

## NATIONAL REPORT – AUSTRIA

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN AUSTRIA

The tradition of volunteering in Austria dates back to the end of World War II and has generally been shaped by the following factors:

- The political and social landscape that for the past century has been strongly influenced by a two-party system. Many traditional volunteering organisations and federations have socialist and Christian democrat equivalents. These are active in most of the traditional fields. This long tradition of distributing public subsidies to the established organisations sometimes hinders the access of new NPOs to public funding.
- Austria is a federal state and the third sector follows is decentralised by nature. Few NPOs have an umbrella organisation but these have relatively little influence due to the strong structures in the federal states.
- Religious organisations are very involved in volunteering in Austria, especially in health care and education.
- There is a considerable difference between urban and rural regions. Public services that are completely funded in the cities are often organised on a volunteering basis in rural areas (e.g. firemen, cultural institutions, social, health and education).
- There is a tax benefit for organisations who contribute to the benefit of 'people in need'.

Volunteering in Austria has also been strongly influenced by general social values, and has mirrored general social changes. The main tendencies that have contributed to the development of the voluntary sector in Austria include globalisation, regionalisation and mobility, influencing scope and reach of volunteering activities; changing family traditions and the concept of lifelong learning; a move towards of more individualistic society, influence of the media; orientation towards events of 'voluntourism'<sup>1</sup>, increasing social responsibility of the economic sector; changing political structures; and the improvement of the management of volunteers<sup>2</sup>.

## 1.1 History and contextual background

European Volunteer Centre's (CEV) 2006 report argues that the civil society in Austria is not as strong as is often assumed. However, the voluntary organisations in Austria have a good infrastructure at their disposal. The report argues that these organisations are dependent on state financing. This contributes to the stability of the voluntary sector, but allegedly to the detriment of civil society<sup>3</sup>.

According to the CEV report, the Austrian bourgeoisie was comparatively weak at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in an increased influence of the aristocracy, the military and the church on society. The strong role of the state civil servants created close links that many non-profit organisations (NPOs) still have with the state today. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> A term used to link volunteering with events

<sup>2</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich (Report on the Voluntary Engagement in Austria developed by NPO-Institut for BMASK) Accessed on 01.10.2009 at: [http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/freiwilligenbericht\\_letztf.3\\_\(2\).pdf](http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/freiwilligenbericht_letztf.3_(2).pdf)

<sup>3</sup> European Volunteer Centre. "Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures", 2006., Accessed on 01.10.2009 at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/FactsFiguresAustria.pdf>

counter and to provide alternatives to this dominance of the state and the church other NPOs were created in the context of the labour movement. These later evolved into the main trade unions and NPOs providing social services in Austria.

After WWII the two political camps that were created entered into a social partnership. This to some extent bridged the gap between the left and right wings in the third sector. The partnership is presently composed of four representative institutions - the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB), the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK) and the Chamber of Agriculture (LK)<sup>4</sup>. These institutions have a strong influence on the Austrian political system and play a central role in reconciling the differences that exist between the different stakeholders in the society. Through this framework many professional organisations and NGOs are strongly linked to politics, resulting in a situation where the public sector often finances services provided by non-profit organisations.

The three main parties in the Austrian society that were involved in developing Austrian NPOs were the conservatives, the labour movement and the Catholic Church and they continue to dominate the landscape of the third sector today. This dominance has continued through a tradition of NPOs that are only open to the members of one of the camps. Austrian civil society is still marked by this approach and widely adheres to the opinion that it is not possible to implement a civic action without the support of one of the main parties.

It was only in the 1980s that independent NPOs finally emerged in Austria, dealing with human rights, women's liberalisation, development aid, environmental and other issues<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.2 Definitions

In Austria the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK) is the State institution responsible for promoting the development of volunteering. Volunteering is defined in numerous BMASK publications<sup>6, 7, 8</sup>.

For the reasons of clarity, it has to be noted that the BMASK in its analysis and statistics makes a distinction between formal and informal volunteering. Formal volunteering is defined as those activities undertaken within an organisation, an association or an institution. While 'informal volunteering', often called 'neighbourhood assistance', is undertaken by personal initiative, without any institutional framework. This report will focus predominantly on formal volunteering<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> ÖGB is organised as a registered society or association, while the three chamber organisations are self-administrating entities under public law with compulsory membership.

<sup>5</sup> European Volunteer Centre. "Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures", 2006., Accessed on 01.10.2009 at: <http://www.cev.be/data/File/FactsFiguresAustria.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich (Structure and Volume of Volunteer Work in Austria) Accessed on 01.10.2009 at: [http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/struktur\\_und\\_volumen\\_der\\_freiwilligenarbeit\\_in\\_oesterreich.pdf](http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/struktur_und_volumen_der_freiwilligenarbeit_in_oesterreich.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Freiwilliges Engagement in Österreich: Zahlen – Daten – Fakten: Projekte und Vorhaben im Bereich Freiwilligenpolitik (Volunteering in Austria: Figures - Data – Facts) Accessed on 01.10.2009 at: [http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/presseunterlagen\\_freiwilligenarbeit\\_21.1.08.pdf](http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/attachments/5/1/4/CH0139/CMS1218445655316/presseunterlagen_freiwilligenarbeit_21.1.08.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> For some data, information sources did not make a distinction between formal and informal volunteering, referring to simply to volunteering in general. In such cases, it will be assumed that "volunteering", includes both formal and informal volunteering, and a proper note will be made.

According to the BMASK's latest report on volunteering in Austria<sup>10</sup>, the Austrian Council on Volunteering<sup>11</sup> defines formal volunteering as the practice of persons working on behalf of others inside an organisational framework, for free, with the purpose of promoting general interests; without a contractual obligation to provide the service and outside the context of vocational training. Voluntary participation in training that is required for the development of an organisation and the implementation of its activities is also regarded as volunteering.

More specifically the Austrian Council for Volunteering describes volunteering as having the following features:

- Voluntary, but within a framework;
- For the benefit of the community or a third party rather than one's own or the family's or one's own household's benefit;
- Work rendered without any relevant consideration in the form of pay for a gainful activity;
- Of a given duration or regularity;
- Non-binding within regard to receiving further training, internship or work within an organisation;
- Undertaken usually within the scope of an institutional organisation, platform, initiative, or group, but falling outside the civic or military duties of a citizen; and
- Includes both informal (family, neighbourhood) and formal (groups, associations, institutions, etc.) work.

The BMASK's reports also list various areas of society in which volunteering can be exercised. The areas of *formal* volunteering include:

- Disaster relief and emergency services (e.g. volunteer fire departments),
- Arts, culture, entertainment and leisure (e.g. music, theatre),
- Environment, nature and animal welfare (e.g. WWF, Greenpeace),
- Church, religious education (e.g. church, parish council),
- Social and health education (e.g. social and aid organizations),
- Self-help groups (uniting members sharing a common problem),
- Policy and advocacy work (e.g. work in a political party or professional association),
- Civic and community activities (e.g. citizen initiatives in urban or local development),
- Education (e.g. parents' association, learning centre), and
- Sport and movement (e.g. sports club, exercise group)<sup>12</sup>.

### 1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

#### ***Total number of volunteers***

It was estimated that 27.9% of the population or 1.93 million Austrians aged 15 years and older engaged in formal volunteering activities in 2006<sup>13</sup>. There were 6.9 million persons

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<sup>10</sup> NPO-Institut, Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich (Report on the Voluntary Engagement in Austria developed for the BMASK), 2009, pg. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Österreichischer Rat für Freiwilligenarbeit. "Aktionsprogramm Freiwilligenarbeit", 2004

<sup>12</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

aged 15 years and older in Austria at the time that the data constituting the main source for this report was gathered<sup>14</sup>.

### ***Trend***

The BMASK research<sup>15</sup> indicates that there has been a 9% decline in the number of hours volunteered in a formal setting from 8,705,200 thousands hours worked weekly in 2000 to 7,918,700 in 2006.

Another study suggests that 903.000 volunteers were estimated to have been engaged in NOPs in 1997<sup>16</sup>. This corresponded to a full-time equivalent of 117.000 employees or a saving of €2.8 billion in wage costs in 1997<sup>17</sup>.

### ***Gender***

#### Volunteers by gender as a part of the overall population

Generally, more men than women were involved in formal volunteering: 1,100,000 men and 825,400 women. This represented 33.0% and 23.2% of the total male and female populations respectively in 2006.

In comparing the number of formal volunteers to the total population in certain age groups, there was an average participation of 38% and 37% of men in the age groups 50-59 and 15-19 years old. These groups found to have the most active male volunteers. In regard to women the 40-49 and 50-59 year olds were the most active with 28% and 27% respectively. In the age group 70 years and older, the involvement of men in volunteering was considerably higher than that of women in the same age group (41% and 14% respectively).

Consequently, there were more volunteers among retired males (26%) than among retired women (14%). However, the opposite was true for the unemployed with unemployed women (20%) being more active volunteers than men (14%).

A comparison of the number of men and women involved in specific fields of voluntary activities is illustrated in figure 1 below.

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<sup>13</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

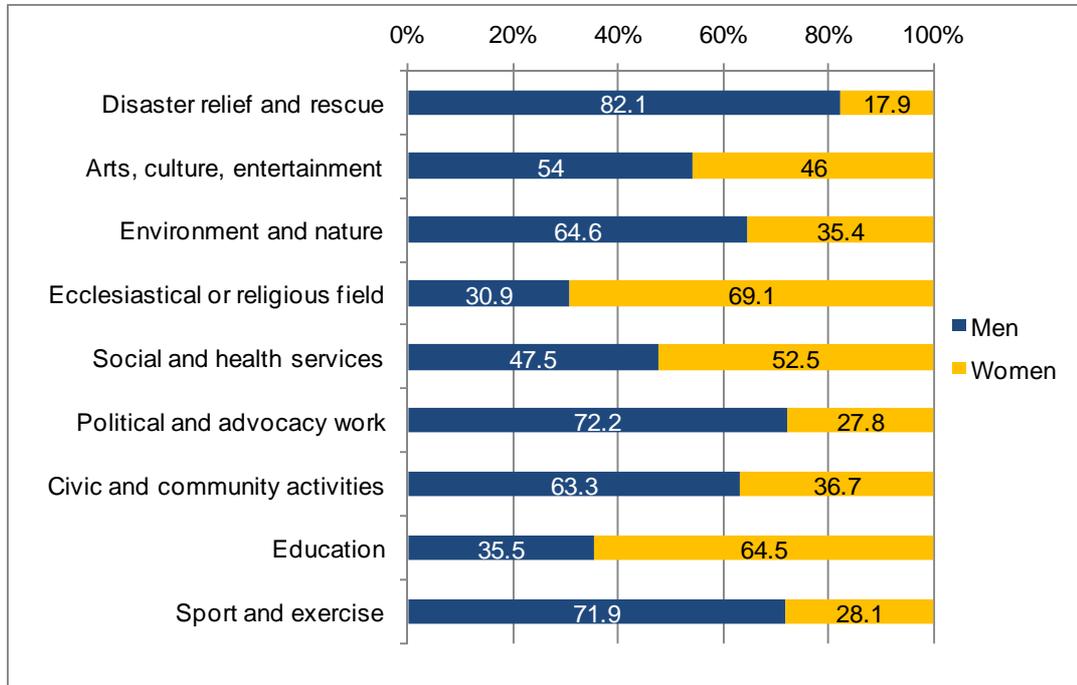
<sup>14</sup> The information was gathered for BMASK through phone interviews and occasional face-to-face interviews by the STATISTIK AUSTRIA in the framework of micro consensus in the fourth quarter of 2006.

<sup>15</sup> NPO-Institut for BMASK. "Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich. Zusammenfassung." Vienna, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Heitzmann, Karin. The Role of Third Sector Organizations in Specific Policy Fields: Contrasting Nonprofit Theory and Empirical Findings - The Case of Austria, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> It has to be noted that different studies have used different methods of investigation and also the people surveyed may have had very different concepts of volunteering. Therefore it is difficult to compare the results of various studies unless their methodology is examined in detail.

**Figure 1: Volunteers in activity fields by gender**



There were a couple of pronounced gender specific differences in the volunteering sector in Austria in 2006. Just over 80% of the volunteers in the field of disaster relief and rescue were men. They also represented more than 70% of volunteers in the political work and sport fields. However, women were more often volunteers in the religious field with 69% and in the education field with 65%<sup>18</sup>.

### **Age groups**

In 2006, as illustrated by the data in figure 2, the greatest percentage of volunteers in Austria was in the age groups 40-49 year olds (32.4%) and 50-59 year-olds (32.3%). In other words, almost one third of all the Austrian citizens in these age groups volunteered in some kind of formal framework. Equally active were the 15-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds with 31.4% and 30.5% of volunteers respectively. In the age group 70 years and older only 13% of the total number of persons were engaged in voluntary work. This figure is considerably lower than the average number of persons in the other age groups as that average was 29.9% (i.e. almost half)<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

**Figure 2: Number and percentage of formal volunteers among the population in the age group**

Age group	Total number of persons in the age group (in thousands)	Formal volunteers (in thousands)	Formal volunteering (in %)
15 – 19 years	492.1	154.6	31.4
20 – 24 years	520.0	158.8	30.5
25 – 29 years	521.0	146.1	28.1
30 – 39 years	1235.2	359.4	29.1
40 – 49 years	1343.2	435.7	32.4
50 – 59 years	1025.4	331.0	32.3
60 – 69 years	863.3	221.3	25.6
70 – 70 years	567.9	91.8	16.2
> 80 years	329.8	26.6	8.1

### ***Geographical spread of volunteering***

Generally, the voluntary engagement in Austria's rural areas was higher than in the urban regions in 2006. People living in the federal states of Upper Austria, Lower Austria and Tyrol were the most active – with correspondingly 34%, 33%, and 32% of the regions' population involved in volunteering. In Vienna this proportion was only 14%<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 3: Number and percentage of formal volunteers per Federal State**

Federal State	Total number of inhabitants (in thousands)	Formal volunteers (in thousands)	Formal volunteering (in %)
Burgenland	238.9	68.9	28.9
Lower Austria	1320.1	431.3	32.7
Vienna	1396.1	199.1	14.3
Carinthia	471.0	137.7	29.2
Styria	1014.6	310.8	30.6
Upper Austria	1151.8	392.9	34.1
Salzburg	434.9	109.0	25.1
Tyrol	575.2	183.0	31.8
Vorarlberg	295.4	92.7	31.4

There seemed to be a clear correlation between an increasing degree of urbanisation and a decreasing level of voluntary involvement. On average, in regions of low population density the involvement in formal volunteering was around 34% and in regions with an average density of 31%. The research also shows that 18% of people in regions of high population density are involved in volunteering.

In regions with low population density, men are considerably more often involved in formal volunteering (41%) than women (28%). In regions with average population density this difference can still be noticed - with 38% of men and 24% of women participating. In city areas (including Vienna) the figures are closer to being equal (i.e. 20% for men and 17% for women)<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Freiwilliges Engagement in Österreich: Zahlen – Daten – Fakten, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

### Education levels

The data from the study undertaken for BMASK in 2006 seem to clearly illustrate a correlation between the education degree obtained and the willingness of people to volunteer. In fact, the proportion of people volunteering increases the further they advance in their education. Around 19% of Austrians who just finished the compulsory primary education volunteer in formal setting. The percentage increases to 28% among people who have completed their education at schools providing vocational education. It is in between 28% and 34% among people with secondary school education. The percentage of individuals engaging in formal volunteering, who have graduated from a higher educational institution (non-university, post-secondary education - i.e. pedagogical and social academies) is the highest with 45%, while 37% of university graduates engage in formal volunteering<sup>22</sup>.

**Figure 4: Number and percentage of formal volunteers by education level**

Highest completed education	Total number of persons with the specific education degree (in thousands)	Formal volunteers (in thousands)	Formal volunteering (in %)
Compulsory school	1776.7	343.9	19.4
Vocational school	2413.9	667.2	27.6
Vocational middle school	928.8	299.6	32.3
General secondary school	394.2	111.2	28.2
Vocational higher education school	570.8	195.8	34.3
Vocational higher education course, College	49.3	11.1	22.6
Higher non-university education	154.9	69.6	44.9
University, University of applied sciences	609.3	227.0	37.3

Above average participation was observed among men who have graduated from higher (non-university) education (56%) and from higher-level and medium-level vocational schools (40% and 39% respectively). Among women, the most active formal volunteers also had higher (non-university) education (41%), followed by those who had graduated from universities and universities of applied sciences (36%)<sup>23</sup>.

### Volunteer involvement by sectors

Figure 5 below presents the number and the percentage of volunteers in Austria engaged in different voluntary sectors. This information is presented for the formal volunteering in total and also for each of the individual formal volunteering fields (e.g. sport, education, etc.).

**Figure 5: Number and percentage of formal volunteers by sector**

Name of the sector	Total nr. of formal volunteers in thousands	Nr. of volunteers in the sector in thousands	Percentage of volunteers in the sector
Disaster relief and rescue	1925.4	413.2	15%
Arts, culture, entertainment	1925.4	516.5	18%
Environment and nature	1925.4	176.4	6%
Ecclesiastical or religious field	1925.4	428.5	15%
Social and health services	1925.4	227.9	8%
Political and advocacy work	1925.4	242.2	9%
Civic and community activities	1925.4	146.0	5%
Education	1925.4	174.3	6%
Sport and exercise	1925.4	474.7	17%

<sup>22</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008, pg. 43-44.

The sectors involving the most volunteers were arts, culture, entertainment and leisure with 18% of all volunteers, sport and exercise with 17% and disaster relief as well as volunteering in church both attracting 15% of all formal volunteers.

The numbers of formal volunteers per sector in the table above add up to more than 1.9 million as some people have been involved as volunteers in more than one formal context. In fact, 67% of 1,925,400 people engaged in formal volunteering in 2006 were active in only one sector, 25% in two, 6% in three and around 2% in four or more sectors<sup>24</sup>.

### **Profile of volunteers by employment and civil status**

Figure 6 below illustrates the proportion of Austrians 15 years and older involved in formal volunteering by their employment status in 2006. The most active volunteers were pupils and students with 36% involved. Military and civil conscripts as well as people on other means of subsistence were also above the average with 34% and 33% involved respectively. The largest group was the employed, and 33% of this group was involved in formal volunteering. While the unemployed and those on parental leave were the least involved in formal volunteering - 16% and 14% respectively.

**Figure 6: Number and percentage of population involved in formal volunteering by employment status**

Employment status	Total nr. of persons in the group	Total nr. of volunteers	Percentage of volunteers
Employed or apprentice	3678.6	1199.5	32.6
Unemployed	251.8	41.3	16.4
Retired	1753.6	335.5	19.1
Only running a household	478.6	126.4	26.4
Pupils and students	490.8	175.1	35.7
People with permanent incapacity	39.8	7.6	19.0
Military and civil conscripts	21.7	7.3	33.5
On parental leave	145.0	20.0	13.8
On other means of subsistence	37.9	12.7	33.4

The findings of the BMASK report<sup>25</sup> suggest a link between the employment status of a person in paid work, their level of education and the type of activity ("leading" versus "technical"<sup>26</sup>) while volunteering. According to the report only 18% of workers and about 19% of those not employed (unemployed, housewives, etc.) were occupying a managerial role while volunteering. In contrast, almost 40% of executives and 42% of the self-employed were in their voluntary activities undertaking leading functions. Similarly, only 11% of people with the lowest education level (finished or unfinished compulsory education) are undertaking a leading role as volunteers, while 37% of those with a university degree occupy such leading functions. The Austrian voluntary scene mirrored the employment hierarchy with respect to senior positions and the gender differences. In other words, the hierarchy of the working world was closely reproduced in the type of volunteering that people undertook<sup>27</sup>.

In turn, figure 7 below provides the percentages of volunteers by their civil status. Single and married people were equally active as volunteers with 30%, followed by those who are divorced 21% and widows 14%.

<sup>24</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> "leitend" versus "ausführend"

<sup>27</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

**Figure 7: Number and percentage of population involved in formal volunteering by civil status**

Civil status	Total nr. of persons in the group	Total nr. of volunteers	Percentage of volunteers
Single	1990.5	593.9	29.8
Married	3897.6	1154.6	29.6
Widow	493.3	66.5	13.5
Divorced	516.5	110.4	21.4

#### ***Time dedicated to volunteering***

The latest BMASK report on volunteering<sup>28</sup> indicates that 7,918,683 hours per week were invested by Austrians working in formal volunteering sectors.

The report also notes that the amount of weekly work hours invested by volunteers in *both* formal and informal work decreased by 11.8% in the period between 2000 and 2006. The main reasons for this decrease are attributed to changes in the fabric of the Austrian society, such as the ageing of the population, the increasing employment rate of women, individualisation, etc.

According to a BMASK data, in the fourth quarter of 2006 workers in Austria delivered 1 billion 787 million work hours per week. In relation to this, the scale of volunteering corresponded to 11% of the volume of work per week delivered by all Austrian paid workers. The work hours contributed through volunteer work corresponded to regular working hours of around 373,860 employees or actual<sup>29</sup> work hours of 416,223 workers<sup>30</sup>.

Figure 8 below provides a more detailed overview of the number of volunteers in formal volunteering sectors in Austria, the average number of hours they have spent working in the sector and the total number of hours spent on volunteering in each sector.

**Figure 8: The average and total number of hours spent on formal volunteering per week**

Sector	Total volunteers in thousands	Average hours per week	Total hours per week in thousands
Disaster relief and rescue	413.2	3.8	1575.9
Arts, culture, entertainment	516.5	3.4	1761.6
Environment and nature	176.4	2.0	349.9
Ecclesiastical or religious field	428.5	2.4	1026.1
Social and health services	227.9	2.5	564.7
Political and advocacy work	242.2	2.6	640.9
Civic and community activities	146.0	1.9	278.2
Education	174.3	1.7	302.9
Sport and exercise	474.7	3.0	1418.4
<b>Total hours</b>			<b>7918.6</b>

#### **1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers**

No reliable source on the number of voluntary organisations as yet exists. The voluntary organisations in Austria and also the organisations involving or co-operating with volunteers are not systematically counted. The data of the Central Association's register<sup>31</sup> provides an approximate indication of the number and types of organisations that could involve volunteers. However, the register does not include information on the number of association members or volunteers involved. Furthermore, the register does not include all the non-

<sup>28</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Actual hours worked are the actual hours delivered per week. Overtime is included, absenteeism (leave, sick leave) are deducted.

<sup>30</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008, pg. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Vereinsregister

profit organisations as those that are registered in another status than associations and those groupings without a formal status are not registered<sup>32</sup>.

**Figure 9: Number of associations in Austria by sector of activity**

Sports associations	24368
Savings clubs	16001
Charity associations	6649
Profession associations	5841
Gardening and animal elevation associations	5425
Conviviality associations	5655
Parents associations	4024
Associations of formal military staff	1958
Student associations	1322
Religious associations	1123
Colleague associations	418
Rotary clubs, Lions Club, Schlaraffia	414
Others	18276
<b>Total</b>	<b>106363</b>

(Source: Statistik Austria 2004)

As figure 9 above illustrates the largest number of associations in 2004 were registered in the sports sector, followed by "other" sectors and savings clubs. However, often a clear classification of these organisations has been difficult. This has led to a situation in which many associations fell into the category "others".

#### ***Definition of voluntary organisations in Austria***

No definition specific for voluntary organisations was found in official sources in Austria.

#### ***Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector***

As there is no systematic national register for organisations working with volunteers in Austria, it is very difficult to obtain accurate data on the number of organisations involving volunteers and their distribution across sectors. Since 2006, a central register for all associations is being maintained by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). This register provides an incomplete picture of the third sector in Austria, as it only includes records on formal associations and it does not provide information on the quantity of members or on the number of volunteers that are active for a specific association<sup>33</sup>.

#### ***Trend***

The Heitzmann report indicates that the Austrian non-profit sector in 2000 consisted of some 94,000 organizations, with 66% of these engaging in culture, sports and leisure activities<sup>34</sup>. The BMASK report on volunteering estimates that the number of associations (main form of voluntary organisation) increased from 104,203 in 2000 to 111,282 in 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Heitzmann, Karin. The Role of Third Sector Organizations in Specific Policy Fields: Contrasting Nonprofit Theory and Empirical Findings - The Case of Austria, 2000.

The report also states that the number of associations has more than doubled in the past 40 years, as there were only 42,269 associations in Austria in 1960<sup>35</sup>.

### **Types of organisations engaging volunteers**

The latest BMASK report on volunteering in Austria provides some general information on the types of organisations per sector. However, as mentioned before the ranking of their relative share in the Austrian “voluntary” market is not known<sup>36</sup>. The main types of entities involving volunteers or volunteer groups within the non-profit sector include:

- Catastrophe aid is delivered by the service providers;
- The fire service in rural areas is mainly guaranteed by voluntary services. The organisational form of these depends on the communes;
- The emergency medical services are part of the non-profit sector, although they are mainly funded with public funds from the communes and social security payments;
- Mountain and cave aid services are also provided by volunteers;
- Culture sector is mostly serviced by associations;
- Training and information activities in the field of environment are mostly provided by federations and associations;
- Social services also cover the volunteering work in religious sector;
- Social and civic activities are delivered by self-help groups, mutual aid organisations, and service providers. These overlap with activities in religious, education, and emergency fields;
- Volunteering in political activities is mostly done through voluntary committees and organisations for communes, education, and information;
- Information and training in the field of education is mostly delivered by parent associations;
- Sport services are mostly delivered by associations and federations<sup>37</sup>.

## **1.5 Main voluntary activities**

**Figure 10: Main voluntary activities by sector**

Sector	Formal volunteers in thousands	Core tasks in %	Administrative tasks in %	Leading function in %	Other tasks in %
Disaster relief and rescue	412.8	68.1	17.9	5.2	8.7
Arts, culture, entertainment	516.5	50.6	24.5	11.6	13.4
Environment and nature	176.4	37.7	34.4	11.1	16.8
Ecclesiastical or religious field	428.5	44.7	32.7	7.3	15.3
Social and health services	227.9	47.4	26.3	16.7	9.6
Political and advocacy work	241.9	32.8	30.9	23.6	12.7
Civic and community activities	146.0	35.5	32.7	15.3	16.5
Education	174.3	30.5	39.5	17.8	12.2
Sport and exercise	474.7	36.4	31.0	15.9	16.6

Figure 10 provides a more detailed overview of the percentage of the volunteers involved in the principal volunteers’ tasks<sup>38</sup> for each sector. It illustrates a high proportion of core tasks

<sup>35</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> What is known is the number of volunteers in each sector and the time they have spent volunteering in each of these sectors, presented earlier in the report.

<sup>37</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

in the disaster relief and rescue field as well as in the arts, culture, entertainment and leisure fields. In both sectors more than half of the volunteers' tasks are related to active type activities. Volunteers have spent the most time on administrative and supporting tasks in the fields of education and environment. Finally, the leading functions have been undertaken by almost a quarter of the volunteers in the political and advocacy sectors. The "Volunteerism in Austria" report also underlines a high dependence of Austrian NPOs on volunteers for fundraising and other project related activities<sup>39</sup>.

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

As mentioned earlier, BMASK is the State institution responsible for promoting the development of volunteering in Austria. The structure of BMASK hosts the Austrian Council for Volunteering. According to the CEV report<sup>40</sup> this Council is the most important volunteering body at the national level. The Council consists of 53 members, appointed by the relevant ministries, the cities and municipalities. It also includes members that represent employers', workers' and farmers' organisations as well as the main federal voluntary umbrella organisations from all the sectors involving volunteering. The Council meets at least once per year and its members are appointed to the office for a term of five years<sup>41</sup>.

The Austrian Council for Volunteering serves as a consultative mechanism between organisations involving volunteers and the Austrian Federal government. The legal basis for the Council was provided by the Ministers' decision of the 17th June 2003, establishing the Council as a body representing the interests of volunteers and their organisations. The Council also provides a platform for the networking among the various actors represented in it. The Council is integrated into the structure of BMASK and this close link with the Ministry in charge of volunteering has contributed to its recommendations being promoted and implemented. In addition, the presence in the Council that engage volunteers has enabled it to reflect on a wide range of volunteering issues in Austria.

The role of BMASK has been to create an attractive environment for volunteers in Austria. The Ministry together with representatives of volunteer organisations develop and implement projects and innovative measures to promote volunteering in the country. It also facilitates national and international transfer of know-how and encourages enterprises and institutions to use and promote the benefits of volunteering<sup>42</sup>.

#### ***Main public body responsible for volunteering***

The Austrian Council for Volunteering is a representative body and a consultation instrument for the Austrian government in the process of upgrading voluntary policy<sup>43</sup>. The Council also aims to remove barriers and obstacles to volunteering in Austria. It develops recommendations for action, aimed at promoting the voluntary involvement among people

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<sup>38</sup> The report explains core activities of the organisation for example active missions and administrative/supporting tasks as for example office tasks, gathering expenses, etc. Leading functions and other tasks are not operationalised.

<sup>39</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> The BMASK website: <http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/liste.html?channel=CH0143>

<sup>42</sup> The BMASK website

<sup>43</sup> Freiwilliges Engagement in Österreich: Zahlen – Daten – Fakten, 2008.

of all ages. The Council serves as a forum for discussion and institutionalised dialogue among policy makers on the one hand and representatives of volunteer organizations from all sectors of society on the other. It has competences in general matters related to volunteering and the voluntary and civic engagement. Specific tasks of the Council are as follows:

1. Development of recommendations on matters affecting the interests of the voluntary sector and volunteers;
2. Working out proposals to develop a modern framework for voluntary engagement and volunteer work;
3. Development of proposals for networking among volunteer organisations and specific projects involving volunteer work;
4. Participation in the development of priorities and the design of the report on volunteering in Austria that is presented to the Parliament once per election period; and
5. Expresses opinions on draft laws and ordinances which affect the interests of the volunteer organisations and volunteers<sup>44</sup>.

The Austrian Council for Volunteering was created in 2003 on the basis of the Austrian National Committee for the International Year of the Volunteers 2001. The Committee dates back to 2001 and was initiated as a response for the need of new infrastructure and instruments to accommodate the International Year of Volunteers. It was supposed to assess the relevant issues in the context of the Year and to bring these into the political agenda.<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that at the time the Committee was chaired by federal ministers and involved social partners, academic partners, media representatives as well as representatives of most organisations active in the fields of social services. This ensured a high profile support, backed up by a wide range of representation in the Committee.

Within the Committee eight work groups were established that worked on different aspects of volunteering in Austria:

- Valorisation and recognition of voluntary engagement, public relations for volunteering and possibilities of creating a certificate for voluntary engagement;
- Quality assurance of volunteering, especially regarding training of volunteers;
- possibility of insurance protection of volunteers valid for the whole of Austria, that should lead to standardised contracts for all institutions and organisations;
- Business support for volunteering, encouragement of social sponsorship by enterprises and promotion of commitment to volunteering among executives;
- Possibilities of integrating voluntary activity in the education system;
- Recruitment and placement of volunteers;
- Recognition of voluntary engagement in the public service, reflections on making volunteering an admission criterion in education institutions; and
- Legal questions concerning the modernisation of work in associations.

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.BMASK.gv.at/cms/site/liste.html?channel=CH0143>

<sup>45</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

Government actions following the International Year of the Volunteer were all the result of the work started in 2001 by the Austrian National Committee<sup>46</sup>.

Although less than half the size of the Committee, the Council still includes a considerable number of actors that represent the Austrian civil society. In particular the Council includes representatives of the federal ministries and the federations of towns, communities and the federal states, members that represent different business and labour federations, members that come from NPOs and NPO networks working with volunteers and members that represent the four political groups in the Austrian parliament. The Austrian Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection holds the presidency of the Council. Two officials from this ministry oversee the day-to-day management of the Council's work<sup>47</sup>.

### ***Other public bodies involved in volunteering***

As Table 8 illustrates, a multitude of associations exist in Austria. However, there is no centralised data available on the extent that these organisations rely on volunteering or on the number of volunteers that they engage. This information was also not available for the public and private organisations involving volunteers.

In 2006, there were 10 official regional centres for volunteering<sup>48</sup>. The volunteering centres operated on a regional level and were responsible for volunteers and volunteering organisations in their region. The centres were active in seven out of nine federal states (except Burgenland and Carinthia). They shared know-how, offered advice and general guidance on volunteering. The centres also created an umbrella organisation<sup>49</sup> to undertake common benchmarking and aim-setting.

In 2006 as well as regional centres for volunteering, 21 GEMA-platforms existed in Austria<sup>50</sup>. These platforms represent BMASK's efforts to support, boost and facilitate volunteering and to promote citizen engagement at the local level. The GEMA-platforms operate as a brokerage services for both formal and informal voluntary fields, bringing together the potential volunteers and voluntary positions in a specific region or locality. Through GEMA-platforms volunteers offer a wide range of services: social services, cultural offers, event organisation, mediating further education, offer consultations, and supporting self-help initiatives<sup>51</sup>. It is also a common practice that local governments through these platforms consult voluntary citizen groups on areas of urban and social planning as well as on housing politics<sup>52</sup>.

### ***Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate co-operation and exchange of information***

No source of information providing a comprehensive overview of the range of actors contributing to the promotion of volunteering and their specific roles and responsibilities has been identified. For example, the Austrian National Committee for the International Year of the Volunteers 2001 included:

- The federal Ministers for 'Social Security and Generations' and 'Home Affairs';

<sup>46</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> Freiwilligenzentren

<sup>49</sup> Interessengemeinschaft Freiwilligenzentren Österreich (IGFÖ) <http://www.freiwilligenzentrum.at/>

<sup>50</sup> Freiwilligenzentren

<sup>51</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009. P. 164-166.

- The representatives of all political fractions (conservatives, liberals, social-democrats and greens) of the Austrian federal and state parliaments;
- The representatives of eleven federal ministries;
- The representatives of the regional governments;
- The representatives of the Federation of Austrian Communities and the Federation of Austrian Cities;
- The representatives of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce;
- The representatives of the Austrian Trade Unions Federation;
- The representatives of the Austrian Academy of the Sciences or the Austrian Institute for Youth Research;
- The representatives of the Federation of Austrian Newspapers; and
- The representatives of organisations active in the fields of social services, family, retired, women, youth, sports, education, culture, self-help, disaster relief, civil protection, from the fire brigade and from the military<sup>53</sup>.

## 2.2 Policies

### ***National strategy/framework for volunteering***

Following the recommendations of the Austrian National Committee concerning the needs and requirements of volunteers, summarised in the “Volunteering Manifest”, four work groups developed specific recommendations that were brought together in the “Volunteers’ Action Programme”. This programme is the main policy document for promoting volunteering in Austria and was unanimously accepted by the Council at its second meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2004<sup>54</sup>.

This programme consists of actions in three consecutive priority levels. It outlines the necessity to develop a legally valid definition of volunteering and honorary office. This definition would allow the improvement of the legal protection for volunteers with regard to liability and accident insurance as well as being within the scope of labour law. Once the recommended measures to improve the framework of volunteering have been implemented, the programme foresaw running an image campaign to boost the voluntary involvement of Austrian citizens of all ages. In 2006 a discussion was under way on finding a way to summarise all the regulations affecting volunteering in a new Volunteers Act<sup>55</sup>.

### ***National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering***

Non-quantified national targets for volunteering have been defined in the Austrian Council for Volunteering “Action Programme”<sup>56</sup> produced in 2004. This document lists a number of recommendations that have provided benchmarks and the framework for the development of volunteering in Austria.

The recommendations are divided under three broad priorities and are based on the following logic:

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<sup>53</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>54</sup> The documents referred to above and further information may be obtained at: [www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at).

<sup>55</sup> CEV & AVSO. “Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Austria”, 2006

<sup>56</sup> Austrian Council for Volunteering. “Aktionsprogramm Freiwilligenarbeit: Zusammenfassung der Empfehlungen der vier Ausschüsse.” (Volunteers’ Action Programme: Summary of the Recommendations of the Four Committees), 2004.

*Priority 1: The development of a legally valid definition of volunteering and organisations involving volunteers.*

- Recommendation 1.1: Definition of volunteering and volunteering organisations (this recommendation provides the definition of areas of voluntary activities);
- Recommendation 1.2: Survey on measures to promote volunteering in Austria (review the innovative measures to promote volunteering at all levels in the country);
- Recommendation 1.3: Volunteering (provide mediation, counselling and support to volunteers and organisations, offer education and training as well as implement projects and evaluation);
- Recommendation 1.4: Evidence of volunteer activity (build awareness and gather evidence of the importance and potential of volunteer contribution among businesses and non-profit organisations);
- Recommendation 1.5: Curriculum-based education, training and further education of volunteers (promote a coordinated nationwide approach to professionalization of volunteer qualifications and training);
- Recommendation 1.6: Volunteer Management Curriculum (establishing a national level working group for the development of a curriculum for the management of volunteers);
- Recommendation 1.7: Report on the situation of volunteering in Austria (promote qualitative and quantitative research on volunteering in Austria);
- Recommendation 1.8: Basic Curriculum - control (establishing of a group to pass on to the basic training curriculum quality standards to NPOs and develop a national quality certificate to improve the recognition of education received through volunteering in companies);
- Recommendation 1.9: Clearing-house marketing for volunteering (establishment of a body to promote new partnerships between public authorities, industry and NPOs to promote volunteering, create new ideas and attract financing).

*Priority 2: The development of the framework for the legal protection of volunteers (based on the definitions developed under the first priority).*

- Recommendation 2.1: General insurance (establishment of a work group to discuss measures and proposals for civil liability);
- Recommendation 2.2: Accident insurance (extension of some norms of the Social Security Act to cover accident during voluntary work, education and training);
- Recommendation 2.3: Sick leave (extension of the sick leave to not only cover a person and her/his family but also close relatives and not only to care but also to event-related education and training leave);
- Recommendation 2.4: Dismissal (clarification of the service exemption in emergency service organizations - this proposal was rejected);
- Recommendation 2.5: Payment of wages (extension of the State law provisions on fee reimbursement to be understood as an income replacement - this proposal was rejected);
- Recommendation 2.6: Joint Working Group on dismissal (creation of work group to discuss points 2.3.-2.5.);

- Recommendation 2.7: Pension (to consider a more permanent recognition of long-term volunteer activities for the pension);
- Recommendation 2.8: Funding of legal protection (the funding of all recommended actions at the national or Community level or through a fund);
- Recommendation 2.9: Tax Law (set up work group to discuss the possibilities of tax deductibility of donations).

*Priority 3: Implementation of an image campaign for the promotion of volunteering and for attracting new activists.*

- Recommendation 3.1: Campaign to enhance the image of volunteering (shortly defines the target groups, the aims and the content of the campaign).

As illustrated above each priority is further operationalised through a number of recommendations and some concrete steps to be taken. Each recommendation also lists the organisations that will assume political responsibility for implementing the recommendation, provide the relevant expertise as well as a reference to the relevant legislation.

As the targets mentioned above were established in 2004, many of the related activities have already been undertaken, some have been dismissed while the implementation of others is still ongoing.

#### ***International policies***

No information identified.

## **2.3 Programmes**

### ***Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at the national level***

This section summarises the various national programmes in Austria aimed at promoting volunteering.

#### Austrian volunteer awards

Between 2001 and 2006 Austria awarded around 20 “Volunteers of the Year” in six categories. In 2006 these categories were: youth, disaster relief, social work, serving people with disabilities, health and sport as well as culture and community partnerships<sup>57</sup>.

Selection criteria for these awards included the uniqueness of the engagement, its originality, its duration, the person’s commitment and the aspect of sustainability in the project. Lists of winners are published on the Internet each year.

#### Austrian Volunteer Passport

In 2005 the Austrian government created the Austrian Volunteer Passport to promote voluntary engagement<sup>58</sup>. This passport was primarily targeted at young people, in order to promote the recognition of their voluntary engagement and to encourage the idea that it “pays off” to be a volunteer. The passport allows volunteers to document their voluntary engagement throughout their lives.

The introduction of the passport was also intended to encourage employers to hire employees who are engaged in a voluntary activity. The passport not only provides information on the type and duration of the volunteering that has been completed, but also

<sup>57</sup> Source: <http://www.bso.or.at/download/1442/Voluntaria%202006.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Österreichischer Freiwilligenpass

documents the skills and competences acquired by the person during the course of this work. The passport is recognised by the Austrian Economic Chamber and the Austrian Employment Service<sup>59</sup>.

#### Act for a voluntary social year

The Voluntary Social Year (FSJ<sup>60</sup>) in Austria has been offered since 1968 by the Society for the Promotion of Voluntary Social Services<sup>61</sup>. The association has its headquarters in Vienna and its secretariat is in Linz. Regional offices are located in Graz, Vienna, and Innsbruck. The activities of the society are primarily financed (95%) by the organisations in which young people engage as volunteers. The rest of the financing is provided through the land governments and federal ministries' subsidies.

The aim of FSJ is to help in the professional orientation of youth and young people. The objectives of the FSJ are to support voluntary commitment of young people, contribute to their training, diminish unemployment as well as provide guidance and introduction to social care professions. If opting for the FSJ, young people can work for ten to eleven months in a social institution in Austria. The successful applicants can work in organisations helping people with disabilities, elderly, children or adolescents, homeless people or other groups.

The weekly working time of the young people doing the FSJ is equivalent to full time work - 37.5 hours. They receive a moderate monthly allowance as well as holiday and Christmas bonuses in relation to the period worked. The expenses and travel costs of the participants in the FSJ are covered. If a young person meets the necessary criteria, there is also the possibility of obtaining an additional support of 150 euro per month.

Accommodation and meals are normally provided free of charge by the host organisation. The young people participating in FSJ are insured (accident, sickness, pension and unemployment insurance) and offered the opportunity of receiving educational support and guidance during the entire period. Their participation costs at professional development seminars are also covered.

In 2006 Austria introduced a special directive promoting the FSJ. It defined the FSJ as a special year in which a person in an appropriate age group as part of the FSJ programme is contractually obligated to make a voluntary contribution to the work of a NPO in the social welfare sector. A total of 336 persons participated in FSJ 2006/2007. The activities of the FSJ are constantly evaluated in order to develop new insights for the implementation of the FSJ in the future.

In the framework of the existing special directive there are four associations promoted within the FSJ offer - the Association for the Promotion of Voluntary Social Services (Linz), Project Arge Social Berufsorientierung Vorarlberg, Diakonie Austria and Volkshilfe Oberösterreich. The annual funding amounts to around 750.000 euro. The monthly subsidy for each participant is approximately 230 euro, before the social security costs.

#### Volunteer portal

The BMASK has also established a volunteer portal ([www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at)). This website includes information on studies and initiatives related to volunteering (e.g. the yearly volunteer awards)<sup>62</sup>. It also presents volunteering opportunities for individuals, a list of the

<sup>59</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>60</sup> Freiwilliges soziales Jahr <http://www.fsj.at/>

<sup>61</sup> Verein zur Förderung freiwilliger sozialer Dienste <http://www.fsj.at/index.php?pid=0>

<sup>62</sup> Shadow report on the implementation of the third priority of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field, Voluntary Activities, 2006.

organisations engaging volunteers and presents opportunities for engaging volunteers in businesses. Furthermore, the portal offers advice on how to engage volunteers provides support to volunteers and lists various reasons for volunteering. Finally, it also provides information on the current and on the past projects involving volunteers as well as on volunteering events<sup>63</sup>.

### ***Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level***

#### Pilot project for the professionalization of Volunteer management

In order to sustain the future of volunteering in Austria, both the young and the old need to find structures that match their lifestyles and facilitate voluntary engagement. Therefore a pilot project was undertaken in Upper Austria to test professional structures for volunteer management, engagement and support<sup>64</sup>. An independent volunteer Centre in Linz was established with the following aims:

1. Engagement and accompaniment of volunteers;
2. Networking and communication between regional and local voluntary exchanges and projects;
3. Education and training of volunteers and volunteer co-ordinators;
4. Promotion of non-formal learning and development of skills through volunteering;
5. Support for model projects in co-operation with municipalities;
6. Promoting accident Insurance for volunteers; and
7. Undertaking of public relations and lobbying activities<sup>65</sup>.

### ***Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level***

No Austrian programmes were identified promoting volunteering at the transnational level.

## **3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 General legal framework**

In Austria there is not specific law regulating volunteering. As there are no specific legal provisions general Austrian laws apply to volunteers and organisations engaging volunteers with regard to social insurance coverage for accidents, illness, unemployment, family allowance and other welfare benefits. There is an ongoing discussion regarding the extent to which provisions on volunteering should be encompassed in a single new Volunteers Act.

The present provisions applicable to volunteers in relief organisations are found in a number of laws at the federal and state level, reflecting the federal structure of the country. The regulations governing voluntary fire brigades and disaster relief organisations is constituted by nine state normative acts each applying to fire fighters and disaster relief workers in a particular state. The social insurance issues are regulated on the federal level by the General Social Insurance Act (ASVG)<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Austria's portal for volunteering: <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/>

<sup>64</sup> [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20081204\\_OT0279](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20081204_OT0279)

<sup>65</sup> Unabhängige Landesfreiwilligenzentrum (ULF)

<sup>66</sup> Allgemeines Sozialversicherungsgesetz

The existing laws governing the various aspects of the fire or disaster relief sectors include:

State Acts governing voluntary fire fighters:

- Burgenland: Burgenländisches Feuerwehrgesetz 1994, State Law Gazette no. 49/1994, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 32/2001;
- Carinthia: Kärntner Feuerwehrgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 48/1990, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 60/2002;
- Lower Austria: Niederösterreichisches Feuerwehrgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 4400, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 4400-6;
- Salzburg: Salzburger Feuerwehrgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 59/1978, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 85/2003;
- Styria: Steiermärkisches Landesfeuerwehrgesetz 1979, State Law Gazette no. 73/1979, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 25/1995;
- Tyrol: Tiroler Landes-Feuerwehrgesetz 2001, State Law Gazette no. 92/2001, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 89/2002;
- Upper Austria: Oberösterreichisches Feuerwehrgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 111/1996, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 84/2002;
- Vienna: Wiener Feuerwehrgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 16/1957, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 79/2001; • Vorarlberg: Vorarlberger Feuerpolizeiordnung, State Law Gazette no. 16/1949, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 27/2005.

State Acts governing disaster relief:

- Burgenland: Burgenländisches Katastrophenhilfegesetz, State Law Gazette no. 5/1986, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 61/2005;
- Carinthia: Kärntner Katastrophenhilfegesetz, State Law Gazette no. 66/1980, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 54/2005;
- Lower Austria: Niederösterreichisches Katastrophenhilfegesetz, State Law Gazette no. 4450, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 4450-4;
- Salzburg: Salzburger Katastrophenhilfegesetz, State Law Gazette no. 3/1975, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 46/2001;
- Styria: Steiermärkisches Katastrophenschutzgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 62/1999, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 63/2001;
- Tyrol: Tiroler Katastrophenhilfisdienstgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 5/1974, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 110/2001;
- Upper Austria: State Law Gazette no. 88/1955, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 92/2001;
- Vienna: Wiener Katastrophenhilfe-und Krisenmanagementgesetz, State Law Gazette no. 60/2003;
- Vorarlberg: Vorarlberger Katastrophenhilfegesetz, State Law Gazette no. 47/1979, last amended in State Law Gazette no. 58/2001.
- General Social Insurance Act (Allgemeines Sozialversicherungsgesetz), Federal Law Gazette no. 189/1955, last amended in Federal Law Gazette no. 88/200567.

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<sup>67</sup> CEV & AVSO. "Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Austria", 2006

### ***Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering***

There is no specific legal framework for volunteering in Austria. Generally, the rights and duties of the volunteers emerge from the rights and duties applicable for the relevant professions, for example fire service and emergency medical aid. The Law on Associations<sup>68</sup> is also relevant for volunteers<sup>69</sup>.

### ***Self-regulation in relation to volunteering***

No information was identified on self-regulation in the voluntary sector in Austria.

## **3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers**

### ***Provisions for specific categories***

Full-time employment is available for young people (17 to 26 years old) in Austria within the framework of FSJ. The young people whose applications to FSJ have been successful, normally receive a monthly allowance, reimbursement of travel costs and expenses as well as insurance coverage.

### ***Suspension of benefits while volunteering abroad***

The payment of unemployment benefits, family allowance, student grants, orphan pensions and similar child related benefits are suspended for the time of voluntary service activity abroad<sup>70</sup>.

### ***Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers***

Earnings up to €10,900 is tax free in Austria, therefore, volunteers de facto do not need to pay any income tax on the monetary and non-monetary compensation received by them (pocket money, lodging, board, etc.)<sup>71</sup>. In line with the Law on Associations, volunteers can receive a tax free allowance of 75 euro per month<sup>72</sup>.

### ***Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers***

Please see the above.

## **3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers**

There is no specific legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers. A number of general laws regulate the rights and responsibilities of organisations engaging volunteers (Please refer to section 3.1 for further details).

## **3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations**

There is no specific legal framework for profit-making organisations engaging volunteers, however a number of general laws apply.

In 2005 the BMASK commissioned a survey<sup>73</sup> among 400 Austrian companies of all sizes and from a wide range of affair, revealed that skills and competences gained through volunteering are widely recognised by Austrian businesses. Approximately 86% of those

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<sup>68</sup> Vereinsgesetz

<sup>69</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> CEV & AVSO. "Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Austria", 2006

<sup>71</sup> CEV & AVSO. "Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Austria", 2006

<sup>72</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> This survey was carried out by "Public Opinion" and its results are published on the official Austrian website on volunteering [www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at).

interviewed thought that it is “very important” or “rather important” that people are engaged on a voluntary basis outside of their paid employment.

The study also showed that companies are often even partners of volunteering. Approximately seven out of ten companies encourage the voluntary engagement of their employees through donations in kind or through sponsoring. As many as four out of ten companies allowed their employees to go on leave for education and training or for voluntary engagement outside of the company.

As many as 93% of the companies’ representatives fully (55%) or partly (38%) agree with the view that through volunteering people can acquire experiences, skills and competences that are also useful for their jobs. Concerning volunteering experiences of applicants, 42% of the interviewed employers affirmed that a proof of having done voluntary activity would improve the chances of them employing an applicant<sup>74</sup>.

### **3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers**

At the present time only disaster relief, emergency and rescue organisations e.g. fire service; medical emergency aid, etc. are required by law to provide an accident and work insurance for volunteers<sup>75</sup>.

Volunteers working within service organisations (such as voluntary fire brigades, Red Cross, mountain rescue service, avalanche warning commissions) enjoy statutory accident insurance protection for accidents suffered within the scope of training, dry-run exercises and actual operations. This coverage may be extended to other activities performed by members of such organisations within the scope of their sphere of activities as stipulated by law or charter. In the case of voluntary fire brigades, the accident insurance contribution must be paid by the relevant state, otherwise the organisation (e.g. Red Cross) is responsible for the payment; at federal level an additional equivalent amount is paid for each insured person to the Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt<sup>76</sup>.

If a member of a relief organisation suffers an accident in the course of a relief operation, such accident is considered the same as an accident at work (Section 176 para 1 item 7 ASVG). The employer accordingly is obliged to continue to pay such individual’s wages/salary just as if she/he had suffered the accident at work. If an employee participates in a disaster relief operation as a member of the fire brigade or ambulance service, the employer is as a rule released from his/her duty to continue payment. Pursuant to the state acts governing fire brigades and disaster relief, members of voluntary fire brigades are compensated for their loss of earnings by the local government.

According to consistent practice of the courts, if an employee is prevented from working due to his/her performing services of public interest within the scope of disaster relief, the employer is not permitted to assert any breach of contract on the part of the employee, including any consequences (dismissal, damages, etc.)<sup>77</sup>.

#### Social protection while volunteering abroad

A participation in the EVS programme by an Austrian national, involves the change of status under the Austrian social security scheme. All benefits are suspended for the time of the voluntary service activity abroad. Upon returning to Austria these benefits can be

<sup>74</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>76</sup> (Section 22a, Section 74a paras 1 and 2, Section 176 para 1 item 7 lit. a and b General Social Insurance Act ASVG).

<sup>77</sup> CEV & AVSO. “Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Austria”, 2006

reapplied for depending on the actual status, i.e. "student", "member of family without own income", "unemployed", etc.

## 4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

### 4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

No information has been identified on this subject.

#### ***National budget allocated to volunteering***

No general data available.

#### ***Sources of funding for voluntary organisations***

More than half of the income of NPOs in Austria is derived from private sources (e.g. private gifts, membership fees etc.). This estimate shows a much higher reliance on private financial support of the non-profit sector than is believed, as there is a widespread view that the NPOs in Austria are highly subsidized by the public sector<sup>78</sup>.

#### ***Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)***

Due to fiscal reasons the question whether an association or a foundation pursues a general interest is important in Austria. To benefit from tax exemptions organisations pursuing the aims of public utility, charitable or parochial goals need to prove that they do this exclusively (not pursuing other goals) and directly (not using other bodies to provide these services). They must also fix these goals in their statutes.

An organisation can only claim to provide SSGI if it promotes collective good and welfare in an altruistic manner. The associations with a limited or restricted membership (for example, limited to regional, professional membership) cannot receive the label of the 'SSGI'<sup>79</sup>.

### 4.2 Economic value of volunteering

According to the BMASK volunteers in Austria spent 545 million hours volunteering in 2005. This number can be converted into 261,883 full-time jobs, which represented an equivalent of 8.19 % of the employed persons at that time. According to the same calculation and assuming an hourly wage of 10 euro, Austrian volunteers created a value of 5.45 billion euro in 2005<sup>80</sup>.

In 2006 the number of hours delivered by volunteers increased to over 11% of the volume of work per week delivered by all working population<sup>81</sup>. The volume of volunteering corresponds to normal working hours of around 373,860 employees<sup>82</sup>. On total the BMASK estimated that the volunteers in Austria contributed around 6.5 billion euro worth of work in 2006<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> Heitzmann, Karin. The Role of Third Sector Organizations in Specific Policy Fields: Contrasting Nonprofit Theory and Empirical Findings - The Case of Austria, 2000.

<sup>79</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

<sup>81</sup> BMASK used the number of people 15 and older undertaking any form of volunteering and the time they spend on voluntary activities in order to calculate the volume of volunteering in Austria.

<sup>82</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

<sup>83</sup> <http://wien.orf.at/stories/118124/>

### ***Income generated through volunteering***

In 2000 NPOs in Austria had yearly expenses amounting to around 5.7 billion euro. If these organisations had to pay for the work delivered by volunteers, their expenses would have increased by approximately 50%.

### ***Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP***

The NPOs contributed around 4.2 billion euro to the GDP in 2000. It was estimated that if the value of volunteering is added, the whole of the NPO sector would have contributed around 7.3 billion euro to the GDP that year<sup>84</sup> or 3.5% of the GDP that year<sup>85</sup>.

### ***Issues of service substitution and job substitution***

No information was identified in relation to issues of service substitution and job substitution.

## **5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING**

### **5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries**

The 2009 Report on the Voluntary Engagement in Austria produced for the BMASK lists the following key benefits of volunteering for society:

- Volunteering plays a part in the construction of social and cultural identity,
- It provides an important social network in times of fading family structures,
- The experience gained through volunteering helps to develop such personal characteristics as flexibility, mobility and other characteristics that are increasingly being demanded by the labour market,
- Volunteering helps to build a relationship of trust with other people and confidence in the society, and
- Provides the basis for the social infrastructure and the services delivered through it<sup>86</sup>.

The Summary<sup>87</sup> of the above report also lists a number of social benefits of volunteering in a number of fields, which are as follows:

- From an economic point of view volunteering contributes to value creation. Although volunteering itself does not directly require monetary compensation, the services and products provided by volunteers create economic value. In 2006, volunteers accounted for almost eight million weekly hours worked in an organisational setting (i.e. of formal volunteering).
- Politically, engagement in volunteering provides a sense of participating in collective decisions. Many civil society organisations involving volunteers participate in political decision-making processes and thus contribute to promoting democracy and legitimacy in their areas of interest (e.g. ecology, human rights or social policy).

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<sup>84</sup> Heitzmann, Karin. The Role of Third Sector Organizations in Specific Policy Fields: Contrasting Nonprofit Theory and Empirical Findings - The Case of Austria, 2000.

<sup>85</sup> Calculation based on Eurostat data

<sup>86</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>87</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich: Zusammenfassung, 2009.

- From a social perspective, volunteering helps to build social capital (i.e. commonly shared norms and trusting relationships between stakeholders) and inclusion as well as integration of various social groups (i.e. community building).
- Finally volunteering is instrumental and represents a considerable contribution in attaining the goals of the social sub-systems in which it is performed (e.g. culture and arts, sports and leisure, religion and churches, social affairs and health, etc.).

## 5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

In addition to the altruistic element as a motivational factor for volunteering, generally volunteers in Austria seem very well aware of the fact that voluntary engagement also has personal or professional benefits for them. Volunteering can offer personal gratification, help in the creation of social networks, development of skills, learning, etc. It is possible to divide the motives for engaging in volunteering into four broad categories: the fun aspect being the greatest motivator, followed by the altruistic aspect and social aspect and a smaller group of volunteers are motivated by self-centred considerations.

Figure 11 below provides a list of motivation factors and the volunteers' assessment of how these correspond to their reasons for volunteering. The reasons motivating men and women were largely identical<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008.

**Figure 11: Does this motivation suit you... ?**

<i>Does this motivation suit you... ?</i>	yes, fully	rather yes	rather no	totally not
I enjoy it	64%	29%	5%	1%
I want to help others	58%	35%	5%	3%
I can meet people and find new friends	49%	34%	10%	7%
It helps me to stay active	43%	33%	14%	10%
It gives me a learning possibility	43%	35%	13%	9%
I could contribute my skills and knowledge	41%	40%	11%	8%
I have the opportunity to share my experience	40%	39%	14%	7%
I volunteer because I hope people will help me when I need it	38%	29%	16%	17%
I wish to broaden my life experience	38%	38%	16%	9%
I would like to do something useful for the common good	34%	45%	14%	7%
I wanted to engage in an important thing	31%	33%	20%	16%
I want to earn social recognition	21%	32%	25%	23%
It helps me in my job	9%	13%	23%	56%
I hope that volunteering will help me to find a paid job	3%	5%	15%	78%

(Source: Struktur und Volumen der Freiwilligenarbeit in Österreich, 2008).

## 6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 6.1 Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system

In 2005 the Austrian Volunteer Passport was introduced, providing certification of competences and qualifications obtained through volunteering that can be documented and properly demonstrated in the passport. It enables volunteers to use them to complement their job applications.

Organisations working with volunteers can commission the Austrian Volunteer Passport at the Austrian Council for Volunteering. The following information is filled in by the organisation for its volunteers: the certificate gives information on the time spent by the volunteer on a voluntary activity, the person's function within the organisation, the volunteer's tasks, skills and competences as well as all of the completed training<sup>89</sup>.

The Austrian national education system recognises the skills developed through volunteering. In order to facilitate the official recognition of these competences, the BMASK has developed a special form (Freiwilligennachweis) that can be completed by the voluntary organisation in order to contribute to making the portfolio of an individual volunteer more powerful<sup>90</sup>.

### 6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

In Austria education and training opportunities for volunteers are promoted through the website: [www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at). This website is an initiative of BMASK, which collects training offers from the providers (voluntary organisations) and publishes it centrally on a single location<sup>91</sup>. The offer on the website includes courses for volunteer coordinators, volunteer tutors and volunteers.

<sup>89</sup> CEV & AVSO. "Country Report on the Legal Status of Volunteers in Austria", 2006

<sup>90</sup> Bericht zum freiwilligen Engagement in Österreich, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/index.php?id=CH0590>

## 7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

There has been no general information identified with regard to the influence of the EU policies on the development of volunteering in Austria.

## 8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

### 8.1 Challenges for volunteering

As already outlined above, Austria does not have a single and specific Volunteers Act. Several statutory provisions provide for social protection of volunteers within voluntary service organisations. This contributes to a highly complex legal landscape relating to volunteering in the country. In addition, a number of special provisions are available for specific groups of volunteers in different Federal States. For the voluntary activities falling outside the scope of these laws, the general laws governing social insurance and social benefits need to be applied.

Although insurance for volunteers is a common practice in Austria, it is only required by law for the volunteers undertaking disaster relief, emergency aid and rescue services.

### 8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

Volunteering has to have an appeal and offer opportunities for volunteers as it does for society. Therefore, public authorities have the task to create an encouraging legal and financial environment for volunteering. A volunteering culture is democratic, strengthens social cohesion and nurtures as well as treasures important values such as solidarity and teamwork.

The following opportunities for volunteering were identified in Austria:

- The role of organisations focusing on volunteering should be strengthened in order to mainstream volunteering issues into other policies and to create an encouraging environment for volunteering.
- The creation and support for volunteer centres providing information and guidance for potential volunteers should be encouraged.
- Opportunities for potential volunteers could be created by giving incentives to employers by providing tax benefits to companies that promote work time reconciliation with volunteering.
- Media campaigns and awards could be organised to promote the image and increase the appeal of volunteering.
- A “volunteering culture” should be developed starting from primary education.
- Improving the provision of funding opportunities to local authorities and sports clubs could develop an even stronger volunteering tradition.
- Government should provide funding to train volunteers needing new and up-to-date skills.

In order to promote volunteering on a large scale the BMASK has created a special website on volunteering in Austria ([www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at)). This web site serves as an information tool for all aspects of volunteering. It covers volunteering policy, information about all the Austrian volunteer centres, information about projects, awards, and other information on

volunteering. It enables people to find out about the volunteering opportunities in their region and generally covers all aspects of the volunteering infrastructure in Austria<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>92</sup> Volunteerism in Austria: Facts and Figures, 2006.

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