

NATIONAL REPORT – MALTA

CONTENTS

1	GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN MALTA	1
1.1	History and contextual background	1
1.2	Definitions	1
1.3	Number and profile of volunteers	1
1.4	Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers	4
1.5	Main voluntary activities	8
2	INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK	9
2.1	Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering	9
2.2	Policies	13
2.3	Programmes	15
3	REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	16
3.1	General legal framework	16
3.2	Legal framework for individual volunteers	17
3.3	Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers	18
3.4	Legal framework for profit-making organisations	19
3.5	Insurance and protection of volunteers	19
4	ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING	19
4.1	Funding arrangements for volunteering	19
4.2	Economic value of volunteering	21
5	SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING	21
5.1	Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries	21
5.2	Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer	22
6	VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	22
6.1	Recognition of volunteer's skills and competences within the national educational and training system	22
6.2	Education and training opportunities for volunteers	23
7	IMPACT OF EU POLICIES	24
8	CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING	25
8.1	Challenges for volunteering	25
8.2	Opportunities for volunteering	27
	SOURCES	28

1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN MALTA

The following section presents a general overview of the voluntary sector in Malta. It provides information on the history of volunteering in the country; definitions of volunteering; the number and profiles of volunteers; the number and types of organisations engaging volunteers; and the main voluntary activities taking place in Malta.

1.1 History and contextual background

Voluntary organisations (also known as non-governmental organisations, NGOs) have historically played a key role in the Maltese society. The NGO sector on the islands of Malta and Gozo is regarded as vibrant and diverse, with organisations and associations stemming from political and cultural groups, sport organisations and band clubs, as well as from foundations of different kinds. A rich culture of volunteering is a long established tradition (about one century), which is especially rooted in the activity of the Church organisations, particularly their missionary work. In addition, the teaching profession has played an important role in this regard. Since the beginning of teacher training in the 1940s, there has been a continuous practice among teachers over the following decades to become strongly involved in sector activities – such as setting-up organisational structures and offering voluntary services.

With the substantial growth of the third sector over recent years, voluntary organisations play an important role in the democratic processes in Malta and contribute to the formation of a robust civil society. An increasing number of people are now working in the non-profit sector, which is generating more income and investing more money to help a greater number of people than ever before. The sector attracts new donors and hundreds more regularly volunteer.

1.2 Definitions

In Malta, volunteering is defined by the law. According to Voluntary Organisations Act of 11 December 2007, a 'volunteer' is a person who provides unremunerated services through or for a voluntary organisation. Accordingly, voluntary activity is undertaken by a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and without regard to financial gain.

The legal act also defines the 'voluntary sector', which includes voluntary organisations, volunteers, donors who make voluntary grants of money or assets to voluntary organisations, beneficiaries of the services of volunteers and voluntary organisations and the administrators of such organisations.

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

The following section provides further details on the number and profile of volunteers active in Malta. While information has been found on the number of volunteers in Malta, their break-down by gender and by sector, and the time dedicated to voluntary activities, there is a lack of data relating to age groups, the geographic spread of volunteering across Malta, and the education levels and employment status of volunteers.

Total number of volunteers

Most of the NGOs in Malta operate with the help of voluntary workers. However there is no information on the exact number of volunteers. A survey carried out by the national statistics office of Malta reports that there were a total of 5,674 active volunteers in 2007; slightly less than in 2003 and 2004¹ (see Table 1 below).

Estimates of other organisations are much higher. Stakeholders have suggested that volunteers represent 12% of the Maltese adult population. This would indicate that over 33,000 volunteers aged 16-64 are involved in volunteering. Others have suggested that as many as 54,000 young people in Malta are engaged in carrying out voluntary activities.

Table 1: Distribution of volunteers in NGOs

	2003	2004	2007
Number of volunteers	5,936	6,246	5,674

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2004, 2007.

Trend

The number of volunteers in Malta appears to have remained stable over the past few years. However, it is difficult to analyse fluctuations as no systematic approach exists in relation to calculating the number of volunteers in the country.

Gender

When looking at gender differentiation among volunteers, there were more females (62%; 3,519) than males (38%; 2,155) among all the voluntary workers (5,674) reported by National Statistics Office in 2007.

Age groups

There is currently no data available on the number of volunteers in Malta by age group.

Geographical spread of volunteering

There is currently no data available on the number of volunteers in Malta by geographical spread.

Education levels

There is currently no data available on the number of volunteers in Malta by level of education.

Volunteer involvement by sectors

Limited information is available on the volunteer involvement by sectors. Overall, a range of different studies suggest that some of the most popular sectors include:

- Community activities;

¹ Since different approaches were taken to estimate the number of volunteers, it is difficult to state whether their decreasing number is resulting from societal trend or different methodology and/or research sample. The data have been collected by National Statistics Office (NSO) from a postal survey that was conducted amongst 330 NGOs in Malta and Gozo, with main activities relating to veterinary services, social work (both with and without accommodation), education, human health, activities of religious organisations and other organisations. Parish encounters, youth centres, choirs and some folklore units were not considered within the database. The response rate achieved from this survey was 80 per cent (National Statistics Office, Non-Governmental Organisations Survey: 2007).

- Recreation;
- Social affairs; and
- Sport

As for voluntary activities engaged in by young people and the most popular fields include²:

- Community activity – 13,026
- recreation - 12,000
- sport – 6,000
- religious volunteering - 6,000
- education – 5,500
- children and youth – 4,682
- environment – 2,500
- arts/culture – 2,500
- social assistance - 1,606.

Profile of volunteers by employment status

There is currently no official data available on the number of volunteers in Malta by employment status.

Time dedicated to volunteering

In 2004, the average time spent by the Maltese population on voluntary activities (including voluntary work and meetings) amounted to 0.4 hours per weekday and 0.8 hours per weekend day (see Table 2a and 2b).

Table 2a: Distribution of average time spent on main activity per weekday

Type of activity	Hours		
	Males	Females	Total
Personal care	10,8	11,2	11,0
Gainful work and study	4,5	1,7	3,0
Housework and family care	1,7	4,8	3,3
Volunteer work and meetings	0,2	0,4	0,4
Free time activities	5,0	4,5	4,7
Travel and unspecified time use	1,8	1,4	1,6
Total	24,0	24,0	24,0

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2004.

Table 2b: Distribution of average time spent on main activity per weekend

² The European Knowledge Centre for Youth (partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work (2005, 2006) Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities Policy.

day

Type of activity	Hours		
	Males	Females	Total
Personal care	11,6	11,8	11,7
Gainful work and study	1,5	0,5	1,0
Housework and family care	1,7	3,8	2,8
Volunteer work and meetings	0,8	0,8	0,8
Free time activities	6,3	5,2	5,7
Travel and unspecified time use	2,1	1,9	2,0
Total	24,0	24,0	24,0

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2004.

1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

The following section provides further information on the number and types of organisations engaging volunteers in Malta.

Definition of voluntary organisations in Malta

As stated in the Voluntary Organisations Act, the term 'voluntary organisation' refers to a foundation, a trust, an association of persons or a temporary organisation. As stipulated in the law, such an organisation is³:

- established by a written instrument for any lawful purpose;
- not created to generate personal profit;
- voluntary;
- independent and autonomous, in particular of government and other public authorities and of political parties or commercial organisations;

whether it is registered or registrable as a legal person or not in terms of the Second Schedule to the Civil Code and whether it is enrolled in terms of this Act or not.

'Voluntary' in the context of a voluntary organisation means the existence of one or more of the following elements⁴:

- the overall control of the organisation is exercised by administrators who do not receive any remuneration for their services for carrying on functions of administrators except as hereunder permitted;
- the organisation is created by the endowment of voluntary and gratuitous grants and the organisation's affairs are supported, at least in part, by such voluntary or gratuitous grants or by services rendered on a voluntary basis;
- subject to limitations due to the nature or size of the organisation and subject to any discretion which may be exercised in terms of the statute of an organisation by the administrators or a membership committee, any person can join the organisation or participate in the activities of the organisation; and
- every participant in the organisation has the right to freely leave the organisation.

³ Voluntary Organisations Act, 11 December 2007.

⁴ Voluntary Organisations Act, 11 December 2007.

In general, NGOs are distinguished from informal or *ad hoc* groups by having some degree of formal or institutional existence. Many of them have charitable or philanthropic purposes and nearly all have public and socially beneficial purposes.⁵ Their aim is therefore to act in the public arena at large, on concerns and issues related to the well-being of people, specific groups of people or society as a whole. At the same time, they cannot pursue the commercial or professional interests of their members.

Nearly all NGOs are managed and very often manned by volunteers. The term 'voluntary organisations' emphasises the choice to associate for a common purpose and some donation of one's time and labour - at least of the board members or organisers.

Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector

Currently, there are over 300 organisations enrolled in the Register of Voluntary Organisations but an estimated number is probably higher.

In 2001, during the International Year of Volunteers, the National Statistics Office widened the scope of its social statistics programme to accommodate a series of surveys, including

Table 3: Distribution of NGOs by type of organisation, 2004

Main Activity	Number
Social	10
Religious	25
Educational	10
Sport	1
Philanthropic	46
International	1
Therapeutic	8
Pressure group	8
Home	33
Support group	18
Other	10
Total	149

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2004.

⁵ 'Social purposes' are the traditional charitable and philanthropic purposes, though they have been extended to reflect current value judgments on the importance of certain areas, including national heritage and the environment. 'Other purposes', or 'non-charitable purposes' are by definition not so publicly and socially oriented, although they are still considered to be positive.

a series of Social Welfare-Oriented Non-Governmental Organisations. A total of 149 social welfare NGOs were surveyed for the purpose of this census⁶.

Out of all 149 NGOs addressed by the research, the largest proportion – 30.9% (46 organisations) - declared that they were philanthropic organisations (see Table 3). This was followed by homes with 22.1%, and religious with 16.8%.

During 2007, the survey was extended to 330 NGOs in Malta and Gozo. This time, membership and religious organisations comprised the largest group of NGOs, amounting to 153 units and accounting for 46 % of NGOs surveyed. There were 141 NGOs performing social work activities (26%)⁷ (see Table 4).

Table 4: Number of NGOs by main activity

Main Activity	2001	2002	2003	2007
Human health activities	8	8	8	18
Social work activities	117	116	111	141
Other organisations	30	29	30	171*
Total	155	153	149	330

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2006, 2007.

Similar results were obtained when analysing the sphere of youth organisations, where religious (21.2 %) and social activities (18.7 %) formed the majority, followed by educational activities (18.3 %) and cultural activities (16.6 %).⁸

Trend

Given that there was no official register for NGOs when the National Statistics Office surveys were carried out, it is difficult to analyse trends in the number of voluntary organisations in Malta.

The only comparable data related to NGOs refers to membership. According to the National Statistics Office, during the last decade (1993-2003) there has been a rising interest in the third sector in this regard. In 2000, a total of 63,718 people became members of non-governmental organisation – signifying an important increase of 31.1% over the previous four years. Subsequently, about 20,000 more members (86,125) were reported in 2007. Such growth can signify an increasing number of NGOs Malta or/and the consolidation of the third sector – with new organisations being founded while others are expanding their work.

Types of organisations engaging volunteers

⁶ National Statistics Office (2004) Social Welfare-Oriented Non-Governmental Organisations. Malta. Information available at Internet: <http://www.nso.gov.mt>

⁷ Given that an official register for NGOs did not exist when survey took place, the sources for the construction of the database for 2007 were varied. The basis of the available information was the 2004 database of NGOs compiled by the NSO. New information was collated from a number of (non-exhaustive) administrative registers available in Malta. Although many efforts were made in order to obtain an exhaustive list of NGOs to make up the target population, a number of NGOs could not be traced and thus were excluded from this survey. However this survey gives a clear picture of the work that is being carried out by all NGOs (National Statistics Office 2008).

* Number includes membership and religious organisations (153) and veterinary activities (18).

⁸ The European Knowledge Centre for Youth (partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work (2005, 2006) Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities Policy.

Most of Malta's **NGOs** are small and medium sized NGOs. Many of these NGOs are not well known, yet their work is highly valuable. Small NGOs help children with learning difficulties, support persons suffering from chronic illnesses, support persons with disability to integrate in community life, give guidance to young people, promote art and culture, protect our environment, help people out of poverty and empower social excluded persons to have a better quality of life. They very often operate through volunteers and function through a very small annual budget⁹.

Social welfare-oriented NGOs utilised the services of 8,437 volunteers in 2005, which corresponded to 84% of total workers in the sector¹⁰. The largest number of volunteers worked in membership organisations. The percentage of volunteers of total members was highest in organisations whose main activities were artistic, literary or other entertainment – in this sector 100% of the workforce were volunteers. Taking into consideration organisations performing cultural activities, in sport organisations 74% of the total workforce were volunteers. In local councils and theatres, 57% of the total workforce were volunteers. This figure stood at 41% with regard to band clubs and 27% with regard to museums¹¹.

Over past years the number of full-time and part-time employees in NGOs has been increasing steadily. In 2007, there were 1,097 full-time employees as opposed to 982 in 2003 and 991 in 2004. As for part-time workers, their number grew from 609 in 2003 to 762 in 2007¹².

Other types of organisations engaging volunteers include foundations, associations and corporations. These are outlined in greater detail below.

As described in the Maltese Civil Code, a **foundation** is an organisation consisting of a universality of things constituted in writing, including by means of a will, by a founder or founders whereby assets are destined either:

- for the fulfilment of a specified purpose; or
- for the benefit of a named person or class of persons, and are entrusted to the administration of a designated person or persons. The patrimony, namely assets and liabilities, of the foundation is kept distinct from that of its founder, administrators or any beneficiaries.

The term thus includes all organisations, institutions or similarly titled patrimonies, which are set up through the bequest, endowment or appropriation of assets, by public deed or otherwise and howsoever named, for a stated purpose or for the benefit of a named person or class of persons, to be achieved through a designated administrator or administrators, but shall not include trusts as defined in the Trusts and Trustees Act.

Foundations can be a 'purpose' or 'private' organisation. A purpose foundation is established exclusively for a charitable, philanthropic or other social purpose or as a non-profit organisation or for any other lawful purpose. Accordingly, a private foundation is created for private benefit.

Subsequently, an **association** is an agreement between three or more persons to establish an organisation with defined aims or purposes to be achieved through the dedication of efforts and resources by such persons and others who may join voluntarily, the patrimony,

⁹ Malta Solidarity Overseas Service (2005) SOS Malta Annual Report 2005. www.sosmalta.org/file.aspx?f=140

¹⁰ The reliability on the data for comparisons is questionable. In 2004 and 2007, a total number of volunteers in NGOs as reported by NSO was 6 246 and 5 674 respectively.

¹¹ National Statistics Office (2006) *International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development: 2006*. Press Release. Malta, 4 December 2006.

¹² National Statistics Office (2005, 2008) News Release 260/2005, 230/2008, Malta.

namely assets and liabilities, if any, of the association being distinct from that of the members, its administrators or any beneficiaries. Associations are not bound to register as legal persons but are entitled to do so. They can be established:

- for the purposes of promoting private interests;
- for the purposes of promoting a trade or profession;
- for the achievement of a social purpose; or
- for the carrying on of any lawful activity on a non-profit making basis.

The White Paper (July 2005) states that the main difference between foundations and associations is the very fact that while foundations are a universality of things under administration, associations are groups of persons. They both have common aims and administrators but they have different structures. Therefore, the tests for determining whether an association qualifies as voluntary are not the same as those for foundations. The distinctive feature is thus the democratic requirement in management of associations which does not apply to Foundations unless their constitutive deed states otherwise in particular cases.

The same document further defines **non-profit entities** with purposes which are not necessarily altruistic or which do not necessarily merit State support under certain perceptions. These include professional organisations set up to protect or promote the interests of a sector in our community (other than Unions or Employer Associations which are regulated by the existing industrial legislation). Other organisations with non-charitable purpose are also associations set up to lobby for a particular agenda or those relating to the hobbies and leisure of members. Likewise they can include organisations set up to commemorate the memory of a person or for the benefit of animals. Examples of these organisations abound in Maltese society.

The most popular form of not for profit organisations is a **corporation**. For most purposes, the law treats a corporation as a person, the same as any human being. It has its own name and the equivalent of a social security number. A corporation can enter into contracts, incur debts, and hire and fire its employees. The corporate form has many advantages; the corporation's debts are not the personal liability of its members; it can have a perpetual existence, sue and defend suits, hold, use and transfer property, and adopt assumed names for conducting business; it can also own or control other corporations. A non profit corporation can even own one or more business corporations¹³.

1.5 Main voluntary activities

Of the 5,674 volunteers reported in 2007, the majority (3,306) of volunteers were working as operational / technical staff, followed by those involved in carrying administrative tasks (1,014) (see Table 5).

Table 5: Distribution of voluntary workers engaged with NGOs by type of activity

	2004	2007
Director	166	591
Administrative staff	589	1,014
Operational/Technical staff	3,736	3,306

¹³ Polini, B., Camilleri-Cassar, F., and other contributors (2009), Volunteering across Europe 2008 – Research Year III [forthcoming].

Other staff	1,258	763
Total	5,749	5,674

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2004, 2007.

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The following section details the current institutional framework of the voluntary sector in Malta. It presents an overview of the main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering in Malta; international and national policies; and programmes in place at transnational, national and regional and local level.

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

Main public body responsible for volunteering

Until 2007, there was no overall authority responsible for all voluntary organisations in Malta. In addition, there are no provisions for their registration and there are no monitoring or supervisory structures.

With the introduction of the 2007 Voluntary Organisations Act two key institutions were established to ensure greater professionalism and coordination within the voluntary sector: the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations and the Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

The Commissioner is responsible for establishing appropriate communication systems to support Maltese citizens engaged in voluntary activities, whether in Malta or abroad. The first Commissioner was appointed by the Minister responsible for social policy in November 2007. The term of office runs for three years and a Commissioner can be reappointed at the end of the period. Reappointment and changes to the Commissioner are subject to the decision of the Minister responsible for Social Policy in consultation with the committee of the representatives on social affairs.

The Commissioner must follow a set of guiding principles:

- Recognise, encourage and promote the value and importance of voluntary activities and voluntary organisations, whether operating independently of government institutions or in a supporting role, and the benefit deriving to the social and cultural life in Malta;
- Recognise the contribution of voluntary activities and voluntary organisations, as expressions of participation, solidarity, pluralism and subsidiarity, towards the continued enjoyment and enrichment of democratic life in Malta;
- recognise the direct economic benefit of voluntary and unremunerated activities and of initiatives undertaken by voluntary organisations and volunteers;
- recognise the importance of the co-ordination of efforts by voluntary organisations with similar purposes so as to achieve a greater concentration of resources and the benefits of economies of scale, whilst avoiding any duplication of efforts and always acting in the interests of their beneficiaries; and
- recognise the importance of the creation of federations or of associations of members in order to regulate member organisations and their activities in order to achieve the benefits of self regulation in the voluntary sector.

The Voluntary Organisations Act also sets out the main duties of the Commissioner:

- provide enrolment facilities for organisations, which are eligible for enrolment under the terms of the Act;
- monitor the activities of voluntary organisations in order to ensure observance of the Act's provisions and any relevant regulations;
- provide voluntary organisations with information about the benefits and responsibilities as a result of registering as a 'legal person' in terms of the Second Schedule to the Civil Code and enrolment under the terms of the Act;
- provide information and guidelines to individuals engaged in voluntary activities and to members of voluntary organisations, in order to help them better fulfil their roles and to improve the attainment of organisational objectives;
- make recommendations to the Minister responsible for social policy on legislation and policies in support of voluntary organisations, volunteers and voluntary activities;
- assist the government, government departments, public agencies and entities controlled by the government in preparing and reviewing policies in support of voluntary organisations and the voluntary sector in general;
- investigate any complaints relating to voluntary organisations or individuals or organisations purporting to be voluntary organisations and their activities, and to take such action as is in their power to redress any justified grievance that may come to their notice;
- monitor the promotion of voluntary organisations and the behaviour of their administrators so as to ensure the observance of high standards of accountability and transparency, as well as their compliance with law;
- coordinate and communicate with the Registrar for Legal Persons in terms of the Second Schedule to the Civil Code with a view to facilitating registration and enrolment processes for voluntary organisations;
- cooperate with and support the Council in developing policies which will be of benefit to the voluntary sector in general or specific sections within the voluntary sector; and
- perform any other function or duty assigned to them under the Voluntary Organisations Act and any corresponding regulations, as well as other functions which may be assigned to the role of the Commissioner under any other law.

Council for Voluntary Organisations

In September 2008, the first Council for the Voluntary Sector came into being. The Council is composed of a Chairperson and an additional ten members. Of these eleven members, one is appointed by the Minister to represent the Government, a second is the Commissioner ex officio and the remaining nine members are appointed from the voluntary sector to represent the voluntary sector. The Council is appointed for a two year term – after this period it can either be reappointed or changed. The Council falls under the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for social policy and is governed by the 2007 Volunteer Organisations Act, which outlines the parameters for its activity.

One of the Council's primary aims is to represent the voluntary sector and promote its interests. While serving as a consultative body to the Commissioner when developing policies in relation to this sector, the Council's is also meant to counterbalance the power of the Commissioner.

The key tasks of the Council include:

- overseeing the volunteer sector;
- representing the interests of the voluntary sector as a whole;
- assisting the voluntary sector capacity building and training;
- helping with troubleshooting;
- creating programmes and projects for the voluntary sector;
- administering a voluntary organisations fund to promote voluntary activities.

In general, the Council for the Voluntary Sector acts as a platform from which co-operation is developed between voluntary organisations and the government and between voluntary organisations themselves. The Council is chaired by the Commissioner.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

In addition to the main public bodies mentioned above, there are also a number of other public bodies involved in coordinating and supporting the functioning of the NGO sector. These include:

- The Governmental Organisations Projects Selection Committee – advises the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity on the allocation of funds out of the Support to Voluntary Organisation Fund;
- The Advisory Committee - receives and assesses NGO requests for government funding for social inclusion projects and programmes and recommends to the Ministry which programs should be funded. The Committee also ensures that the projects provide value for money and verifies output through financial and service audits.
- The Unit for Liaison with NGO - supports the Committee by taking in and processing applications for funding, as well as liaising with and assisting NGOs in their submittal of the relevant application and documentation. The Unit is also authorised to carry out service and financial audits.
- The Board of Appeal - established to determine all matters relating to voluntary organisations as are referred to it within the term of the Voluntary Organisations Act. Any individual or organisation unhappy with any decision taken by the Commissioner may appeal to the Board within period of time specified by the law. An application may also be made by the Commissioner, a founder, administrator, member, donor or beneficiary of a voluntary organisation.

When it comes to European dimension, the voluntary sector is now represented in the Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee (MEUSAC), which is a government agency that coordinates local actions with the EU. During Malta's EU accession, NGOs were directly involved through the Committee that brought them together with the negotiating team and the key government ministries and departments active in the process. On several occasions their input helped to shape Malta's negotiating positions during negotiations. In addition, MEUSAC has created a special unit to help volunteer organisations and local councils to apply for EU projects and funds.

Furthermore, the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) has been set up to give a more effective voice to non-governmental organisations in Malta, in particular the main social partners. However, it is worth noting that MCESD also has a committee that focuses directly on civil society.

Finally, the main actors related to voluntary activities involving young people are the Youth Section within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment and the National Youth Council. The Ministry provides financial and informational support to activities organised by youth organisations, circulates a monthly e-newsletter, and promotes and sustains youth empowerment programmes in various localities across the islands. The National Youth Council, on the other hand, represents youth organisations, advocates and promotes synergy and networking, shares expertise and holds seminars, attends international meetings, promotes collaboration, support local initiatives, and implements the National Youth Policy.

Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information

Malta has no definite volunteer support centre. NGOs offer support and training to volunteers who provide a service to the community through their respective organisation. However, there are various platforms, networks and federations set up for voluntary organisations, which facilitate cooperation and help share skills and knowledge.

The National Federation of NGOs of Malta (NFNM)

In April 2007, the National Federation of NGOs of Malta (NFNM) was established to represent the interests of NGOs working across all sectors and to strengthen the role of NGOs in Maltese civil society. It works to develop policies and practices to promote and assist NGOs, to facilitate and promote communication between NGOs, and to lobby on issues that are of concern to NGOs. The Federation also monitors the legal framework within which NGOs operate and ensures that it adequately reflects the needs and practices of the organisations. There are currently 16 NGOs involved in the Federation.

Malta Resource Centre for Civil Society NGOs

The Malta Resource Centre facilitates the process and the day to day administration of the National Federation of NGOs. It was originally set up in 2004, following Malta's membership in the EU, as the Malta Solidarity Overseas Service (SOS) Malta initiative to support and strengthen civil society NGOs in Malta. In addition to providing assistance to the National Federation of NGOs, the main activities of Centre include:

- supporting a network of 50 NGOs and groups working to fight poverty and social exclusion;
- supporting a network of 30 NGOs working in the health sector;
- providing ongoing information, technical assistance and training events to NGOs and groups;
- running a major health project called 'Health Volservnet' to organise voluntary work systems and structures in hospitals and in the community to enhance patient care;
- developing a major EU research project on volunteering; and
- developing the first and only national NGOs and Groups on-line database¹⁴.

Malta Solidarity Overseas Service

The Malta Solidarity Overseas Service (SOS Malta) was established in 1991 to help fight against poverty, support emergency aid and take part in overseas development work. SOS Malta also launched the Malta Resource Centre for Civil Society NGOs (mentioned above) and set up the European Anti-Poverty Network Malta (EAPN Malta), which created a

¹⁴ Malta Resource Centre for Civil Society NGOs. Information available at Internet: <http://www.mrc.org.mt>

network of Maltese NGOs involved in combating poverty and social exclusion. EAPN Malta currently has 53 member organisations from the voluntary sector and aims to participate and influence the national action plans for inclusion, the National Reform Programmes and the participation of persons facing poverty and social exclusion in national policies and plans¹⁵. EAPN Malta is a member of the wider European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) () – as such, it monitors and analyses EU policies, which have an impact on individuals affected by poverty¹⁶.

The Maltese NGDO Platform¹⁷

The Maltese NGDO¹⁸ Platform was set up in June 2000 on the initiative of the NGDO, *Koperazzjoni Internazzjonali* (Kopin), to bring together all Maltese NGOs involved in development and overseas relief and/or in the provision of development education. The Platform aims to provide a forum for consultation and co-operation among its members, as well as whenever possible or desirable to help them to speak with a single voice on development issues, when possible or necessary. The Platform is also a member of CONCORD, a Confederation which aims to inform and co-ordinate the political actions of NGOs for Relief and Development at European level. Most of the NGOs, which participate in the Platform, also carry out programmes related to short-term volunteering abroad.

Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks

As seen above, a number of Maltese organisations that promote volunteering and facilitate cooperation and the exchange of information are affiliated with European-wide umbrella organisations/networks – EAPN Malta, set up by the SOS Malta is a member of the European-level EAPN and the Maltese NGDO Platform takes part in the activities of the European confederation, CONCORD. SOS Malta is also an associate member of the European Volunteer Centre (CEV), which maintains a network of national and regional volunteer centres and volunteer development agencies across Europe to support and promote voluntary activity¹⁹. As a result, the Maltese organisations are kept informed of developments within their field, which have taken place a European level and have the opportunity to take part in cross-national activities led by their affiliated European umbrella organisations/networks. These may include taking part in information seminars, focus and working groups, workshops, relevant training sessions, and aiding with project work.

2.2 Policies

Research suggests that there are differences in opinion between different stakeholders as to whether or not volunteering is a national priority. Government officials interviewed as part of this study state that volunteering is a priority for the national political agenda. However, representatives from NGOs have highlighted the need for further development.

National strategy/framework on volunteering

There is currently no national strategy or framework on volunteering in place in Malta. However, State authorities took their first step towards encouraging volunteering with the introduction of the White Paper (July 2005), which briefly outlined proposed new legislation for the voluntary sector – namely, the Voluntary Organisations Act. The aim of the White

¹⁵ Information taken from EAPN Malta, available at Internet: <http://www.eapn.eu/content/view/79/21>

¹⁶ Malta Solidarity Overseas Service (2005) SOS Malta Annual Report 2005. Information available at Internet: www.sosmalta.org/file.aspx?f=140

¹⁷ NGDOs are voluntary non-profit and non-governmental organisations working within the framework of international development cooperation. They are concerned with poverty reduction, social justice, human rights and the problems of marginalisation within society, particularly with regard to women (Caruana 2003).

¹⁸ Non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs).

¹⁹ Information available from Internet: http://www.cev.be/78-our_vision_and_our_work-EN.html

Paper was to give all voluntary organisations and other stakeholders an opportunity to share their views with the Maltese Government before the bill was published and forwarded to the Maltese parliament for discussion. The White Paper outlined the role of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations, the Voluntary Organisations Fund and of the National Council for the Voluntary Sector. It also addressed the need for credible transparency and accountability by allowing for monitoring without undue interference²⁰.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

There are currently no national targets for volunteering as there is no national strategy/framework on volunteering in place.

In terms of reporting arrangements for volunteering, the Commissioner's Office undertakes the only arrangements to monitor voluntary activities in Malta. More specifically it monitors the activities and progress of registered NGOs. The Office also constantly monitors the print media (including newspapers, both print and online) in order to keep as up to date as possible with the activities of the voluntary sector. In addition, the Office regularly reviews the web-sites of all known voluntary organisations (both registered and not) to document the work performed by the different organisations and to check for any irregularities.

The Commissioner is also responsible for the Register of Voluntary Organisations. Once a NGO fulfils all the conditions required by the enrolment process, it receives a certificate and an official number which acts as proof that it satisfies the conditions of accountability and transparency. Registration is renewable annually on condition that an annual report and annual accounts are made available to the Commissioner's Office together with information of any relevant changes within the administration, which has occurred during the year under review in the reports. In order to apply for enrolment with the Commissioner, NGOs must submit set documents, which have been specified in law (for example, the application form, statute, written consent, etc.). Together with the application for enrolment, an organisation is required to submit a nominal fee of EUR 40.

Certain organisations are excluded from enrolment – specifically if they have been established to promote a private interest, such as the commercial interest of a company or a particular product or to benefit a named individual beneficiary. This means that a co-operative or a private foundation for an individual or their personal and family interests or a condominium arrangement cannot be listed in the register as they promote private interests. Commercial entities and other organisations that carry out commercial activities or trade (even if the profits made are to be donated to charity or to voluntary organisations) are also excluded from enrolment. This does not mean, however, that a commercial organisation cannot establish and enrol a voluntary organisation, or that a voluntary organisation cannot itself establish a commercial entity. In fact, the latter case is mandated by the Voluntary Organisations Act to ensure that there is a level playing field and that voluntary organisations do not trade and compete unfairly: they are required to set up the appropriate commercial organisation, which is subject to all the relevant compliance and disclosure rules.

International policies

As there is currently no national strategy or framework on volunteering in place in Malta, it is difficult to see whether any EU or international policies or programmes have had an

²⁰ Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (2005) *White Paper on Strengthening the Voluntary Sector*. Information available from Internet: http://www.msp.gov.mt/documents/ngo/strengthening_voluntary_sector.pdf

impact on national policies geared towards volunteering. However, it is likely that the affiliation of certain Maltese organisations, that actively promote volunteering, with wider European umbrella organisations and networks, has influenced their activities and their internal organisational and operational strategies. By cooperation with EU-level organisations and other NGOs operating in different European countries, Maltese NGOs will have been exposed to different good practice examples and greater information on volunteering.

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

With no national strategy/framework on volunteering, national level programmes play an important part in promoting volunteering and the voluntary sector in Malta. Research has highlighted two key national programmes, which seek to stimulate volunteering at national level:

Biennial Fare

The Biennial Fare is an annual youth event organised by the Youth section of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment to promote youth initiatives. The Fare takes place nation-wide and promotes voluntary work to support and encourage voluntary organisations. It is also supported by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity.

In addition, the Youth section of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment also organises an evening event where young people who have participated in voluntary activities are rewarded for their contribution to society and the voluntary sector. The winner and the runners-up are awarded financial assistance to support their cause. All entries are processed by an independent selection committee and the winner and runners-up are chosen by public nominees²¹.

Health Volservnet Project

The Health Volservnet Project is the result of a partnership agreement signed in April 2007 between the Ministry of Health, the Elderly and Community Care and SOS Malta. Its overall aim is to recruit and co-ordinate volunteers for the provision of non-clinical and non-medical services, which assist and support patients, relatives and other service users of the Mater Dei Hospital and in the wider community. The project also facilitates the participation of patient representatives and NGOs concerned with health in national health action plans and in influencing health related EU directives. It is administered by Malta Resource Centre.

The volunteer services provided by the initiative focus on activities that enrich and improve patients' stay in hospital and involve non-medical and non-clinical activities. These activities include: grooming assistance; helping visiting relatives to navigate the hospital correctly; reading the newspaper to patients; playing with hospitalised children; operating the mobile library; providing companionship for patients receiving long-term inpatient care; delivering newspapers and doing small errands. Volunteers also provide support to medical staff, who are then able to concentrate more fully on technical aspects²². All volunteers participating in the project are provided with specific training depending on which hospital service they will be allocated to. Individuals and voluntary organisations can access application forms from the web-site of the Malta Resource Centre (MRC) and can also be sent by post.

²¹ The European Knowledge Centre for Youth (partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work (2005, 2006) *Key priorities for youth policies answers on Voluntary Activities Policy*.

²² Malta Solidarity Overseas Service (2005) *SOS Malta Annual Report 2005*. Available at Internet: www.sosmalta.org/file.aspx?f=140

The Health Volservnet Project is supported by Lombard Bank Malta plc, the Panta Lesco Group of Companies, and Air Malta.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local levels

No information was obtained on local authority programmes to promote and support volunteering at local level in Malta. However, churches promote volunteering through the parishes and the Diocese Youth Council²³.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level

Local NGOs have a long tradition of sending volunteers abroad on short-term assignments. This is particularly true for areas, which are geographically close to due to the relatively low costs involved and for accessibility reasons. Most members of the NGO Platform are primarily involved in sending volunteers abroad.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the regulatory framework in place for the voluntary sector in Malta. A number of different elements within the regulatory section are examined, covering: the general legal framework; the legal framework in place for individual volunteers, organisations engaging volunteers and profit-making organisations; and the relevant insurance and protection of volunteers.

3.1 General legal framework

In general, the voluntary sector is governed by the Voluntary Organisations Act, which entered into force in 2007.

Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering

Up until introduction of the new law regulating the functioning of the third sector, most voluntary organisations were self-regulated. Since the Voluntary Organisations Act was published in 2007, the basic criteria governing the voluntary sector are regulated by a legal framework. More specifically, the Act defines:

- the attributes necessary to qualify as an NGO;
- the term ‘volunteer’;
- the position and the role of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations;
- the position and the role of the Council for the Voluntary Sector;
- the role and conduct of the Board of Appeal and the right of appeal ;
- the rules governing the enrolment of a voluntary organisation on the Register of Voluntary Organisations; and
- the setting up of the Voluntary Organisations Fund.

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

²³ Youth Partnership, Council of Europe, European Commission (2008) *Questionnaire on Voluntary Activities – Malta*.

There do not appear to be any codes of conduct, which govern self-regulation in the voluntary sector.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

There is no specific legal framework for individual volunteers in Malta as the Voluntary Organisations Act does not pay particular attention to volunteers. Although the Act addresses the institutions responsible for volunteering and voluntary organisations in general, there is no reference to volunteer as individuals other than a definition of the term 'volunteer'. The Act defines a volunteer as 'a person who provides unremunerated services through or for a voluntary organisation'.

Individuals are not required to obtain specific permission to engage in voluntary activities and there are no specific restrictions in place which limit participation in volunteering activities (for example, requiring unemployed individuals to undertake reasonable step to find employment in parallel to taking part in volunteering activities or time limitations on the number of hours spent volunteering per week).

Provisions for specific categories

There are no legal provisions relating to different categories of volunteers - such as, employees; self-employed individuals; individuals receiving benefits and/or social welfare; individuals receiving a pension; etc. All individuals are allowed to volunteer. Young people who are unemployed and who take part in European Voluntary Service (EVS) voluntary activities abroad will continue to receive their unemployment allowance and benefits.

Support schemes and incentives

While no disadvantages have been identified, which could penalise individuals for taking part in voluntary activities, there are no specific incentives in place to encourage individuals to volunteer.

The lack of support schemes for volunteers in Malta is perceived as a particular challenge by certain stakeholders. Most NGOs, which engage volunteers, are responsible for their insurance – in many cases group insurance is bought. NGOs periodically fundraise to help volunteers going abroad. The only support observed by NGOs is that every year the government allows up to ten individuals working in the civil service to be seconded to NGOs. This means that an individual, who is still on the government's payroll, can work for an NGO for a period of one year, with the possibility of renewal – as such, NGOs are able to access extra staff at no additional cost.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers

The costs associated with voluntary activity vary between different NGOs and different fields of activity. Each NGO has its own policy on how volunteers can claim back the costs of volunteering. Traditionally individuals volunteering abroad paid for their own trips and the associated costs (for example, subsistence). Some NGOs have now joined Europe-wide schemes to send volunteers abroad (such as the GLAN project) – as a result they are able to access some funding, such as help with training costs. Some NGOs also have an internal policy to reimburse transportation costs (when a volunteer must travel to get to their voluntary activity) or to provide a basic allowance for volunteers abroad.

Interviewees highlighted the lack of access to funds as a particular challenge. NGOs spend a significant proportion of their time fundraising and most volunteers must bear the cost of their voluntary activities themselves – in nearly all cases volunteers on short-term assignments must pay for their own costs. As sources of funding are very limited, NGOs use up a lot of their energy to cover operating costs.

No information was given on taxation rules concerning reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers.

Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

No information received on this question.

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

Existing subsidies linked to the establishment of a voluntary organisation are directly linked to taxation issues. While no specific subsidies were identified by interviewees, the Voluntary Organisations Act states that voluntary organisations that satisfy the necessary requirements and obtain a certificate of registration can benefit from various measures. One main advantage is the possibility to make public collections and to advertise for donations without the need of a licence from the commissioner of police. The law also states that enrolled voluntary organisations can:

- receive or benefit from grants, sponsorships or other financial aid from government or any entity controlled by the government;
- receive or benefit exemptions, privileges or other entitlements in terms of any law;
- be party to contracts and other engagements, whether remunerated or not, for the carrying out of services for the achievement of its 'social purpose' at the government's request or any entity controlled by Government.

Organisations with 'social purposes' will qualify for the greatest privileges. Those with other purposes will benefit from the minimum status enjoyed by all organisations. Although they will still qualify for enrolment as 'voluntary organisations', they will not necessarily qualify for the same level of support by the state.

While there is no data available concerning the taxation rules on income generated through fundraising, the law on voluntary organisations states that the minister responsible for social policy with the concurrence of the Minister responsible for finance, can make regulations relating to the fiscal status of voluntary organisations. As such, they may establish the criteria for granting any exemption from any law relating to taxation. For instance, the income of a youth club or youth centre, which is organised and operated exclusively for pastoral purposes shall, upon the approval of the Minister of Finance, be exempt from tax, provided no part of its income is available for the personal benefit of any proprietor or member thereof. The provisions do not exempt such youth club or youth centre from the filling of income tax returns.

The current practice is for the Commissioner for Inland Revenue to vet voluntary organisations to ensure whether they are eligible for exemption from the Income Tax Act. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the tax regime is regressive and inconsistently applied. Some organisations are apparently taxed on gross income, others on net income. The basis for interpreting the rules is difficult to ascertain.

In order to address this issue, a consultation was commenced with the Inland Revenue Department as the Commissioner's Office initiative with the aim of starting a process whereby all fiscal exemptions which can currently be found sporadically in Maltese laws are combined and streamlined in a manner that administrators of voluntary organisations will be able to benefit from better. The office of the Commissioner is undergoing a review of the fiscal laws in so far as these affect or relate to NGOs.

In addition, the current VAT Act is contemplating a VAT classification for voluntary organisations (following an EU directives policy) – however, this has not yet been translated

into the language of the classification developed for NGOs so as not to create confusion in the implementation of this law.

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

Certain private companies have introduced specific support schemes to support employees wishing to take part in voluntary activities. Some employers facilitate participation by granting employees paid or unpaid special leave, for instance, during youth related national campaigns. In other cases, employees are also allowed to engage in a year/period of voluntary service in a third world country.

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

According to data from 2005, there is no specific social protection of volunteers in place in Malta.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

The following section details the economic dimension of volunteering in Malta. Research highlights an apparent lack of detailed information on this subject in Malta – indeed there is very little information available concerning the funding arrangements for volunteering and no information relating to the economic value of volunteering.

4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

National budget allocated to volunteering

There is no data available on the national annual budget allocated to volunteering. As a result, there is no data available on how funding is allocated to voluntary activities (for example, by sector, region or organisational type). However, it is worth noting that interviewees did not identify any tensions between the rules on state aid and the allocation of grants, subsidies and other donations (such as, land or real estate) to volunteering activities.

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

A total income of EUR 37 million was reported by the NGOs. Donations accounted for 44% of a total income, according to the survey carried out by the National Statistics Office. Services provided by the NGOs generated 22% of the total income. This was followed by government subsidies and international grants (19%), other income (14%) and membership fees (2%) (see Table 6). Organisations performing social work activities generated most of the income out of all NGOs²⁴.

²⁴ Data have been collected from a postal survey that was conducted amongst 330 NGOs in Malta and Gozo, with main activities relating to veterinary services, social work (both with and without accommodation), education, human health, activities of religious organisations and other organisations.

When looking at social welfare NGOs, their income as a whole has increased by 13% between 2001 and 2004²⁵. The largest portion of income in 2004 came from donations, with 31.4 % of the total income, followed by income from services provided with 22.2% and government contributions with 22.1%. Grants from the European Commission made up the lowest percentage of income for NGOs from all categories, these made up 0.1 per cent in total (See Table 7)²⁶.

Table 6 : Income distribution in NGOs

Type	Total
Membership fees	634,793
Private donations; fundraising activities	16,526,410
Government subsidies and international grants	7,205,000
Income from services provided	8,084,924
Other income	4,917,730
Total income	37,368,856

Source: News Release 230/2008, National Statistics Office, Malta.

Table 7: Distribution of income in social welfare NGOs

Type	Income			
	2001	2002	2003	2004
Membership contributions	412,135	525,827	528,606	437,648
Government contributions	2,028,359	2,144,515	2,121,232	2,238,649
Grants from the EU Commission	-	-	12,057	5,759
Donations	2,417,526	2,992,534	3,483,724	3,179,057
Fundraising activities	880,321	997,348	1,029,362	1,375,877
Other services	1,861,201	1,698,441	1,992,300	2,252,272
Other	1,367,638	1,513,234	834,113	647,482
Total income	8,967,180	9,871,900	10,001,394	10,136,744

Source: National Statistics Office, Malta, 2004.

It is also worth mentioning that the Voluntary Organisations Act established the Voluntary Organisations Fund, which is administered by the National Council for the Voluntary Sector. This Fund may include part of the fees earned by the public registrar from registrations of legal persons, unclaimed funds from donations and public allocations as well as funds from organisations which are wound up as stated in the draft law. The objectives of the Fund are to assist and support all enrolled voluntary organisations through education, management support and financial grants²⁷.

In terms of the transparency of funding, the majority of NGOs were transparent even before the new legislation came into force but the external verification is even after the new legal framework was introduced (but mainly by the bigger NGOs who could afford an external auditor). At the moment, even the small NGOs which have limited financial resources have to find a way to do it. It is particularly challenging small NGOs which are mainly staffed by volunteers and which often have very small budgets.

²⁵ Data has been collected from a total of 149 social welfare NGOs.

²⁶ National Statistics Office (2004) Social Welfare-Oriented Non-Governmental Organisations. Malta.

²⁷ Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (2005) White Paper on Strengthening the Voluntary Sector. http://www.msp.gov.mt/documents/ngo/strengthening_voluntary_sector.pdf

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

According to the Maltese Voluntary Organisations Council there is no information available on SSGIs in Malta.

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

There is no data currently available on the economic value of volunteering in Malta.

Income generated through volunteering

There is no information available on the income generated through volunteering in Malta.

Issues of service substitution and job substitution

Interviewees did not identify any risk that certain volunteering activities could, in part, replace services provided by the state (service substitution) or that voluntary activities could replace employment in Malta (job substitution).

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

This section examines the social and cultural dimension of volunteering, in particular how voluntary activities can benefit volunteers, beneficiaries of voluntary services, as well as the wider community. It also looks at the factors, which motivate individuals to volunteer.

5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Volunteering is a strong manifestation of the greatest universal values such as respect, tolerance, charity, altruism and commitment, which should be channelled from generation to generation. These values are today threatened by increased materialism and a 'want it now' culture. Volunteering plays a vital role in developing a sustainable and effective civil society. It can be argued that a strong civil society is also a sign of a strong democratic society. As such, a vibrant volunteering sector can contribute to a vibrant democracy.

In addition, volunteering can also contribute to economic and social policy goals at national level. The voluntary sector often attracts dedicated members of society who have the skills and knowledge that matches, and sometimes even exceeds, government expertise in specific areas. At the same time, by being closer to local communities and thus their problems and needs, NGOs are an important source of support and information for state authorities when designing national policies.

Volunteers

In addition to gaining a sense of achievement and of having put something back into society, voluntary activities also enable volunteers to acquire new and relevant skills, which can also be transferred to their personal and professional lives. For example, by volunteering in youth clubs and youth organisations, young people can acquire key interpersonal skills (such as, team-building, assertiveness and negotiation) and can learn valuable crucial lessons about active participation and citizenship.

Community

Communities can also benefit from voluntary activities. Local charities, voluntary organisations and grassroots community groups often provide locally based services and activities, campaign and give a voice to local people, and help people to get involved in their communities. They also provide an important means for individuals to influence their own lives and society at large. Societies with a history of volunteering have a stronger civic

culture, and the trust that emerges from a civil society tends to result in more effective democratic institutions and healthier economies.

Beneficiaries

Volunteering is perceived as very important for those who are enjoying and benefitting from the services that are being carried out by voluntary workers. In Malta, it is particularly strong in the field of social inclusion where volunteers help people who suffer from the disability or marginalisation.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

Volunteers are motivated by a range of different factors – these can vary from wanting to help certain groups in society (such as children or young people, people with disabilities, or elderly people) to wanting to use certain skills for a good cause (such as, medical knowledge or gardening skills) or to make a difference to a particular cause (for example, environmental conservation or the fight against poverty). Interviewees also emphasised that volunteers who run NGOs gain satisfaction from helping others and from helping to make Malta a better place.

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The following section looks at how volunteering in Malta has been integrated into education and training, both in terms of the recognition of volunteer's skills and competences and the education and training opportunities available to them.

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

There is no general system of recognising skills gained through volunteering. However, the university structure in Malta includes schemes that allow NGOs to create and propose a programme which can count as an optional credit for fulltime students who wish to volunteer. There are some voluntary organisations that are taking this opportunity.

Interestingly, there are two opposite opinions that exist in Malta regarding certification of volunteers' skills. One is that volunteerism should not be certified because this would change the idea into something self-definable and would undermine the intrinsic value of voluntary activities. The supporters of this opinion are cautious about an instrumental approach towards volunteering as a helpful tool for the labour market. They claim that say that there are certain values linked to volunteerism and that being a volunteer is a life choice. Thus, there is no need to recognise volunteers' skills. Another view is that volunteering includes informal learning and there is no reason why not to capture this knowledge by valuing and quantifying it. Accordingly, many employers, particularly in the social sphere, would like to see applicants who have in their CVs information that they were working for a volunteering organisation.

Participants/volunteers of the European Voluntary Service (Action 2.1) of the Youth in Action Programme (as with other Actions within the programme) are given a Youth Pass Certificate which is issued by the applicant organisation for the volunteers through an online system. Non-formal recognition is also given to voluntary service outside EVS.

Volunteering is also being increasingly encouraged in higher education, in particular at Maltese universities. In addition to the core courses that all students are obliged to complete, students are also allowed a certain number of optional credits that can be gained through working in the community and volunteer work.

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

The training of volunteers in the NGDO sector is generally the responsibility of the sending organisation. Each NGO has a slightly different ways of approaching training for volunteers. Most of NGOs are very strong in terms of preparatory phase of the training and offer support while volunteers are abroad. The weak point in this context is the reintegration of volunteers and support for them when they are back and try to find a new direction in their life. One way this problem is being address is to organise meetings for volunteers after they come from abroad to discuss how they can continue their voluntary work in Malta. The NGDO Platform members plan to intensify sharing their experiences and ideas on how to improve the reintegration of volunteers after a period aboard.

There are a number of education and training opportunities in place for volunteers across the Maltese voluntary sector.

Training for NGDO members

NGDOs sending volunteers abroad on short-term assignments provide individuals with relevant training and help with practical preparations in the period preceding departure. Long-term volunteers also receive a period of training, which can include language lessons to learn the host country language. For example, through the Trialog project, the NGDO Platform has been sending a number of its members on training seminars abroad. These have included a study visit to Brussels and seminars on a number of themes, including: Democratisation and Civil Society; Gender Issues in Development Policies; Labour Issues and Globalisation; Capacity Building; Human Rights and Development; Debt and Structural Adjustment Policies; and Environment and Development. Members have also taken part in workshops on Fair Trade and Personnel Development Cooperation, as well as a Europe-wide Congress on Global Education and a visiting programme to BOND in UK²⁸.

Seminars and courses for NGO staff and volunteers

The Malta Resource Centre established an agreement with the Foundation for Educational Services to provide part-time courses organisers and part-time professional trainers to train NGO personnel. The Centre provided a number of capacity building courses and seminars for NGOs staff and volunteers and for NGO beneficiaries. Courses provided for NGO volunteers and staff included:

- Relationship Skills;
- Volunteers Management;
- Planning of Resources;
- Problem Solving Decision Making;
- Thinking Skills (Six Thinking Hats);
- Managing information;
- Managing and Coping with Stress;
- Think Skills - Direct Attention Thinking Tools;
- Presentation and Public Speaking skills;

²⁸ The Trialog project, partly funded by the European Commission, was set up by a consortium of NGDOs, led by the Austrian Horizon 3000, to create within the project period from 2000 to 2003, an operating network of people and organisations in candidate countries for whom a common understanding of global development issues is or could be an important topic.

- The Process of Communication Skills;
- Team Building and Motivation Skills.

The total number of participants from different NGOs was 210. The project was part financed by the European Social Fund.

EU Funding Seminars for NGOs

The Malta Resource Centre also organised three half-day seminars on EU Funding for NGOs working in the social field. The seminars involved workshops to train NGO members in the writing skills needed for producing good proposals. The seminars and workshops were organised in collaboration with MIC (Malta EU Information Centre) and with the EUPU (EU Programmes Unit). The Resource Centre has obtained funding through MIC in order to be able to offer the seminars and workshops free of charge. The seminars focused on the following areas:

- introducing EU Funding - the broad picture of EU funding;
- practical information about the Leonardo Da Vinci programmes;
- Youth Programme: information and workshops, applicable solely to youth organisations provided effective information on the five action schemes of the Youth Programme.

Training for unemployed persons

A positive development is a national employment-training scheme organised and paid for by the Employment and Training Corporation (Malta's Public Employment Service) in which unemployed individuals can offer their services to NGOs, which in turn provide training and work experience²⁹.

Training for MGRM Volunteers

Established two years ago, the Malta Gay Rights Movement (MGRM) provides support services, which target gay, lesbian and bi- and trans-sexual (GLBT) young people. During the process of establishing a gay helpline run by voluntary workers, MGRM volunteers received training in collaboration with the government social work agency APPOGG, which has experience in operating a 24-hour helpline³⁰.

7 IMPACT OF EU POLICIES

There has been no clear identifiable impact by EU policies on volunteering in Malta. However, the influence of the EU has affected the NGO sector indirectly as a whole, particularly through Malta's participation in the Structural Funds. In particular, the EU has impacted on the:

- direct participation of NGOs in a committee involved in Malta's EU accession process; and
- active involvement of Maltese NGOs in the implementation of the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion as a result of EU's stress on promoting social dialogue.

²⁹ Caruana, V. (2001) Challenges of Voluntary Work in Malta. Available at Internet: http://www.geocities.com/kopinmalta/voluntary_work.htm [cited 12/10/2009].

³⁰ Report by an international panel of experts appointed by the Council of Europe (2005) Youth policy in Malta. Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport.

In March 2008, the Prime Minister appointed a Parliamentary Secretary responsible for public dialogue within his office. One of the tasks entrusted to the Parliamentary Secretary was that of the refocusing of the government's consultation structures. Accordingly, the following tasks were identified³¹:

- to engage civil society in the EU decision-making process;
- to manage such a consultation process;
- to discuss the impact proposed EU measure could have on Malta, its institutions, its specific sectors and ordinary citizens;
- to establish and maintain dialogue between those participating in the EU decision-making processes;
- to be proactive with regards to EU legislation and policy initiatives;
- to actively support NGOs in their participation in EU programmes and funding; and
- to lead and stimulate a national debate on European ideals, values, objectives and long term strategies.

Certain elements of the European Youth policy have also been seen by interviewees as having had a positive impact on volunteering in Malta – notably the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and the European Union Programme's Agency (EUPA). In general, the EVS is perceived as a very good tool for the implementation and support of voluntary activities undertaken by young people both within Maltese territory and overseas.

It is important to note however, that other EU policies have not had an identifiable impact on volunteering in Malta, according to key stakeholders. These include the EU's policies on: active citizenship; education and training; the internal market; competition; or taxation.

Interviewees have also emphasised that whilst the voluntary sector has made an important contribution to Malta, in some countries its activity is largely hidden, unrecorded and unreported. A long term strategy is needed to inform European society about volunteers, voluntary organisations and voluntary activity to ensure that the voluntary sector benefits from active support and the recognition that its work deserves from across the EU.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Research has highlighted a number of challenges and opportunities, which impact directly on the success of the voluntary sector in Malta.

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

Interviewees reported a number of important challenges facing the voluntary sector in Malta:

- maintaining the independence of NGOs while still making use of the government grant system;
- limited access to funding, which endangers the sustainability of existing projects;

³¹ Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee. Information available at Internet: <http://www.meusac.gov.mt/fme/294/default.aspx> [cited 12/10/2009].

- the constant struggle for funding limits the time NGOs can devote to long-term planning, strategy and vision;
- limited professionalism and over-professionalisation;
- the trend towards career motivated volunteering in order to 'bulk up' CVS, as opposed to genuine commitment to the NGO's cause;
- a lack of human capacity (all volunteers) that makes it difficult to realise the action plan;
- complex procedures to apply for EU grants (e.g. application and instruction materials are often in lengthy manuals that are difficult to access);
- lack of qualified personnel, know-how, and resources to apply for EU grants;
- with regard to EVS, many young people find it difficult to leave the island on a long-term basis as voluntary work gives minimal income;
- the formal recognition of voluntary work;
- the lack of a fiscal framework for NGOs; and
- the need to impress European partners or to obtain funds by local NGOs, which can lead to NGOs distorting information their membership and structures.

In general, the most significant challenge identified by interviewees relates to the funding of the voluntary sector, including the difficulty in obtaining local support for the co-funding of projects and initiatives.

These challenges are being addressed in a number of ways, but there is clearly the need for further development. Specific activities and initiatives include:

- the introduction of the Voluntary Organisations Act, which improved the visibility of Maltese voluntary organisations and which in turn made them more eligible to access grants, loans and funds issued by international bodies.
- a consultation has been commenced with the Inland Revenue Department as the Commissioner's Office initiative with the aim of starting a process whereby all fiscal exemptions which can currently be found sporadically in Maltese laws are combined and streamlined in a manner that administrators of voluntary organisations will be able to benefit from better. The office of the Commissioner is undergoing a review of the fiscal laws in so far as these affect or relate to NGOs.
- the new law on voluntary organisations encourages the registration of voluntary organisations, which improves the transparency of the voluntary sector by making information readily available to the public and fosters professionalism among organisations.
- the establishment of the MEUSAC unit to address the problems faced by voluntary organisations when applying for benefits from the EU.

Interviewees noted that NGDO access to EU financing could be improved by adopting good practice seen in other EU countries. Specifically, that Maltese projects submitting applications for EU funding through various EU programmes should be supported by an agreement from the Foreign Ministry of Malta, which agrees that if the project is chosen to receive EU funding, then the national government will provide co-financing.

Interviewees also suggested that an EU-wide education campaign could be launched to raise public awareness of the plight of certain groups targeted by voluntary groups and NGOs, such as, forcibly displaced individuals. This would help organisations to better

explain their fields of activity and why their cause can make a real difference to people in need of their help.

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

Despite the challenges faced by the voluntary sector in Malta, it is important to note that there are also significant opportunities, which should be taken advantage of. These include:

- little or no problems in finding young people to volunteer;
- a growing trend among voluntary organisations towards cooperation through national and international coalitions and networks in order to share skills and knowledge;
- the strong position of NGOs on the local social welfare support services scene;
- the new legal framework, which provides the NGO sector with a stronger identity, structured systems of NGO representation, and helps to avoid the duplication of services delivered.

Interviewees drew attention to the fact that the availability of motivated and committed volunteers in Malta represented a significant advantage for the further development of the Maltese voluntary sector. It is clear that volunteers are a crucial factor in being able to provide effective voluntary services, which benefit the volunteers themselves, the voluntary organisations and the wider Maltese society.

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