

NATIONAL REPORT – CYPRUS

CONTENTS

1	GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN CYPRUS	1
1.1	History and contextual background	1
1.2	Definitions	1
1.3	Number and profile of volunteers	2
1.4	Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers	3
1.5	Main voluntary activities	4
2	INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK	5
2.1	Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering	5
2.2	Policies	7
2.3	Programmes	7
3	REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	8
3.1	General legal framework	8
3.2	Legal framework for individual volunteers	9
3.3	Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers (non-profit)	10
3.4	Legal framework for profit-making organisations	10
3.5	Insurance and protection of volunteers	10
4	ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING	10
4.1	Funding arrangements for volunteering	10
4.2	Economic value of volunteering	12
5	SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING	12
5.1	Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries	12
5.2	Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer	12
6	VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	13
6.1	Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system	13
6.2	Education and training opportunities for volunteers	13
7	EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING	13
8	CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING	14
8.1	Challenges for volunteering	14
8.2	Opportunities for volunteering	14
	SOURCES	15

1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN CYPRUS

1.1 History and contextual background

There is a long history and tradition of voluntary activity in Cyprus. Notions of altruism, expressions of kindness and “helping one another” have been features of Cypriot society since ancient times and still feature to this day. As in any other country, socio-economic, cultural, religious, political and other factors have all shaped the scope and the nature of voluntary activity on the island.

Christianization and the establishment of the Church of Cyprus in 45 AD led to some form of organisation of philanthropy and charity especially in periods of hardship, destitution and deprivation. In medieval times, Cyprus was passed to a series of foreign rulers (Franks, Venetians and Ottomans) and the Church became an important provider of social welfare as well as political representation.

The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960, following a struggle for independence from British colonial rule. The British governed the island from 1879 and set the foundations of the Cypriot welfare state by establishing a civil service and public institutions and services. Following independence in 1960, a welfare state covering the whole of the population was developed and established.

In this context, there are many voluntary organisations that exist to supplement the services offer provided by the state or to advocate (mainly to the state) for particular societal groups or common interests.

1.2 Definitions

The 2009 law establishing the Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council provides definitions for “non-profit purpose”, “volunteer” and “voluntary organisation”. Thus, according to Article 2:

- “Non-profit purpose” is defined as “every voluntary action or act which tends to alleviate or relieve human suffering, human poverty, illness or need and any physical, mental and psychological malfunction, as well as any action which serves the welfare or the protection of children, teenagers, young people, adults and older persons, any action which contributes to the prevention or addresses social problems or needs and generally any action which contributes to the improvement of the welfare of the people residing, permanently or temporarily, in the Republic of Cyprus”.

The term “non-profit purpose” is seen as equivalent to the terms “voluntary activity” and “volunteering”.

Furthermore, also according to the 2006 law:

- A “volunteer” is defined as “a person who offers, without any reward, financial or other, services or other means to individuals or groups or to the society at large, in order to address social or other needs”; and
- “Voluntary organisation” is defined as “every organisation which is comprised by volunteers and its main or exclusive purpose is non-profit

However, the spectrum of what is understood to be a voluntary activity in Cyprus does extend beyond the above legal definition to encompass the wider gamut of civil society. Thus, organisations such as labour and trade unions, professional associations, environmental organisations, religious organisations, student societies, cultural societies, community groups and sports clubs may all engage volunteers (many almost exclusively).

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Total number of volunteers

There is no census or concrete estimation of the total number of volunteers in Cyprus.

A 2008 Survey by the Volunteer Network Project of 369 citizens identified 69 citizens who had volunteered in the previous 12 months which amounts to 19% of the sample. Extrapolating for the whole population (which was 789,269 in 2008 according to Eurostat, we can estimate that there are 147,500 active volunteers in Cyprus.¹

Trend

The 2008 Survey found that over 1 in 4 active volunteers (43%), i.e. those who have volunteered in the last 24 months, have been volunteers for more than 10 years. A third of volunteers are new to voluntary service with the average volunteer having volunteered for 13 years. It is unclear what implications this has to the total number of volunteers and hours volunteering overall.

Gender

The 2008 Volunteer Network Project Survey found that gender is not a decisive factor in volunteering with an equal split by gender) between volunteers and non-volunteers, i.e. 49% male and 51% female for both groups.

Age groups

The same survey found that age does make a difference to whether a Cypriot volunteers with half of all volunteers coming from age bands between 35 and 54 and non volunteers heavily concentrated among youth under 35 years old. More specifically the results are presented in the table below:

Age bands	Non-Volunteers	Volunteers
16-24	18%	14%
25-34	22%	15%
35-44	19%	28%
45-54	17%	24%
55-64	14%	14%
65+	11%	6%

Young people were also found less likely to be a member of an organisation engaging volunteers.

Geographical spread of volunteering

The 2008 survey found no significant difference to residence in urban or rural areas to whether an individual volunteers.

Area	Non-Volunteers	Volunteers
Urban Area	76%	24%

¹ This figure should be created with caution because of the small sample size of the survey.

Rural Area	25%	25%
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Education levels

No data available on incidence of volunteering by education level.

Employment status

The 2008 survey found that individuals employed in the public sector are most likely to volunteer. Those in employment volunteer more than those not employed.

Area	Non-Volunteers	Volunteers
Employed in Private Sector	36%	43%
Employed in Public Sector	16%	25%
Not Employed	48%	32%

Employed individuals are also more likely to be a member of an organisation engaging volunteers than those not employed.

Time dedicated to volunteering

No data available on time dedicated to volunteering.

1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

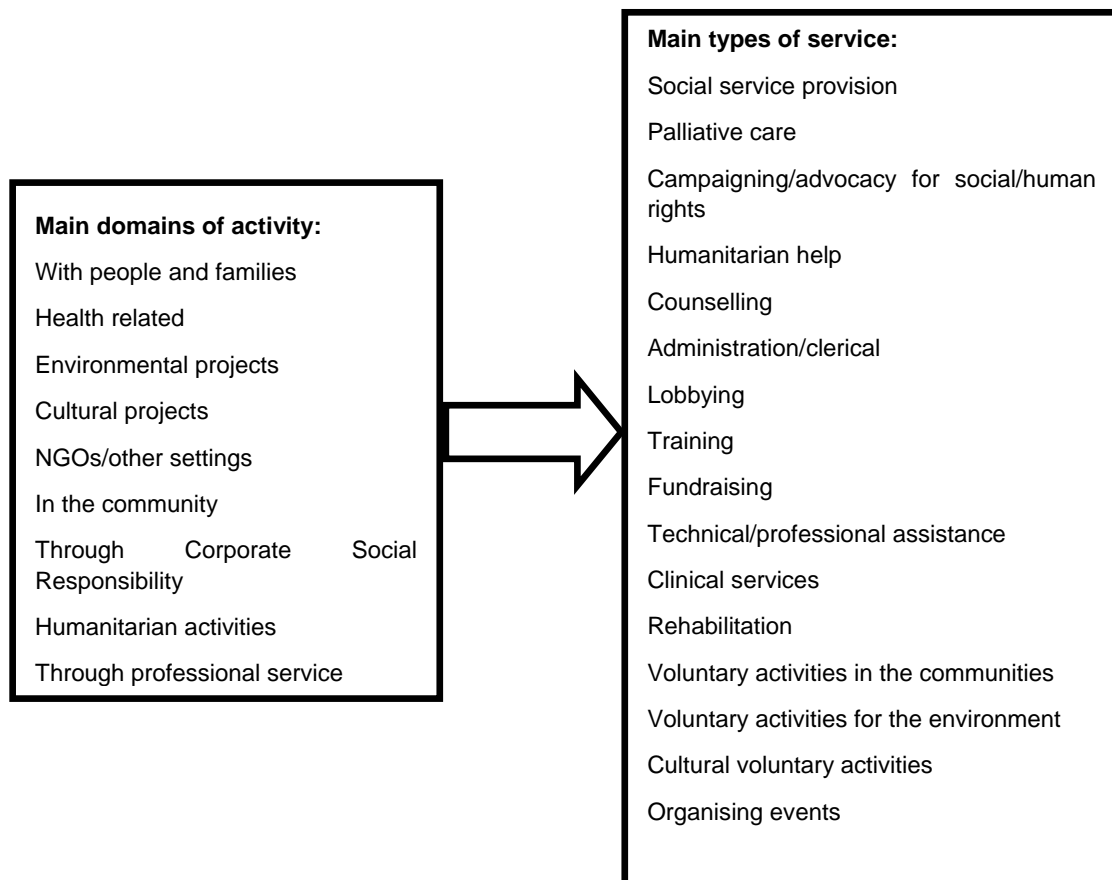
The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC) maintains a register of voluntary *societies* – which does not include foundations, clubs or other forms of voluntary organisations. Since 1974 when recording starting up to 2009 a total of 3,227 societies were registered. The break-down of societies by type is shown in the table below. Additionally, the PVCC has also registered 289 *foundations* engaging in non-profit activity in the period 1974 to 2009.

Type of Organisation	Number	% of total
Welfare and Health	1,087	33.7%
Sport	678	21.0%
Professional Organisations	393	12.2%
Culture, Arts and History	274	8.5%
Ethnic and National issues	152	4.7%
Leisure / Entertainment and Other	144	4.5%
Religious and Faith-based Organisations	116	3.6%
Education and Student Affairs	90	2.8%
Environment	76	2.3%
Networking / International Relations	64	2.0%
Animal Welfare	45	1.4%

Youth	42	1.3%
Research / Technology	37	1.1%
Total	3,227	100%

1.5 Main voluntary activities

The main domains of voluntary activity and the main types of service, as identified by the PVCC are demonstrated in the schema below:



2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

Main public body responsible for volunteering

The main public body responsible for volunteering in Cyprus is the **Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC)**. The mission of the Council is to:

- promote the principles and values of volunteerism;
- advance the shared interests of the voluntary organisations, and
- deliver a strategic vision for the further development of the voluntary sector.

The PVCC is an umbrella membership organisation for voluntary organisations and is independent from the government. It is administered by a management board, structured to allow for the participation of the member organisations in decision making processes and respect the members' diversity and independence. Operational costs for the Council are covered by a special line in the state budget which is put forward by the management board to the Minister for Labour and Social Work.

Currently, more than 350 voluntary organisations are members of the PVCC, both at national and local level. The member organisations represent the interests of civil society and of almost all social groups. The overwhelming majority of these organisations operate within the welfare and social services sphere. However, social welfare activities and social policy interests do cover a broad spectrum but focus in particular on youth, the elderly, marginalized / disadvantaged groups, women, health and safety and social inclusion.

The Council's heavy focus on social welfare is reflective of the history of the organisation as it was first established as the Welfare Council in 1973. It became a legal entity in 1989 when it also was appointed the responsibility of acting as the supreme body for coordinating voluntary activity and volunteerism. The law was revised again in 2006 when the council was renamed Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council and acquired a new operational framework and new responsibilities for coordinating and developing the voluntary sector (see section 3 for further details on the legal framework).

The main activities of the PVCC are:

- Identifying and analysing of social problems or needs of the voluntary organisations;
- Developing voluntary activities based on best practice;
- Establishing and administering of the Registry of Voluntary Organisations;
- Developing short and long-term strategic policy on volunteerism and the voluntary sector;
- Coordinating activity of the member organisations in order to safeguard the effective implementation of the voluntary sector policy;
- Providing technical or other support and consultative services to the member organisations;
- Engaging in civil dialogue with the government and public authorities to formulate and implement of any policies affecting the voluntary sector and social policy interests of member organisations.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

The **Social Welfare Service** in the **Department of Community Work Service** within the Ministry of Labour and Social insurance is the main departmental government body involved in volunteering. The service is responsible for assisting local communities to identify and meet their social needs and facilitate cooperation between the state, the community, individuals and voluntary groups in order to best serve the needs of the citizens. Its activities help achieve two additional objectives; firstly to safeguard social cohesion through collective actions and secondly to promote decentralisation of social services provision in community settings, where the voluntary and community sector is perceived to be more effective, flexible and appropriate.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for organising initiatives in schools and further and higher education institutions that promote volunteerism among students. Primary schools students are encouraged to engage in voluntary activity through **Volunteerism Week** (see section 2.3) activities, participating in fundraising drives for the two oldest voluntary organisations (Red Cross and the Anti-Cancer Organisation), join the Young Volunteers Association. At Secondary School, students are encouraged to participate in voluntary service through the Action-Creativity-Social Contribution (DDK) programme. The programme is a mandatory part of the curriculum but students may opt for strands other than voluntary service. Additionally, students are encouraged to volunteer in school social clubs which organise community service, student unions and are rewarded for social action through the school system.

The **Cyprus Youth Board (CYB)** is a non-departmental semi-governmental organisation which aims to promote the voice of young people in Cyprus to the government and the vehicle in which many government policy and programmes for youth are implemented. The Youth Board provides small amounts of funding to active youth voluntary organisations or for projects or activities relating to youth through a bidding process. The CYB also supports the implementation of the YOUTH programme on strand of which supports young people to engage in volunteering.

Decentralised services

The PVCC is represented in the regions through the District Volunteerism Coordinative Councils which also act as coordinating bodies for voluntary sector organisations in their areas. They are also responsible for running the Volunteers Centres in each district which operate a volunteer matching service.

Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information

The NGO Support Centre aims to strengthen civil society in Cyprus through providing capacity building for NGOs (start-up support, consulting, training, logistic /resources), encouraging partnerships between organisations and promoting awareness of the role of civil society in developing transparency and democratic procedures. The centre is partly funded by the United Nations Development Programme Action for Cooperation and Trust (UNDP-ACT) and other international grant-making organisations.

The Young Volunteers Association promotes voluntary contribution among children, who in cooperation with their schools and parents, provide community service and participate in charity events and fundraising activities. The Association numbers around 1500 children.

Affiliation with European and International umbrella organisations/networks

The PVCC is affiliated with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the European Voluntary Service (CEV) and the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW). It also coordinated International Volunteer Day in Cyprus.

Some large voluntary organisations are independently affiliated with their respective European networks of platforms.

2.2 Policies

National strategy/framework for volunteering

Promotion and support of volunteering and voluntary organisations is a long-standing objective of the government. Funding for the PVCC and grant-in-aid schemes are main the means for achieving this objective. More specific goals and priorities are defined on an annual basis by the PVCC in collaboration with government services and ministries as well as its membership.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

There are no specific national targets for volunteering. The regional Volunteer Centres are responsible for monitoring volunteering activity at a district level. Coordinators keep a database of volunteers and volunteer placements and match up supply and demand.

Additionally, voluntary organisations are required to report on their financial affairs in order to apply for grant-in-aid funding and as well as the outcome of all fundraising activities.

International policies

Cyprus participated in the UN International Year of Volunteering through activities and promotional campaigns organised through the PVCC. Additionally, the International Volunteer Day is also marked and is highlighted through Volunteerism Week activities (see section 2.3)

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

The PVCC is responsible for stimulating volunteering at a national level and receives state funding for this purpose (among others). It runs systematic national awareness raising campaigns to promote volunteerism.

Two specific programmes ran by the PVCC are:

Volunteerism Week was introduced by the PVCC in 1994 to highlight the importance of the International Volunteer Day and to bring an added value to volunteerism. The week aims to make the contribution of voluntary organisations more visible to the wider public, to present the big picture of ongoing projects and mobilize people to participate in these projects, to initiate new innovative projects and to showcase the hundreds of volunteers make a daily contribution in their communities and society.

The week's activities include (among others) the kick-off of hundreds of volunteer projects, launch of the **'Youth & Volunteerism Programme'** competition, press and awareness raising campaigns and a Volunteers' reception at the Presidential Palace hosted by the President and the first lady of the Republic of Cyprus.

The **Youth & Volunteerism Programme** is organised by the PVCC in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus to promote the values of volunteerism among youth in schools, universities and other educational institutions on the island. The

schools that participate in the programme, also enter in the annual competition, which distinguishes and awards the most innovative voluntary projects.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level

Volunteer Centres, established in 1991 in all districts by the PVCC, are the key bodies promoting and supporting volunteering at a regional level. The Centres are charged with:

- Undertaking promotional activity to encourage volunteering;
- Identifying social problems and welfare needs;
- Responding to these needs by initiating humanitarian, environmental, cultural and welfare volunteering projects;
- Organising the Volunteer Service which includes matching up individual volunteers to available voluntary placements and projects;
- Providing training (introductory and on-going) and support to volunteers in relation to their voluntary activities.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level

Cyprus participates in European programmes (such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Youth in Action) that support and promote volunteering at a transnational level.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 General legal framework

The **2006 Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council Law** is the most significant legislation relating to volunteering in Cyprus. As described in section 2.1, this legislation founded the PVCC through renaming the Welfare Council and thus establishing a body with a specific remit of representing and supporting the voluntary sector. This legislation also provides legal definitions for key concepts (volunteer, non profit activity and voluntary organisation) as well as provides for the establishment and maintenance of District Volunteerism Coordinative Councils and the Volunteer Centre.

Additionally, there is other legislation in Cyprus relevant pertaining to voluntary activities, non-profit organisations and the voluntary sector. A historical trajectory of this legislation and key information is presented below:

1925: Charities Law - Cap 41 (British colonial law)

1930: The Clubs (Registration) Law - Cap. 112 (British colonial law)

1948: The Street and House to House Collections Law - Cap. 95 (British colonial law)

1951: Companies Law/Cap 113 : a legal framework with articles on the establishment and registration of non profit companies article 20(1)] (British colonial law)

1962: Societies Law 3/62

1968: The Grants-in-aid Scheme for voluntary organizations (not governed by law - introduced by the Department of Social Welfare)

1972: The Societies and Institutions Law 57/72: a legal framework with provisions for the establishment and registration of societies and institutions (associations and foundations) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior

1973: The Societies and Institutions Regulations 118/73

1980: The Capital Gains Tax Law 52/80: a law which states that Capital Gains Tax is not levied on a “gift made for educational, instructive or other charitable purposes to a local authority or to any charitable institution in the Republic (under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance)

1989: The Pan Cyprian Welfare Council Law 152/89: a legal framework which establishes and defines the competences of the coordinative council for the voluntary sector]

1993: The Pan Cyprian Welfare Council Regulations 290/93 (regulations of the Pan Cyprian Welfare Council Law 152/89)

2000: The VAT Law 246/90: a law which exempts VAT for the supply of services or goods by non-profit organizations in the fields of welfare, social security, protection of children, young people or the elderly and physical education and culture (under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance)

2002: Income Tax Law 118(1)2002: the law qualifies voluntary organizations for tax exemptions (under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance)

2006: The Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council Law 61(I)2006: a new legal framework which amends the 1989 law

In recent years, the PVCC in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and the Policy Department have undertaken actions to combat the “commercialisation” of volunteering such as tackling “phony” fundraising activities and “phantom” welfare organisations through establishing control and registration procedures.

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

The PVCC is an umbrella body of voluntary organisations and is independently administrated by a management board on which voluntary organisations are represented. The PVCC does work closely with government to influence the legal framework but does not issue self-regulation (such as codes of conducts) to its members. However, it published “The Volunteer’s Manual” in 2001 which it provide to all members and volunteers on its register which offers a set of rights and responsibilities of volunteers as guidance to organisations engaging volunteers.

Furthermore, some voluntary organisations have their own rules for administering themselves.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

The Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council Law of 2006 defines a “volunteer” as “a person who offers, without any reward, financial or other, services or other means to individuals or groups or to the society at large, in order to address social or other needs. Beyond this legal definition of what constitutes a volunteer there is no further legal provisions.

Provisions for specific categories

Any individual regardless of employment status, health, occupation and age can engage in volunteering. Voluntary work does not affect unemployment benefits or any other benefits or tax status. As such, the legal framework in Cyprus does not “penalise” any individuals undertaking voluntary activities.

Support schemes and incentives

There are no schemes to encourage and support voluntary activity through the legal framework or financial subsidies and benefits.

The legal framework does support and encourage donations or gifts (cash or goods and services) through income and capital gains exemptions for physical and legal persons.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses, rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

There are no rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers. It is not common for voluntary organisations in Cyprus to reimburse or remunerate volunteers for costs relating to voluntary activities.

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers (non-profit)

The 1951 Companies Law introduced a legal framework for registering non profit companies. These companies do not have to engage volunteers but for an organisation to be deemed “a voluntary organisation” it must be not for profit. This was supplemented by the 1972 Societies and Institutions Law which governs the registration of societies and institutions (or associations and foundations).

Beyond this legislation on establishing and registering non profit organisations, other legislation provides tax benefits for voluntary organisations. So Capital Gains Tax is not levied on gifts for charitable purposes, (most) non-profit organisations are exempt from VAT and voluntary organisations may qualify for income tax exemptions (see section 3.1 for specific legislation).

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

There is no legal framework guiding the engagement of volunteers by profit-making activities or the engagement of employees of profit-making organisations in voluntary activities. Certain for-profit organisations engage in CSR activities on an organised and planned basis (large organisations) while several other Cypriot businesses engage in CSR activities on an ad hoc basis (usually in response to nationwide fundraising initiatives, e.g. the Radiomathon).

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

There is no legal framework guiding insurance and protection of volunteers.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

National budget allocated to volunteering

National budget is directly allocated to the voluntary sector through funding for the operation and activity of the PVCC, through the Social Fund programme and indirectly through other governmental and semi-governmental organisations.

The PVCC budget is derived directly from the state’s General Auditor and is also approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Protection. It was not possible to obtain exact figures for this budget line.

Social Funds are financial grants offered to voluntary organisations through the Social Welfare Service, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. This scheme has been operating since 1986 and aims to promote, strengthen and mobilise voluntary initiatives. The scheme predominantly supports activities relating to welfare, such as elderly caring services, low level skills of school dropouts, juvenile delinquency, and initiatives in eradicating social exclusion and poverty.

Since 2004, the Scheme has been reviewed and most of the existing guidelines were to improve distribution and allocation of funds. Stricter eligibility criteria were established to ensure the quality and sustainability of the projects funded and improve impact (by excluding organisations that were too small to deliver).

Priorities of the scheme for 2007 were to:

- Strengthen cooperation between voluntary organisations to avoid dilution and duplication;
- Establish programs in rural and under-developed urban areas, where poverty and social exclusion are more prominent;
- Encourage innovation and targeting at a localised level.

In 2007 (latest figures available), grants of total value of €7,972,334 (£4,666,000 CYP) were provided to voluntary organisations engaged in the field of welfare. The grant has increased from £4.250,000 in 2005 and £4.640,000 in 2006. During 2006, 237 Organizations (operating a total of 350 programs) were provided with grants for projects in themes of the elderly, people with special needs, preschool age children, day care for school-aged children and other programmes.

Other national funding

This includes:

- Ministry of Justice and Public Order in 2007 awarded grants of total value of €309,000 to voluntary organisations engaged in field of equality in particular around gender equality through the National Mechanism for Women's Rights.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment for environmental groups;
- The Cultural Services Department (under the Ministry of Education and Culture) for organisations that promote cultural education and the arts;
- The Cyprus Tourism Organisation for organisations or projects/events in the area of cultural heritage;
- The Cyprus Youth Board for youth groups or youth-related activities;
- The Cyprus Sports Organisation for sport organisations as well as voluntary organisations dealing with substance abuse, violence/fair play and minority rights.

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

Other sources for funding for voluntary organisations include:

- **Private donations** including large national fundraising campaigns;
- Grants or subsidies from **local authorities**;
- **UNDP-ACT** in Cyprus for projects around strengthening civil society, multicultural education, cultural heritage and sustainable development;
- **EU funding** through programmes such as ESF, YOUTH and others. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has also developed a series of measures to assist voluntary organizations familiarize themselves with programs that are financed by the EU, in order to provide guidance on applying directly for grants from EU programs.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

Voluntary organisations in Cyprus have historically not bid for public procurement contracts or delivered SSGIs. Some voluntary organisations deliver social welfare on a voluntary, and usually ad hoc, basis but this complements rather than competes with public provision at delivered national or local level.

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

No information or data available regarding to the economic value of volunteering in Cyprus.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Volunteers

The main benefit to individuals of engaging in voluntary activities is the altruistic satisfaction. However, through volunteering individuals also benefit from an education and career perspective (through gaining new skills and improving employment options) as well as a boosting self-confidence through a sense of achievement and social gains through meeting people and building a strong network of contacts.

Direct beneficiaries

Benefits to direct beneficiaries, whether these are individuals, social groups or communities obviously differ by the type of voluntary service provided. So for social welfare activities, individuals or groups of individuals benefit from an increased quality of life which of course also reflects on the communities in which they live in. For other activities, such as environmental protection for example, the communities and individuals that live in those localities benefit from an improved living environment which may lead to improved opportunities for economic rewards and thus contribute to local and regional development.

Wider Society

Volunteering is seen as means of achieving societal goals through improved quality of life for individuals and stronger, more cohesive communities. The act of altruistic serving, by definition, promotes values of equality of means and opportunities, social inclusion of different socio-economic groups (gender, age, ethnicity, etc), protection of human rights and inter-community dialogue. It is thus the building block of a more healthy and vibrant society.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

Factors motivating individuals to volunteer may be either individual or societal gains. So, as mentioned above, an individual may volunteer to boost their skills, employment opportunities or social position through meeting new people and building a social network. However, an individual may volunteer because of willingness to give to the community and society and to improve the quality of life of groups that are perceived to be in need or disadvantaged. It is usually a combination of all these factors that encourage an individual to volunteer.

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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

The PVCC accredits training and development courses for volunteers which it runs. However, these qualifications do not form part of the national training system.

The Human Resources and Development Authority (HRDA) has been appointed by the state as the responsible body for developing an accreditation and recognition framework relating to "informing learning" which should include skills gained through volunteering and qualifications relating to volunteering. This stream of work is part of the development of a national System Vocational Qualification (SVQ) which is currently underway and is co-financed by ESF 2007-2013 funding. The SVQ will link in the European Qualification Framework (EQF). However, the SVQ is still being developed and qualifications relating to volunteers have not yet been included.

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

As mentioned above, the PVCC offers a series of education and training opportunities for volunteers and voluntary organisations through its Training, Development and Research Centre. These are courses organised and provided on a regional basis and range from one day courses to seminars offered in the evenings over several weeks. Themes and topics covered are responsive to the needs of the sector at any given time and may related to a target group (e.g. the elderly) or the sector as such (e.g. how to write a successful bid for EU funding).

Additionally, some voluntary organisations (such as the Cyprus Red Cross) offer education and training opportunities for their staff and volunteers on an ad hoc basis.

7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

The PVCC believes that the EU policies in the field of active citizenship, youth and employment and social policy have had some effect on national policies through shaping national policies with EU-led approaches and promoting civil dialogue through sensitising public opinion. National policies and programmes therefore refer to EU policy for guidance and inspiration, rather than being a direct response to them.

However, a major issue for voluntary sector organisations in Cyprus concerning European policy and more specifically around European funding streams (such as ESF for example) is that most organisations do not have the resources, technical capacity or experience to compete for funding. As already mentioned, there is little history of competitive tendering to the voluntary sector in Cyprus and thus organisations engaging volunteers are not adequately equipped to take full advantage of EU co-financed opportunities that would benefit the sector.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

Some challenges for volunteering in Cyprus identified by the PVCC are:

- Lack of a comprehensive strategic plan for volunteering and the voluntary sector at a national level;
- Lack of research and evidence base around the voluntary sector on the island;
- Lacking legal and regulatory framework – especially concerning the protection of volunteers
- Limited funding and resources, with sourcing funding on sustainable basis a particular problem
- Lack of technical capacity, experience and resources of voluntary sector organisations to compete competitively for EU co-financing programmes and lack of expertise and experience in supporting the voluntary sector in sourcing external funding

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

The Civicus Civil Society Index Report for Cyprus (2005) identifies two issues relating to volunteering in Cyprus.

Firstly, there is a lack of an **umbrella organisation** or umbrella body for non-welfare voluntary groups (which are covered by the PVCC).

Secondly, the report found that many organisations were heavily dependent on state, political party and private sector funding which is not stable and impedes on the sector's ability to function autonomously.

They also identify the lack of policy or tax framework to encourage volunteering and giving by private organisations through CSR – which in effect increases dependency of organisations on non-stable funding sources.

Therefore key opportunities for development of volunteering in Cyprus are:

- Development of an umbrella organisation for volunteering;
- Diversifying the sources of funding;
- Creating a policy and legal framework to support volunteering.

Since publication of the report, more EU funding opportunities have been made available and the Ministry of Labour, the PVCC, NGO Resource Centre are all providing training and guidance on applying and securing EU grants.

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Young Volunteers Association: www.youngvolunteers.org

NGO Support Centre: www.ngo-sc.org

The Management Centre: www.mc-med.org/

Interview

Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinating Council