An overarching objective of this paper is to contribute to debates on barriers to voluntary service activities and how to remove or alleviate their consequences. This paper seeks to contribute to discussions of how voluntary service activities can foster active citizenship and solidarity of young people in Europe.

This paper first presents an overview of what is meant by public and private, then a discussion of what is public and private when considering voluntary service activities. It then presents three categories of private and public-private barriers to voluntary service participation. This paper concludes with a brief discussion of how these barriers may be overcome or mitigated for purposes of employing voluntary service activities to foster active citizenship and solidarity of young people in Europe.

What is Public and Private

Before examining private and public-private barriers to voluntary service, it is important to discuss what is meant by public and private. It is impossible to give all meanings of public and private or to come to a neat conclusion about sources of ideas of what is public and private. Instead, this section's objective is to offer an overview of how we often think of what is public and private, and to raise questions about what is meant by public and private.

We start with common notions of what is public and private. Nancy Fraser (1999: 128) reviews typical conceptions of public and private.

> "Public," for example, can mean (1) state-related, (2) accessible to everyone, (3) of concern to everyone, and (4) pertaining to a common good or shared interest. Each of these corresponds to a contrasting sense of "private." In addition, there are two other senses of "private" hovering just below the surface here: (5) pertaining to private property in a market economy and (6) pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life.

Fraser's notions of public seem to revolve around either the state or a matter that involves everyone. Public denotes government as well as universal access or relevance. Her notions of private appear to be non-state, not to involve everyone, or to pertain to private property or intimate relations. Private refers to space and relationships outside government, including areas and relationships not universally available. These spaces and relationships include the home and relationships taking place within the home or in the market place.

Fraser's (1999) conception, like others' notions of public and private, probably has a basis in Aristotle's ideas. In his *Politics,* Aristotle sets out the basis of a state, delineating categories: the citizen, the household, the village, and the state. In his model, the state subsumes the village, the household, and the citizen. Rather than a dichotomy between state and non-state actors and institutions, the state is built on the village, which is based on households capable of fulfilling daily needs. A state is a community based on an organization of villages. A community is formed from several villages. A village is formed when several households unite to fulfill more than basic needs, thereby allowing household members to manage concerns beyond their own households. A household consists of master and slave, husband and wife, and father and children. Outside Aristotle's household, as a citizen, a male household member participates in public affairs arising between other households and the village and state they form.

Aristotle offers some directions on how a household should be governed. Inside this household, the male citizen as husband, father, and master, governs his wife, children, and to a less degree his servant, respectively. The relationship between husband and wife is constitutional rule. The husband should govern his wife as a citizen leader governs another citizen, with the expectation that they will take

turns and the other citizen will eventually govern. In the case of the relationship between husband and wife, however, the husband's rule never ceases. The wife will never govern the husband, but she should submit to the power of the husband, who should treat his wife with the respect of a fellow citizen who will rule him. The father should govern his children royally. A royal government for Aristotle means the father should rule his children as a loving parent. His children, in turn, should submit to him out of love and respect for his royal government. Although the male member owes responsibilities beyond mere ownership, the bottom line is that the servant is the master's property. For Aristotle, the state is based on and subsumes the village and the household, but within the household the male citizen governs. Outside the household, together citizens would form government and make decisions affecting others living in and under authority of government.

Gobetti (1997: 103) suggests that the public-private dichotomy "has its roots in the modern contractual theorists." She points to the distinction between public and private jurisdictions. The private jurisdiction belongs to the "citizen/subject" and the public jurisdiction belongs to the group that makes decisions for a "politically unified group" (1997: 103). The private jurisdiction extends to all activities in which an "adult engages without harming or endangering others," whether by commission or omission. When harm is done, the public authority can then legitimately intrude into an individual's private jurisdiction.

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1991), Jürgen Habermas conceives of a public sphere, the state, and the economy or market place. His focus is on the public sphere, which he describes as a place where people are socially integrated and rational, critical discourse can take place about state and economy. Integration into this public sphere occurs through communication, not domination (Calhoun 1999: 29; see Calhoun 1999 for an excellent overview of this book). In the public sphere, individuals are to participate together, through communication, in debating issues of authority of the state and market place. Habermas' private sphere is the household. Compared to Aristotle, the public sphere is the site where all individuals can exchange ideas and opinions to exercise control over state and

market sectors. It is not clear in Habermas' conception whether communication in the public sphere is expected to be used to control the private sphere.

Behanbib (1999: 92) criticizes Habermas for failing to identify power differences in intimate relations found in the private sphere. The women's movement, according to Behanbib, is making private issues into public issues (1999: 92) by noting power differences "on which sexual division of labor has rested" (1999: 92). As a result, lines between public and private are under negotiation. She is troubled, however, by how these private issues are managed in public. "When, however, issues like child rearing...domestic violence...child abuse...go public in our societies, more often than not a 'patriarchal-capitalist-disciplinary bureaucracy' has resulted. These bureaucracies have frequently disempowered women and have set the agenda for public debate and participation" (Behanbib 1999: 94).

An important conceptual contribution to the public-private dichotomy is the social sector. Fraser (1989: 156) identifies the social, which she says is different from family and official economy, as well as Habermas' public sphere. "Rather, the social is a site of discourse about people's needs, specifically about those needs that have broken out of the domestic and/or official economic spheres that earlier contained them as 'private matters.'" It is a place of conflict and struggle "in which conflicts among rival interpretations of people's needs are played out" and discussed (Fraser 1989: 156-157). She (1989: 157) identifies three major ways needs are discussed in the social arena: (1) experts such as social workers and policy makers identifying people's needs; (2) oppositional movements identifying people's needs; and, (3) reprivatization constituencies that seek to move "newly problematized needs to their former domestic or official economic enclaves." Fraser’s social is similar to Habermas' public sphere in that it is a site of communication, but less of integration. While Habermas may hope that everyone enters the public sphere, it seems that experts and groups dominate Fraser’s social sector.

These different conceptions suggest many important thinkers have devised different conceptions of what is public and private, and that these conceptions sometimes conflict. Fraser (1999: 131) advocates taking harder looks at "public" and "private." "These terms, after all, are not simply straightforward designations of societal spheres; they are cultural classifications and rhetorical labels. In political

discourse they are powerful terms frequently deployed to delegitimate some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others." Turkel (1992: 222) contends that the public-private "division is increasingly determined by social forces," but that the public-private distinction is incoherent. This incoherence "occurs along with increases in societal power that make the individual and the private sphere a zone of surveillance, manipulation, and intensive technological control." Yet the public-private dichotomy is a double-edged sword. To deny the utility of the public-private boundary can result in the weakening of the boundary, permitting the state and others to intrude into private life. On the other hand, affirming the boundary can discourage new responses to problems the public-private boundary denies (Turkel 1992: 222-223; see Fraser 1999: 137).

What is meant by public and private includes both place and relationship. Aristotle described relationships between state, village, and household. Male household leaders negotiated these relationships, as well as relationships within the household. Roles of other household members, including wife, child, and slave, were conceptually limited to intra-household relationships. The male household leader participated in public and private sectors, while participation of women, children, and slaves were limited to the private sector. Habermas is concerned that state and economic marketplace will overwhelm the public sphere, which is a site of social integration that can encourage individuals to participate in controlling authority of the state and economic marketplace. In his later work, Habermas goes further to express concern that the state and economic marketplace will intervene in and to some degree control the private sphere. Habermas conceives that everyone will participate in the public sphere, but as his critics note, he fails to consider barriers and abilities to participation. These barriers may be erected in the state and economic marketplaces as well as within the household (see Gobetti (1997: 105).

What is Public and Private for Policies of Voluntary Service Activities

Voluntary activities may be undertaken as part of a relationship to a non-governmental organization, a charity, a social movement, or less formally with like-minded individuals interested in pursuing similar activities. These activities may belong in Habermas' public sphere because they can integrate people. Most people would probably designate these activities and their relationships as private.

Lines separating government and voluntary service activities, however, are fuzzy. Considering Fraser's (1999) conception of public and private, voluntary service activities are not explicitly tied to government and the relationships are exclusive in that they are not open to everyone. In some countries, on the other hand, people perceive strong ties between government and voluntary service agencies (Chaney and Febre 2001) and these activities receive government support.

Voluntary activities belong in Fraser's (1989) social sphere as well. This paper and the seminar to which it will hopefully contribute are examples of discourse about people's needs. The seminar and other fora will be locations of discussions of what voluntary activities can do to promote active European citizenship. The immediate goal of this paper and seminar is not to integrate a potential volunteer, but to communicate and critically discuss voluntary activities as means to promote active European citizenship and solidarity among younger people.

Voluntary activities are not performed, of course, in a vacuum. Instead, understandings of voluntary activities are influenced by government and non-government actors and institutions. Perceptions of voluntary activities are affected by work in Fraser's social sphere, as this research seminar will do. Attitudes toward government and social sphere actors can affect an individual's decision to participate in volunteer activities.

Barriers to Voluntary Service Participation

This paper presents and discusses three types of private and public-private barriers young people may face when pursuing voluntary service activities across European boundaries: obligations, information, and opportunities. These three types are not hard and fast; they are meant to serve as guidelines to thinking about barriers young people may encounter in participating in voluntary services in other European countries. Lines separating the types are fuzzy. Formal and informal obligations may hinder, even prevent, a young person from participating in voluntary service activities. These obligations can limit information the young individual receives about opportunities to participate in volunteer service activities. Available information may be limited by opportunities an individual enjoys. Some individuals may enjoy opportunities to participate, while others do not or think they do not. This section presents

conceptualizations of each type, then offers information about how the barrier may influence young people's participation in voluntary service activities and the degree to which these barriers exist.

Obligations

Young people may face formal and informal obligations that influence their decisions on whether and how to perform voluntary service activities in other European countries. Coleman (1990) emphasizes the leverage a group can bring on an individual member to ensure compliant behavior. Group membership may be based in Habermas' public sphere or Aristotle's household. In the public sphere, these obligations may be to non-market institutions like religious organizations or market-related institutions such as trade unions.

While it is likely that individuals have varying depths of convictions, it is probable that many religious institutions mandate formal fulfillment of religious practices. Adherents to some faiths are expected to practice their faiths in explicit ways, often daily. They may require access to religious facilities and interaction with religious authorities. Adherents may have dietary needs they must fulfill to maintain their religious convictions. Some religious practices require adherents to undergo fasts or to avoid work in general. A young person may reasonably question whether he or she can fulfill faith obligations away from his or her home community.

Within Europe, approximately 271,000,000 people adhere to Roman Catholicism, 166,000,000 to Orthodox beliefs, 80,000,000 to Protestant beliefs, 32,000,000 to Muslim beliefs, and about 3,000,000 to Jewish beliefs. Although Europe is known for its great religious heterogeneity, this heterogeneity is not evenly distributed.

Table 1: Religious Adherents (Percent of population)[1]

Country	Catholic	Jew	Muslim	Orthodox	Protestant	% of 18-25 year olds who say that "religion" is "very important"
Austria	75.5	0.1	2.2	1.9	5	13.7
Belgium	80.9	0.2	3.6	0.5	1.3	6.9
Bulgaria	1.1	0.1	11.9	71.6	1.2	
Cyprus	1.6	0	1	87.4	1.4	
Czech Republic	40.4	0.1	0	0.6	3.1	
Denmark	0.6	0.1	1.3	0	87.7	1.9
Estonia	0.4	0.2	0.3	16.5	17.2	
Finland	0.1	0	0.3	1.1	89.6	14.5
France	82.3	1	7.1	1.1	1.5	7.4
Germany	34.9	0.1	4.4	0.8	37	4.1
Greece	0.6	0.1	3.3	93	0.2	
Hungary	63.1	0.5	0.6	0.9	25.5	
Ireland	84.7	0.1	0.2	0	4.4	20.7
Italy	97.2	0.1	1.2	0.2	1	24.7
Latvia						
Lithuania	84.6	0.2	0.2	3.1	1.2	
Luxembourg	94.4	0.2	1	0.3	1.7	
Malta	94.5	0	0.5	0	0.6	
Netherlands	34.5	0.2	3.8	0.1	27	9.3
Poland						
Portugal						7.9
Romania	14.5	0	1.3	85.1	10.7	
Slovakia	67.9	0.1	0	0.4	11.1	
Slovenia	83.5	0	0.1	0.6	1.6	
Spain	96.1	0	0.5	0	0.3	9.9
Sweden	2	0.2	2.3	1.4	94.5	6.4
Turkey	0.1	0	97.2	0.3	0.1	
UK	9.6	0.5	2	0.6	53.3	6

An individual living in Austria who adheres to Muslim beliefs, for instance, may hesitate to participate in voluntary service activities in another European country because of concerns of religious practices. The number of mosques, for instance, varies across European countries.

[1] The final version of this paper will present additional data on religious practices.

Table 2: Number of adherents and mosques

Country	Muslim adherents	Number of mosques
Austria	120,000	87 (1999; Islamic voice)
France	4,200,000	1554 (2004; Islamonline.net)
Hungary	Few	None

A religious obligation can restrict an individual from building relationships outside his or her own country, hindering the process of becoming an active European citizen.

Although it may appear as a less formal obligation, responsibilities toward children, parents, and other family members, including siblings and grandparents, may be significant obstacles to a young person's participation in voluntary service activities in another country. These responsibilities run the gamut from physical and social care to financial support.

Table 3: Family ties and responsibilities[2]

Country	Average age at which women become biological parents (UNECE 2000)	Proportion of 20-24 year olds who live with parents (IARD: Appendix 1)	Proportion of 18-25 year olds who say that "family" is "very important" (IARD: Appendix 1)	For households headed by young persons (ages 16-26), proportion of disposable income provided to child support or alimony (LIS)	For households headed by young persons (ages 16-26), proportion of disposable income provided to relatives (LIS)
Austria	27	65	78.5		
Belgium	26.4	68	70.8	.1%	
Bulgaria	23.5				
Cyprus	26.1				
Czech Republic	25				
Denmark	27.4		80.2		
Estonia	24.1				
Finland	27.6	29	65.6	.01%	.07%
France	28.7	52	73.8		
Germany	28	55	47.2		

[2] This papers' final version will provide information about the degree to which young people provide care to other family members and their contributions to household income.

Greece	27.3	72			
Hungary	25			0	
Ireland	27.4	64	90.2		
Italy	28.5	87	82.1	6%	6%
Latvia	24.5				
Lithuania	24				
Luxembourg	28.5	69		.03%	1%
Malta	--				
Netherlands	29.1	47	64.6	.03%	
Poland	24				
Portugal	26.8	82	59.5		
Romania	24				
Slovakia	23.1				
Slovenia	26.5				
Spain	29	89	74.1		
Sweden	28		82.7	.05%	
Turkey	--				
UK	27	47	86.6	.1%	

(IARD is L'Istituto Iard (www.istitutoiard.it); LIS is Luxembourg Income Study[3]). IARD cites Eurostat Labour Force Survey, 1998, 2000). These data suggest different aspects of family ties may enter into a young person's decision to participate in voluntary service activities. While we note variation in the age at which a woman typically becomes a mother, the average age is older than 23 years. In some countries many young people live with their parents, with more than half of countries' youth living with parents in ten of the thirteen examined countries. Indeed, in all but one of the thirteen examined countries, approximately 60% or more young people state their family is very important. Data from the Luxembourg Income Study present information on households headed by young people between the ages of 16 and 26. These households typically provide small amounts of their disposable incomes to family members outside their households.[4]

The "family" has an important role in policies established by some European national governments. We can characterize some governments as employing principles of social capitalism.

[3] Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Microdatabase, harmonization of original surveys conducted by the Luxembourg Income Study, asbl. Luxembourg, periodic updating.

[4] Information on income contributions young people make to the households in which they live is not available at the time of this paper's revision.

According to Kees van Kersbergen (1995: 190), through social capitalism "[s]ocial rights are attached to family or status groups, and the state only provides the conditions under which the family and social groups can continue to function according to their natural and organic roles…The state assists those who fail to help themselves in the performance of their natural duty." Van Kersbergen states (1995: 190), "The very idea of social capitalism assumes women to be only marginally present on the labour market and the family to be the prime provider of care." Governments of different countries, including Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, develop social policies based on social capitalism principles. These policies affect relationships within Aristotle's household and outside in his community, village, and state. Social capitalism can establish responsibilities and expectations that will influence a young person's decision to participate in voluntary service activities. Social capitalism may particularly influence women's decisions to volunteer in other countries. These policies may affect people's abilities to become active European citizens and thwart solidarity.

Young may people may face a variety of formal requirements and informal expectations to support family members. As indicated, these obligations may discourage young people from pursuing participation in voluntary service activities at the European level. These private and public-private barriers may disproportionately affect young people in some nation states more than others.

Information

Beyond obligations, other memberships an individual has may affect his or her decision to participate in voluntary service activities in other European countries. As various experts have noted, including Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1990), and Putnam (2000) among others, most individuals belong to groups through which resources are shared and even guarded from others. These resources not only are financial, they can be information about opportunities. These kinds of group membership can criss-cross Aristotle's conception of the relationship between state, village, community, and household. Membership in one community can restrict relationships with other communities and villages. Strong community relationships may weaken ties to national and trans-national institutions. This paper will describe two

ways distribution of information among community members can affect an individual's decision to participate in voluntary service activities based in another European country.

The first is group closure. Group organization and shared beliefs may work against reception of information from outside the group. A group may be organized in a way that, intentionally or not, may isolate group members from outside information. A system of shared beliefs of this group, for instance, could work against receiving and accepting outside information. Norms shared by group members may discourage separation of young people from their own group. Granovetter (1973) finds that weak ties, through which an individual has infrequent and casual contact with another, produce more information. Strong ties are made when individuals frequently see each other over a long period. New information is less likely to enter into relationships based on strong ties than weak ties. For individuals who are members of strong groups, access to information may be restricted because of group closure. A relationship based on a weak tie suggests the other individual has ties to others. These relationships will produce new information that strong ties will not.

The second is unequal access. Rather than closure, a group may not have access to information. Some groups may not be in the position to receive information about voluntary service opportunities. Often times tied to opportunities based in human capital and socio-economic structures (see below), members of some groups may not have access to information presented in "mainstream" media. Some groups may either avoid or do not have access to major newspapers, radio and television programs, or Internet information delivery. Access to a television does not guarantee an individual will view a program about European citizenship, but in Europe televisions are widely available and may be an important means of communicating information about voluntary service activities (IARD 2001: 18). In Malta nearly 7 of 10 people own a television; in Romania only 2.32 of 10 people do. Internet usage widely varies, ranging from 3.7% in Turkey to 67.6% in Sweden. Experiences with voluntary service organizations in home countries (Bode 2003) may shape individuals' opinions of voluntary service activities. Moore and Whitt (2000) have demonstrated that gender breakdown among leaders of a nonprofit organization influence women's decisions to participate in nonprofit activities. Individuals may conclude conflicts

between voluntary service agencies at home (Stroschein 2002) will be found in other European countries. These conflicts may discourage a young person from making a commitment to a voluntary service agency in another European country. Access to information in general and to specific kinds of information will influence a young person's decision to participate in voluntary service activities.

Table 4: Information Access

Country	**Proportion of 15-24 year olds belonging to an association (IARD: Table 6)**	**Proportion of 18-25 year olds who have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in: Europe**	**Proportion of 15-24 year olds agree with the statement: "foreigners living in [own country] have same rights as [nationality]" (IARD: Appendix 1)**	**Proportion of young people who have visited other countries**	**# of individuals owning a television out of 1000 (nationamaster.com)**	**Proportion of Internet Users (users/ population)**
Austria	60		15.6		519.03	45
Belgium	47	70.9	19.3		458.73	36.5
Bulgaria				17	439.11	16.5
Cyprus				70		19.4
Czech Republic				82	332.3	26.2
Denmark	77	47.1	32.9		579.63	62.6
Estonia				63	429.51	30.5
Finland	67	63.3	33.9		616.47	51.8
France	49	74.6	24.4		578.26	28.2
Germany	58	49.1	13.9		623.79	39
Greece			17.8		238.14	13.1
Hungary				46	440	12
Ireland	61	72.4	17.4		463.79	33.4
Italy	54	78.5	20.5		522.42	32.1
Latvia				52	519.41	13.3
Lithuania				40	473.2	9.5
Luxembourg	66		17.4		627.53	22
Malta				41	699.26	14.7
Netherlands	77	60.9	36.1		501.53	60.3
Poland				48	337.88	7.8
Portugal	40	60.9	18.1		327.65	43.6
Romania				20	235.72	4.5
Slovakia				75	482.5	31
Slovenia				86	366.79	12.9
Spain	38	53.7	27.8		402.81	19.6

Sweden	82	64.3	58.3		518.12	67.6
Turkey				2		3.7
UK	50	50	25.2		507.53	57.2

Membership in some groups may work against interest in Europe and European citizenship. Group membership is not only limited to ethno-linguistic or religious background. Group membership may be based in legal categories, such as people with mental and physical disabilities.

Opportunities

Beyond group membership, some individuals may not enjoy opportunities to participate in voluntary activities. Three factors may work against an individual's decision to seize an opportunity of voluntary service. The first factor is whether the individual can economically afford to participate in the voluntary service activities. This question can involve a multitude of factors, including whether a young person has obligations to his or her family. Other affordability factors include whether the person has sufficient income to participate in voluntary service activities: does an individual need to accept a paid job in the short term? Does an individual consider the EVS compensation scheme sufficient?

Table 5: Opportunities[5]

Country	**Gross domestic product per capita (CIA 2003)**	**Youth (15-24) Unemployment Rate (UNECE 2000)**	**Difference between men and women in employment (IARD: Appendix 1)**	**Aggregate of non-mother tongue skills (Europa)**	**Proportion who have visited foreign countries**
Austria	27700	4.9	5.8	82	
Belgium	29000	15.2	6.6	114	
Bulgaria	6600	38.4 (2001)		51	17
Cyprus	10000	10.5		71	70
Czech Republic	15300	17		67	82
Denmark	29000	6.7	0.6	154	
Estonia	10900	23.8		63	63
Finland	26200	21.6	3.7	105	
France	25700	20.7	4.9	65	
Germany	26600	7.7	5.2	74	
Greece	19000	29.5	12	54	

[5] In the final version of this paper, I will include information on average pay a youth receives compared to the EVS scheme and completion of secondary and tertiary education.

Hungary	13300	12.1		36	46
Ireland	30500	6.4	6.4	39	
Italy	25000	29.7	10.1	56	
Latvia	8300	22.9		78	52
Lithuania	8400	28.8		67	40
Luxembourg	44000	-6.4	4.1	244	
Malta	17000	15.4 (2001)		147	41
Netherlands	26900	6.6	2.8	159	
Poland	9500	35.2		46	48
Portugal	18000	8.6	7.7	47	
Romania	7400	18.6		61	20
Slovakia	12200	35.2		72	75
Slovenia	18100	16.6		117	86
Spain	20700	25.3	10.9	54	
Sweden	25400	11.9	3.3	126	
Turkey	7000	13.2		43	2
UK	25300	11.8	5.2	34	

A second factor is other opportunity costs, besides income, that can affect an individual's decision to participate in voluntary service activities. What factors will an individual consider in making a decision to participate in voluntary activities? How will the decision to accept an opportunity to participate in voluntary activities affect an individual's short- and long-term circumstances? Considering availability of work suggests that these opportunities vary across countries. In some countries, a substantial gap exists between men and women in employment. A young person may obtain information indicating that the European country where he or she will participate in voluntary activities does not welcome him or her (Batliwala 2002: 393, 395). Opportunity costs may be greater than predicted benefits arising from voluntary service participation. In addition to foregoing work income, an individual may be concerned that he or she will lose formal educational and career opportunities while participating in voluntary service activities.

A third factor is whether the young person believes he or she is prepared to participate: does his or her educational background and other experiences prepare him or her to live and work in another country? For instance, does he or she possess (or believe he or she possesses) language skills needed to participate in voluntary service activities outside their own country? Despite impressive language

abilities, Eurobarometer and other agencies report secondary-language skills as significant concerns to young people.

Some individuals may mentally place these factors into an equation in which they try to determine whether "benefits" from participating in voluntary service activities outweigh their "costs." Benefits, of course, are not limited to enhancing paychecks or cosmopolitan pedigrees. They will include new experiences, opportunities for immersion in a second or third language, as well as participating in new group memberships. These new group memberships may bring new benefits of relationships and opportunities into a participant's life. Costs to a participant not only include foregoing a larger paycheck and time off-track from formal educational structures, they can include moving away from group memberships and not fulfilling obligations. As mentioned above, a young person may have faith-based concerns. Beyond religious beliefs and practices, individuals may anticipate and experience antagonism because their group membership differs from natives of receiving country in other ways, such as language, ethnic background, and nationality. While it is hoped and anticipated that voluntary service activities will help overcome these antagonisms, it is reasonable that a young person may hesitate to rise to the trans-European challenge.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suspect that many young people will not work through a fully-informed calculus of benefits and costs to participating in voluntary service activities. Not only is it unlikely that an individual would consider every relevant benefit and cost, it is highly improbable an individual could obtain the necessary information. An individual will probably look to experiences of his or her peers, including group members, and information they find at school, on television, or through the Internet. Traveling outside one's home country may strongly influence the decision to participate in another European country. Data suggest that many young people have traveled to other countries. These experiences will alert a young person to potential benefits from living elsewhere and that he or she has similar interests and concerns as young people living in other European countries.

Conclusion

This paper has briefly presented three private and public-private types of barriers to voluntary service activities young people may encounter: obligations, information, and opportunities. Because these barriers are, in many ways, located outside government's purview, they may be more difficult to overcome. Some obstacles, for instance obligations, will be difficult to surmount. Passage of time and demographic change will reduce imagined boundaries separating European citizens, but as we know, these boundaries are often more durable than physical ones.

Information and opportunity obstacles may be easier to change, but will probably be expensive. Distributing information in a means useful to a particular group is one step. Another difficult but necessary step is devising distinctive opportunities for the needs of diverse young people, whether those differences are ethno-religious or socio-economic.

It is not ironic that participation in voluntary service activities is an important step to overcoming these obstacles. Through cooperation in voluntary service activities across European borders, social participation will likely increase, along with promoting educational experiences, learning about different cultural perspectives and values, and exchanging information about opportunities. First-hand experiences in other European countries will hopefully result in less prejudice and more integration. Voluntary service activities will enhance European citizenship and promote solidarity.

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