

# Youth Partnership

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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



## CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

### CHAPTER II: MONTENEGRO VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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## 2.1. General context

### Historical developments

The history of voluntarism in Montenegro, according to the publication [“Voluntarism and public institutions”](#), is connected with the tradition of solidarity. According to this study, one of the typical forms of voluntary work in the past was “moba” (which is voluntary, co-operative work group on a farm), which, even today, is still very characteristic in rural areas. Moba is based on community members’ mutual help while doing work that is too large in scale for one family (harvesting, etc.).

The study further states that before the Second World War, people in Montenegro’s local communities usually worked together, building roads or erecting buildings of importance for the community. Sometimes even the ruling class in Montenegro voluntarily participated in this kind of activity. In the period after the Second World War, young people were actively taking part in “youth working action” (in Montenegrin: Omladinske radne akcije (ORA)), organised annually, to contribute to the renovation of the devastated country. Whether and to what extent those labour activities were truly voluntary – or rather obligatory – is a highly debatable issue, which requires a careful analysis of the historical context and the political climate. However, those were occasions where young people from all regions of the country used to gather, work together, socialise, develop communication and other skills, and take steps towards the transition to adulthood. Taking part in these actions was a matter of self-representation in society and the recognition tools were the so-called “outstanding worker badges”. Those actions have been a big inspiration for some young artists and activists.

At that time, voluntarism was stimulated and implemented through community organisations which were active during the communist period in Montenegro such as the Scout Association, the “Gorani” Association, and the Red Cross. These organisations included a large number of young people in their work, while their importance was recognised and also financially supported by the state. Interest in voluntarism fell suddenly with the beginning of the conflict and the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, both within community organisations (transformed into non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the middle of the 1990s) and through other types of community engagement. The study “Voluntarism and public institutions” states that “low standards, examples of corruption, the sudden enrichment of some individuals, economic collapse, etc. all resulted in a huge loss of trust of people in state and public institutions. In most cases, it contributed to the feeling that voluntarism was an ‘illusion for naive people’ or ‘working for nothing’”.

The study describes that the 1990s in Montenegro can be recognised by the establishment of new civil society organisations with a strong focus on human rights, promotion of peace and solidarity, which emerged as an answer to the violent actions of leading political structures in the country and neighbouring countries. Many volunteers were engaged in providing support for refugees, as well as Montenegrin women, children and youth, who were facing extreme poverty and political discrimination during those years. In that period, the most recognisable

voluntary work was that led and implemented by women and youth NGOs, especially in the sphere of promotion of non-violence and peace building (ANIMA from Kotor, SOS telephone for women and children victims of violence from Podgorica, Niksic, Montenegrin women's lobby, Post-pessimists of Montenegro and many other NGOs). Young people were organising themselves into non-formal groups, joining already established organisations or creating new NGOs in order to volunteer and support those in need, or to make their voices heard. Since the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers, Montenegrin society has slowly been going back to the idea that volunteering is not just some relic from the communist past, but something important for the development of a democratic society.

Volunteering was the focus of several civil society organisations during that decade, and hundreds of volunteers were engaged in national voluntary activities every year through short-term and long-term volunteering programmes of different organisations. Through the establishment of the [National Voluntary Service ADP-Zid](#) in 2001 and its partnership with and membership of European and worldwide voluntary service organisations' networks (Alliance of Voluntary Service Organisations, Service Civil International (SCI), International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE)), youngsters got the opportunity to take part in facilitated short-term and mid-term volunteering abroad. Through the work of the [South East European Youth Network](#) (SEEYN) since it was established in 1999, hundreds of young people have taken part in a regional exchange of volunteers that was financed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs via the FRESTA programme for peace and stability.

The importance of volunteering has been recognised by the civil society and the state in general, which is illustrated by the fact is that Montenegro was [one of the first countries](#) in the region to adopt the National Strategy for Volunteerism Development (2010-2015) (Strategija razvoja volonterizma u Crnoj Gori 2010- 2015) and a law regulating volunteer work.

## **Main concepts**

Under Article 2 of the Law on Voluntary Work ([Zakon o volonterskom radu](#)) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 26/10, 31/10, 14/12 and 48/15), which has been in force since 2010, volunteering services are defined as “voluntary and free investment of time, knowledge and skills for performing of services or activities in favour of another person or for the general welfare of the society”.

This Law in Article 4 states that: “A volunteer shall be a person who shall voluntarily and free of charge perform volunteering services. A volunteer may be a domestic or foreign natural person of working age or a person with a disability who is qualified for performing particular voluntary work”.

According to Article 11, the following actions are not considered as volunteering:

- 1) the performance of services or activities that one person is required to provide to another person under the law or other regulations;
- 2) the performance of specific obligations in accordance with court decisions and

judgments;

- 3) the performance of services or activities that are common in family, friendly or neighbourly relations (free help within a group of friends or neighbours, etc.).

However, the [Youth Strategy](#) 2017-2021 (Strategija za mlade 2017-2021) recognises that volunteering defined by this Law is treated as a specific form of labour-legal relationship, rather than a voluntary and private initiative of citizens. There [are also some assessments](#) by CSOs which state that the legal definition is an unsatisfactory and unclear definition, and that it differs from the CSOs' point of view that volunteering is the core of democracy and citizens' participation in the socio-economic development of society, rather than unpaid work.

## **2.2. Administration and governance of youth volunteering**

### **Governance**

According to the Law on Voluntary Work, supervision over the implementation of the Law and the regulations governing volunteering is performed by the ministry in charge of labour issues through the Labour Inspectorate. When the Law was adopted, the ministry in charge of labour was the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, whose responsibilities were taken over by the Ministry of Economic Development through the Decree on the State Administration's Organisation and Manner of Work in 2020 ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", Nos. 118/2020, 121/2020, 1/2021 and 2/2021). The Law also stipulates that the Employment Agency of Montenegro is responsible for keeping a central database of the organisers, beneficiaries of volunteering and volunteers, based on the data provided by the organisers of volunteering who are obliged to keep records of concluded contracts on volunteering.

Concerning, specifically, youth volunteering the main actor involved in policy making was the Ministry of Sports and Youth until the end of 2020 when the responsibilities in the area of youth policy were taken over by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the Sports and Youth Directorate.

At the local level, according to the [Law on Youth](#) ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", Nos. 025/19 of 30.04.2019 and 4 027/191 of 17.05.2019), municipalities adopt a local youth action plan, which contains measures and activities of youth policy at the local level, to meet the interests and needs of young people. These action plans should be harmonised with the [Youth Strategy](#), which includes measures relating to youth volunteering.

Civil society organisations mainly have the role of initiators and contributors towards implementing the policy measures regarding youth volunteering set by the government.

## **Cross-sectoral co-operation**

There is no official mechanism for cross-sectoral co-operation dedicated exclusively to youth volunteering.

One of the possible mechanisms for cross-sectoral co-operation, although not dedicated solely to youth volunteering, is the councils for youth which are planned to be established at the national and local levels. The Law on Youth stipulates that the Council for Youth will be created in order to foster the development of youth policy. It will involve representatives of state administration bodies in charge of youth policy, labour affairs and education affairs, representative of legal entities that govern youth services and two representatives of NGOs that implement youth policy. For the same purpose a municipality may also establish a local council for youth as an expert and advisory body, which should consist of representatives of municipality bodies in charge of youth policy and NGOs that implement youth policy.

## **2.3. National strategy on youth volunteering**

### **Existence of a national strategy**

There is no specific national strategy on youth volunteering in Montenegro. [The Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) (Strategija za mlade 2017-2021), adopted by the Government of Montenegro in September 2016, introduces a set of measures for improvement of youth volunteering. Action plans for the implementation of the strategy were adopted and implemented for 2017, 2018 and 2019. Currently, the two-year Action Plan 2020-2021 for the implementation of the strategy is in force.

### **Scope and contents**

It is recognised in the Youth Strategy that volunteerism is not that well developed among youth and that young people participate in volunteering principally through the activities of NGOs. Therefore, it states that the mechanisms for youth volunteering should be improved within the formal education system and other environments. It is acknowledged that it is necessary to promote the system of values of volunteerism and how both the individuals and the state can benefit from volunteering.

The Youth Strategy defines six key priorities – key outcomes – concerning Montenegrin youth, and some of them include measures on volunteering, specifically Key Outcome C: “Young people are active citizens, involved, motivated, proactive and participating in decision-making and community development processes, in the creation of policies and their implementation.” The focus of the youth policy regarding this outcome is on “putting in place mechanisms/systems for fostering activism: so that activism can become a value that is systematically fostered, prized and promoted among youth; so that institutional mechanisms for participation in public decision

making can be made more approachable and more adequate to young people; and to foster and promote volunteerism”.

The Youth Strategy has planned, as one of its main desired outcomes, that young people have access to quality cultural content as creators and consumers. To achieve this, it proposes supporting the young creators of culture and media content and developing volunteering in cultural institutions, festivals and manifestations. The strategy recognises that young people have limited access to mentors and role models in the domain of culture, and that the culture and practice of volunteering would enable young people to gain certain knowledge, skills and experience.

The strategy does not contain objectives or measures relevant to inclusive volunteering and it does not identify any specific target groups within the youth population whose participation in voluntary activities should be fostered.

### **Responsible authority**

Until 2020, the ministry responsible for the implementation, co-ordination and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy was the Ministry of Sports and Youth. In 2020, based on the Decree on the State Administration’s Organisation and Manner of Work ([Uredba o organizaciji i načinu rada državne uprave](#)) (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, Nos. 118/2020, 121/2020, 1/2021 and 2/2021), the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the Sports and Youth Directorate took over the responsibilities in the area of youth policy.

As yet, there have been three reports on realisation of action plans for implementation of the Youth Strategy for 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. The reports include information on monitoring of the implementation of activities concerning youth volunteering.

### **Revisions/updates**

It is to be noted that the National Youth Strategy does not recognise volunteering as one of the key priorities, contrary to the previous National Youth Action Plan 2006-2011, which had a clear focus on volunteering. The previous youth strategy had objectives connected to the promotion of volunteering, creating an environment for it, and supporting youth volunteering, including intergenerational solidarity and inclusion. The importance of youth volunteering was also recognised by the National Strategy for Volunteerism Development 2010-2015.

## **2.4. Laws and regulations on youth volunteering**

### **Stand-alone law**

There is no national stand-alone law on youth volunteering.

### **Other official documents containing guidelines on youth volunteering**

Volunteering, in general, is regulated by the Law on Voluntary Work ([Zakon o volonterskom](#)

[radu](#)) adopted in 2010 (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 26/10, 31/10, 14/12 and 48/15). The law defines a number of institutes and issues relevant to volunteerism, including a definition of volunteers, their rights and obligations, the definition of the organisers of volunteer work and their rights and obligations, mandatory elements of the volunteering, international volunteering, development and monitoring of volunteerism, etc.

Two years after adoption, in 2012, the government adopted the amendments to the Law on Voluntary Work introducing the possibility to conclude a contract on volunteering with a person who wants to gain professional education and special knowledge and skills to work in his profession (Article 12a). In that case, the Law states that volunteering is recognised as work experience and as a prerequisite for taking the qualification exam. In Article 7, a new paragraph was added: “If the Contract on volunteering is concluded as in the case of Article 12a of this Law, volunteering may not exceed 40 hours a week.”

Before the option to recognise volunteering as work experience was introduced, the law adopted in 2010 stated that volunteering may last up to six hours per day and no longer than 25 hours per week. This novelty of going to 40 hours a week opened the door to the replacement of paid staff with unpaid staff and included violation of young people’s labour rights since the “volunteer” is working full time – eight hours per day, five days per week – without having the other rights that he/she would have if they had a contract signed following the Labour Law.

The new amendments to the Law on Voluntary Work that came into force in 2015 in Article 34a foresee, that: “a legal entity organiser of voluntary work shall be fined for a misdemeanour in the amount €500 to €20 000 if: it concludes a contract on volunteer work with a minor without the written consent of the parent, adopter or guardian; if children under the age of 15 are engaged in volunteer work”.

Montenegrin legislation does not support corporate volunteering, and Article 5 states that “the organiser of volunteering may be: a state authority, public administration, local government, institution in the field of social and child welfare, health care, culture, sports, religious communities, local or international non-governmental organisations registered in Montenegro, as well as other domestic and foreign legal entities whose main goal is not to gain or distribute profit”.

Other relevant laws containing guidelines on youth volunteering include the Law on Youth and the Law on non-governmental organisations.

The new [Law on Youth](#) adopted by the Parliament of Montenegro in 2019 (Zakon o mladima) (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, Nos. 025/19 of 30.04.2019 and 4 027/191 of 17.05.2019) stipulates that “young people contribute to creation and nurture of social values and the development of the society through different forms of volunteer activities” (Article 9). Volunteerism is according to this Law one of the principles of youth policy (Article 7), and the Law prescribes that public interest in the field of youth policy is, among other things, to promote youth volunteerism (Article 5).

The Law on Non-governmental Organisations ([Zakon o nevladinim organizacijama](#)) (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, Nos. 039/11 of 04.08.2011, 037/17 of 14.06.2017) makes it possible for young people who are 14 and over to be founders of non-governmental organisations (Article 10), which creates a legal framework for implementing youth-led voluntary activities and achieving a higher level of direct involvement of young people in community development.

### **Regulations on standards of quality**

There are no official documents establishing quality standards to be applied to the organisations and projects in which young volunteers participate, and relevant criteria for their evaluation.

### **Target groups**

Concerning the target groups within the youth population in relation to volunteering, the Law on Voluntary Work only states that the minimum age of engaging in volunteering is 15 years, and it defines that a person aged 15 to 18 years may conclude a Contract on volunteering only with the written consent of a parent, adoptive parent or guardian (Article 9). Article 10 on the prohibition of discrimination of a volunteer or a beneficiary of volunteering stipulates that “any direct or indirect discrimination of a volunteer and beneficiary of volunteering, in terms of gender, origin, language, race, religion, colour, age, pregnancy, medical condition, disability, ethnicity, marital status, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, political or other opinions, social origin, property, membership in political and trade union organisations or other personal characteristics is prohibited”.

## **2.5. Youth volunteering at national level**

### **National Programme for Youth Volunteering**

There is no national programme for youth volunteering in the form of a general, nation-wide programme organised, monitored and funded by the state.

There are several youth volunteering schemes in place at the national level. In the scope of formal education, volunteering is a part of regular extracurricular activities in many secondary schools, which is supported by a detailed programme, “Voluntarism and Youth – Education programme for extracurricular activities in gymnasiums and vocational high schools”, developed by the Bureau for Education Services, Centre for Vocational Education and ADP-Zid. Volunteering at the national level is also closely connected to the projects and programmes of non-governmental organisations.

### **Funding**

There is no specific budget allocated specifically to youth volunteering schemes. Non-governmental organisations that implement youth policy in line with the Youth Strategy 2017-

2021 and its action plans can be financially supported through the public calls based on the Law on Non-governmental Organisations. NGOs' projects have been implemented in line with the six key priorities of the Strategy, one of which relates to the active participation of young people and volunteering.

For instance, in 2018, support was given to 25 projects which incorporated measures and activities related to the key priority C of the National Youth Strategy – “Young people are active citizens, involved, motivated, proactive, and participate in decision and policy-making and development of their communities”, including measures for developing volunteer spirit and volunteerism among young people. According to [the report on the realisation](#) of the Action plan in 2018, €121 198 were allocated to the support of the projects, but there is no information on how much of that sum was dedicated to supporting youth volunteering. According to the [report on implementation](#) of the Action Plan for 2019, €15 000 was dedicated to projects aimed at promoting volunteerism and supporting activities of volunteering clubs and services. In addition, the report includes information on celebrating International Volunteer Day, but it does not specify the amount allocated to this activity.

### **Characteristics of youth volunteering**

There are no official statistics on the level and trends of participation of young people in volunteering. The [research of needs](#) of young people conducted in 2019, commissioned in the process of preparing the Programme on Achieving Public Interest in the Field of Youth Policy for 2020 by the Ministry of Sports and Youth ([Program ostvarivanja javnog interesa u oblasti omladinske politike za 2020. godinu](#)), indicated that younger respondents had participated more in volunteer work, whereas young people with lower qualifications had participated less in volunteering, but there is no specific or detailed information on this topic.

The Youth Strategy lists “the share of young people who did volunteer work over the previous month” as an indicator of one of the key outcomes (p. 82). The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework developed within this strategy specifies that it is necessary to carry out a national survey to collect data for this indicator and to add national disaggregation by region, gender and vulnerability. However, this has not been completed and the reports on the implementation of action plans for 2017, 2018 and 2019 do not include information on this indicator.

### **Support for young volunteers**

According to the Law on Voluntary Work, organisers and beneficiaries of volunteering are obliged to ensure adequate conditions and resources for volunteering and to cover the compensation of the previously agreed expenses (Article 21). The Law also stipulates that organisers of volunteering should insure a volunteer in case of injury or occupational disease during the duration of the engagement (Article 22).

In the case of international volunteers, the Law also states that the organisers of volunteering should cover the compensation of the previously agreed expenses related to the accommodation, training and travel (Article 17).

### **Quality assurance**

The comprehensive system of quality assurance of the programmes and schemes of youth volunteering in Montenegro has not been established.

There are some mechanisms in place to monitor youth volunteering programmes, projects and schemes. One of them is monitoring how many people are participating in volunteering through a database kept by the Employment Agency of Montenegro. Namely, according to the Law on Voluntary Work, the organiser of volunteering is obliged to keep records of concluded contracts. The Employment Agency has a responsibility to keep a central database of the organisers, beneficiaries of volunteering and volunteers, based on data provided by the organisers of volunteering. It should be noted that there are many volunteering programmes [organised without signing a contract](#), since the Law is seen as restrictive (more information in Chapter 2.8), which is why this database is likely to be incomplete.

NGOs implementing projects that include volunteering, which are financially supported through public calls, submit reports on project implementation in line with the established procedures. They report on the number of young people taking part in volunteering activities and, depending on the project, include some additional information in their reports. However, there are no general criteria, indicators or standards used to assess the quality of programmes and schemes of youth volunteering.

## **2.6. Cross-border mobility programmes**

### **EU programmes**

Montenegro is a partner country of the European Solidarity Corps, the main EU programme providing volunteering opportunities. The current status of Montenegro opens the following opportunities for organisations and young people:

- organisations from Montenegro can apply for and receive a Quality Label (if they meet the quality requirements), which is a prerequisite for participation in the European Solidarity Corps;
- organisations from Montenegro that hold a Quality Label or a valid Erasmus+ European Voluntary Service accreditation can participate in volunteering activities as partners and can send young people to short-term and long-term volunteering activities, as well as accommodate young people from European Solidarity Corps participating countries.

There are several organisations from Montenegro that hold a Quality Label (an up-to-date list can be found at the [European Youth Portal](#)).

Regular national reporting and monitoring of youth participation in the EU voluntary programmes have not yet been established. The [European Commission Progress Report for 2020](#) stated that, for the first time, six young volunteers from Montenegro participated in the European Solidarity Corps.

### **Other programmes**

Montenegro does not have international volunteering programmes that are funded by the state (in the amount of at least 50% of the total budget) and implemented on a larger scale, i.e. implemented on a wide spectrum in the country.

However, it is important to mention that National Voluntary Service (ADP-Zid) is involved in two networks: Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations and Service Civil International (SCI), which offer cross-border volunteering opportunities of a differing format, such as work camps. Moreover, different youth mobility programmes are also supported by the Regional Youth Co-operation Office (RYCO), which is an international organisation financed by the governments of the region and supported by the EU and other donors. A consortium led by RYCO in association with national voluntary services in the Western Balkans region has recently developed the first [youth volunteering exchange programme](#) across the region, through a project supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers**

The Law on Voluntary Work stipulates that a person who is not a Montenegrin citizen has the right to perform volunteering in the territory of Montenegro under the condition of having a permit for temporary or permanent residence and if other conditions set for volunteers within the Law are fulfilled (Article 19). In terms of rights and obligations, international volunteers are equal to volunteers who are Montenegrin citizens.

The conditions for a foreigner's stay in Montenegro are regulated by the Law on Foreigners ([Zakon o strancima](#)) (National Gazette Nos. 12/18 and 3/2019). Information on visa regimes for foreign citizens can be found at the web portal of the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#). The Law on Foreigners stipulates that a temporary residence permit for volunteer service within the European Voluntary Service may be issued to a foreign national aged between 18 and 30, who fulfils the requirements for permits issuing outlined by the Law and who evidences the grounds for the application by submitting the concluded contract on volunteer service (Article 58).

## **2.7. Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities**

### **Information providers**

Promoting volunteerism among youth is one of the tasks relating to achieving public interest in

youth policy stipulated in the Law on Youth. This is conducted by the ministry in charge of youth policy, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and Sports and Youth Directorate as well as other national bodies with competencies in the youth field.

At a local level, municipalities are supported to establish youth services (youth clubs and youth centres), which are the mechanisms for practising youth work. Youth clubs share important information to young people on their web pages and social media pages, including information on volunteering opportunities. There is an intention, stated in the “Programme on Achieving Public Interest in the Field of Youth Policy” adopted by the government in January 2020, to open youth services in every municipality in Montenegro.

Several schools and faculties have [established volunteering clubs](#), which also disseminate information on volunteering opportunities. Teachers are promoting volunteerism through the offer of extracurricular activities in the school environment and local community, as well as the media, both traditional (printed and TV) and new media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and other social media).

Many civil society organisations, especially at the local level, organise campaigns for attracting volunteers who are mainly involved in environmental projects or projects that include the provision of social services to some of the vulnerable groups.

There are several websites for disseminating information on volunteering opportunities at the national and international level including the following, which have been supported through national calls for the financing of youth projects:

- [www.angazuise.info](http://www.angazuise.info) – web portal founded by non-profit association ADP-Zid;
- [www.mladiinfo.me](http://www.mladiinfo.me) – web portal founded by non-profit association Mladiinfo Montenegro.

Relevant information on EU programmes for volunteering are also disseminated via the EU Info Centre – [www.euic.me](http://www.euic.me).

Young people are using their voices in the promotion of volunteering through YouTube statements such as [Statement by the member of the volunteer club “Slobodan Skerovic”](#) or [Volunteer club of Gymnasium Cetinje](#).

### **Key initiatives**

Awareness-raising activities about youth volunteering are implemented by different civil society organisations at the local and national levels. [International Volunteer Day](#), mandated by the UN General Assembly, has been celebrated on 5 December in Montenegro for more than 15 years. Celebrating International Volunteer Day has been regularly included in the action plans for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy in the period 2017-2021. It is viewed as a unique chance for volunteers and organisations to celebrate their efforts, share their values, and promote their work among their communities, civil society organisations, government authorities, media and the private sector. On this day the annual volunteer prize is given to

individuals, civil society organisations, companies, media or institutions who have contributed to the development of volunteering in Montenegro.

Since 2014, there have been a considerable number of activities and campaigns contributing to the promotion of volunteering. Montenegro was involved in a worldwide “Let’s do it” campaign for cleaning up illegal waste. In 2016, more than 10 800 people in Montenegro [participated in “Let’s do it!” actions](#). More recently, in April 2021, Good Deeds Day was [celebrated for the second time](#) involving a large number of young people.

## **2.8. Skills recognition**

### **Policy framework**

Montenegro does not have a unique top-level policy that enables the transferability and recognition of skills and competences acquired through volunteering. However, there are some mechanisms in place. The Law on Voluntary Work specifies that volunteers should have a volunteer booklet (in Montenegrin: volonterska knjizica), issued by the local authority (Article 29). After the termination of volunteering, an organiser of volunteering enters information in a volunteer booklet about the period of volunteering service, the type of volunteering and training that the volunteer gained during volunteering.

If the contract on volunteering is concluded with a person who wants to obtain professional education and knowledge and skills to work in their profession, according to Article 12a of the Law on Voluntary Work, volunteering is recognised as work experience and as a condition for taking the qualification exam.

### **Existing arrangements**

There is no mechanism for the recognition and validation of knowledge and skills that young people acquire through volunteering. There is only a possibility of verifying the knowledge and skills gained through non-formal education leading to a professional qualification, which is carried out by the Examination Centre of Montenegro.

The Youth Strategy stipulates that the procedures for the recognition of knowledge and skills should be simplified and easily accessible. It also specifies that information about the possibilities of recognising the knowledge acquired through non-formal education should be made available to various target groups.

The Youthpass certificate has been used by youth organisations. However, according to the findings stated in the National Youth Strategy it has been used rarely and, in general, it has not yet been recognised as valuable by the formal education or business sector.

## **2.9. Current debates and reforms**

The Law on Voluntary Work has been the subject of many criticisms. It is concluded in several

reports that the Montenegrin Law on Voluntary Work treats volunteering as a special form of labour law relations, rather than a voluntary, individual citizens' initiative (Balkan Civil Society Development Network 2019, European Commission 2019). Many initiatives have been implemented since 2010 when this law was adopted, which resulted in changes and amendments to the Law, including initiatives for writing a new law that will regulate this area.

The Strategy for Development of Non-governmental organisations in Montenegro (2014-2016) ([Strategija razvoja NVO u Crnoj Gori 2014-2016](#)) had as one of the main goals to "create enabling legal framework for the development of volunteering in Montenegro" (p. 18). It was recognised by this strategy that the existing law that regulates voluntary work, "contrary to its purpose, instead of contributing to the development of a culture of volunteering in Montenegro, is to a large extent an obstacle to its further development". The [Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) also states that the Law on Voluntary Work, "instead of contributing to the development of a culture of volunteerism in Montenegro to a large extent represents an obstacle for its further development, treating volunteering as a specific form of labour-legal relationship, rather than the voluntary and private initiative of citizens" (p. 41). Adopting a new Law on Volunteering was also envisaged in the Strategy on Improving Enabling Environment for the Work of CSOs in Montenegro 2018-2020 ([Strategija unapređenja podsticajnog okruženja za djelovanje nevladinih organizacija 2018-2020](#)).

In line with the initiatives to change the legal framework, the [draft of the new Law on Volunteering](#) was prepared in 2019. This law regulates incentive measures for promoting and developing volunteering, the rights and duties of volunteers and organisers of volunteering, and other issues of importance for the development and promotion of volunteering.

The draft Law addresses some of the concerns and criticism directed to the Law on Voluntary Work. It introduces a new definition of volunteering and does not use the term voluntary work. Contrary to the previous Law, companies are allowed, under specified circumstances, to organise volunteering activities. This would be in line with existing positive practice of companies, as well as the small and medium enterprises to organise corporate volunteering as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, usually in co-operation with civil society organisations (such as National Voluntary Service ADP-Zid, Red Cross, different local CSO etc.), or in co-operation with some institution (day care centre for children and youth or similar).

The draft Law on Volunteering does not oblige organisers of volunteering actions to sign a contract with the volunteer if the volunteering takes less than 10 hours per week. It also differentiates volunteering from vocational training, and it does not permit signing a volunteering contract in cases where a person wants to acquire special knowledge and skills for work in a profession and to gain work experience. The issuing of volunteering booklets by local administration is replaced by an obligation of the organiser of volunteering to issue a certificate to volunteer, which includes a description of the acquired knowledge and skills and their level.

Public discussion on the draft of the new Law on Volunteering was carried out in the period April-June 2019. Meetings with stakeholders have been carried out in this period, and an opportunity for written comments and suggestions was provided. After the procedure of public debate had

been conducted, the government passed the proposal of the new law in November 2019 and it entered parliamentary procedure. However, it has not yet been adopted by the Parliament of Montenegro. In July 2021, the Government of Montenegro again discussed the Draft Law on Volunteering with the Report from the public discussion from 2019.

Volunteering has been a significant topic during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many young people have been actively involved in volunteering activities and this type of support has been widely promoted. During the lockdown and the severe restrictions on mobility and gathering, [NGOs noted](#) that volunteering was in these circumstances partially limited unless it was organised through the Red Cross. This has prompted [recommendations of NGOs](#) to further legally regulate and support volunteering programmes and activities of NGOs and non-formal groups in periods of crisis.

## Glossary

The Alliance of Voluntary Service Organisations is an international non-governmental youth organisation that represents national organisations which promote intercultural education, understanding and peace through voluntary service.

Corporate volunteering (sometimes called employee volunteering) is a way for businesses to contribute to the community. Companies give their employees an allowance of paid time off annually which they use to volunteer either at a civil society organisation of their choice or at activities organised by the company itself or in co-operation with volunteer centres or other organisations or charities.

International Cultural Youth Exchange (ICYE) – is an international, non-profit youth exchange organisation that provides youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service opportunities.

Moba is a voluntary, co-operative work group in rural households.

Service Civil International (SCI) is an international volunteer organisation dedicated to promoting a culture of peace by organising international voluntary projects for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Volunteer booklet (volonterska knjižica) is a form of volunteer certificate containing information about the period of volunteering service, the type of volunteering and training that the volunteer gained during volunteering.

Youth working actions (Omladinske radne akcije – ORA) are the largest youth volunteering actions that took place in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the Second World War, when several crucial infrastructural projects were accomplished including the main national motorway, railways, bridges and urban districts.

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