



## **VOLUNTARY ACTION** **IN GERMANY**

### **FACTS AND FIGURES**

INTRODUCTION .....	2
1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEERING .....	2
Historical and Social Context .....	2
Terminology and Concepts .....	3
Legislative Framework .....	4
2. EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM (recent developments) .....	5
3. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE.....	6
4. GENERAL DATA ON VOLUNTEERING .....	9
Sectors and Tasks .....	9
Volunteering Profiles .....	12
Training of Volunteers.....	14
5. FINAL REMARKS.....	14
6. USEFUL CONTACTS.....	15
7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	15

## **INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to provide comprehensive information as well as statistics and data on volunteering in Germany. First of all, it gives an overview of the historical, political and social framework regarding volunteering in Germany as well as an approach to the general understanding of and attitude towards volunteering in the national context. Secondly, it explores the volunteering infrastructure and describes the actors involved in volunteering at all levels (local, regional and national). Furthermore, the study provides broad data on features of the volunteer population and the sectors in which volunteers are active. Finally, concluding remarks on recent developments of volunteering in Germany are given.

## **1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEERING**

### *Historical and Social Context*

The German concept of welfare is primarily characterized by the “principle of subsidiarity”, that, in the provision of core welfare services, gives preference to non-for-profit organisations (NPO) over public services. It means that NPOs should act first and, if there is no alternative, the state should intervene. Under the principle of subsidiarity NPOs can claim public financial support. Subsidiarity had been fully developed after the World War II as part of the social legislation and created the six “peak” associations of the welfare sector in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), which together constitute the Federal Association of the Voluntary Welfare Organisations (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege).<sup>1</sup> Almost every NPO in Germany is a member of one of the following “peak” organisations:

1. Worker’s Welfare Service (Arbeiterwohlfahrt, AWO)
2. German Caritas Association (Caritasverband)
3. Association of Non-affiliated Charities (Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband, DPWV)
4. German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, DRK)
5. Welfare Service of the Protestant Church (Diakonisches Werk)
6. Central Welfare Agency of the Jews in Germany (Zentrale Wohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland).

Traditionally, charitable organisations have integrated volunteers in all fields of their activities. However, volunteering took place mostly within the framework of the “peak” organisations and became more and more marginal due to the professionalisation of social work since the 1970s. From 1990 onwards, there has been a change in the understanding of what volunteering means. Many new organisations and structures have been founded, and at the same time the traditional “peak” organisations have become more volunteer-oriented again.

Due to the division of Germany and the diverging political systems voluntary commitment developed differently over four decades.<sup>2</sup> In the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) volunteering was

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.freiewohlfahrtspflege.de/english/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> H.K. Anheier, E. Priller, Annette Zimmer (2000): Civil society in transition: The East German third sector ten years after unification in Münsteraner Diskussionspapiere zum Nonprofit-Sektor, Münster

mostly closely related to “mass social organizations” (gesellschaftliche Massenorganisationen). Although the GDR constitution guaranteed its citizens the freedom to associate, all organizations, such as political parties, trade unions or voluntary organizations, had to accept the supreme authority of the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED). There was no independence from state control and party ideology. Subsequently, local organizations had to join one of the “mass social organizations” such as the Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend, FDJ) or the cultural association (Kulturbund). However, these local organisations operated much like non-profit organizations. Government funds or fees, as well as private donations, supported the organizations. Beside the party ideology related voluntary activities or campaigns, volunteering also took place under the roof of the Lutheran Church. The Catholic Church was less represented due to the smaller number of members.

With the breakdown of the leading SED during the transition, traditional organizations were either transformed into registered associations or changed radically. Some of them just dissolved. Due to the unification treaty (Einigungsvertrag) between the two German states, the area of the former GDR adapted the existing legal and institutional system of the FRG on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1990. Consequently, the social sector and in particular the volunteer sector were shaped by the West German “peak” organisations. A significant amount of public money was transferred to these organisations to set up an infrastructure in the new states (neue Bundesländer) according to the existing welfare system in Western Germany.

However, there is still a gap in scientific research and publication about the characteristics of volunteering in the former GDR. Can the term volunteering be used in the context of the former GDR or was do we have to talk about compulsory work? In which framework did people engage?

### ***Terminology and Concepts***

Within the current discourse about volunteering there is a problem with the terminology because different and sometimes competing concepts are used in Germany. The traditional term ***honorary work*** (Ehrenamt) describes voluntary work as an engagement in formal organisations such as associations, societies or clubs that is either unpaid or against an expense allowance. Literally translated it means a task or an office assumed on honorary basis, but experts considered this term as too restrictive. Today, activities may be performed in the frame of formal or informal organisations and comprise sports and recreation, culture as well as self-help, neighbourhood activities, and activities in civic action groups. In order to reflect this wide range of activities corresponding to the model of a participatory society, the concepts ***voluntary involvement*** (freiwilliges Engagement), ***volunteer work*** or ***volunteering*** (Freiwilligenarbeit) have been introduced. In the final report of the Federal Parliament’s Study Commission on the Future of Civic Activities, the term ***voluntary civic activities*** (bürgerschaftliches Engagement) was used to emphasise the specific character of all activities assumed voluntarily. Civic involvement is understood as “responsibilities for others” and “becoming active as a member of the community”.<sup>3</sup>

So far there is no generally accepted term in Germany. In the First National Survey on Volunteering the interviewees were asked to choose among five commonly used concepts the one that they would prefer

---

<sup>3</sup> English Summary of the Final Report of the Study Commission of the German Parliament, p.3

for the activity they perform.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the most popular choice was *volunteer work* (48%) followed just at some distance by *honorary work* (32%). Maybe the term volunteer work reflects the self-conception in a better way than the older term “Ehrenamt”. Although on the national level the term “Freiwilligenarbeit” seems to put across, on the country level different concepts are still used to describe almost the same phenomenon, namely activities done on a voluntary basis relating to the society as such. For example, the Saxon Ministry for Social Affairs prefers the term “Ehrenamt”, while the Ministry for Social Affairs of Baden-Wuerttemberg applies the term “Bürgerengagement”.<sup>5</sup>

Within the framework of volunteering, voluntary service programmes have a long tradition in Germany.<sup>6</sup> After several campaigns headed by the Catholic and Lutheran Churches in the 1950s the precursors to the voluntary service programmes were translated into policies in 1964 in the FRG. The so-called Voluntary Year of Social Services (Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr, FSJ) has been hosted by social welfare organisations and offered young people the possibility to volunteer fulltime for 12 months in social and health care. The activities included work with physical disabled or elderly as well as work in hospitals. There was also an equivalent service introduced by the Lutheran and Catholic Church in the former GDR. Called “Diakonisches Jahr” (service within the "Diaconia", the Lutheran church-related social welfare work) or “Jahr für Gott” (a Year for God, service within the catholic social welfare work) it was a chance mostly for women to work voluntarily in the social field. Due to new legislation in 1994 the Voluntary Year of Ecological Services (Freiwilliges Ökologisches Jahr, FÖJ) was introduced offering young people the possibility to volunteer in the environmental field. With the renewed legislation in 2002 the fields of activity of the voluntary service were enhanced to culture and sports. Today the voluntary service programmes offer young people who finished their obligatory period of full time schooling up to the age of 26 to link volunteer activities with concrete practical experience in a professional area. Recognised conscientious objectors can also participate in the voluntary service programmes instead of civil community service. Currently, there are pilot projects in order to explore the possibility of a voluntary service for other groups of ages.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Legislative Framework***

Apart from the legislation for voluntary services, there is no national legislation specific to volunteering that covers all the issues related to volunteering. However, there are:

- tax regulations for the organisations that enjoy charitable status
- tax regulations for individuals or companies that donate either money or ascertained goods and
- regulations for reimbursement of travel expenses or general regulations for compensation for expenses for individuals volunteering

---

<sup>4</sup> Rosenblatt, Bernhard (2000) Volunteering in Germany. Results of the 1999 Representative Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement. Volume 1: General Report. Munich, p.13, p.37

<sup>5</sup> see: [http://www.sms.sachsen.de/de/bf/staatsregierung/ministerien/sms/hfs\\_index.htm](http://www.sms.sachsen.de/de/bf/staatsregierung/ministerien/sms/hfs_index.htm) and <http://smbw.baden-wuerttemberg.de/>

<sup>6</sup> see: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2003) For Myself and for Others. Voluntary Year of Social Service. Voluntary Year of Ecological Service

<sup>7</sup> Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2004) "Impulse für die Zivilgesellschaft. Perspektiven für Freiwilligendienste und Zivildienst in Deutschland, p.9

The act for the voluntary service programmes (FSJG or FÖJG) states that volunteers enjoy the same legal status as young people who attend vocational training. During the service period they receive some pocket money, support for board and accommodation as well. Furthermore, the volunteers are insured against illness and accidents, pension coverage is contributed and they receive child benefits and child allowances.

## **2. EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM (recent developments)**

As mentioned above, the attitudes with regard to volunteering have been changed since the 1990s; several initiatives towards research and development of volunteering in Germany were launched in the late 1990s. Some remarkable ones on the national level are explained below:

- Launching of the manifesto “Youth Renewing Society – A Call for Voluntary Service in Germany and Europe” (Jugend erneuert Gemeinschaft) organised by the Robert Bosch Foundation in October 1998
- Launching of the first comprehensive National Survey on Volunteering and Civic Engagement (so called “Freiwilligensurvey”) in 1998
- Establishing of the Study Commission on the Future of Civic Activities on 15.12.1999 by the German Federal Parliament

In 1997, the Robert Bosch Foundation established a commission to consider the future of voluntary service programmes for young people.<sup>8</sup> This initiative was based on the assumption that voluntary services are an important possibility for young people to gain educational and work related experience, to take responsibility and become an active member of society. It considered the fact that in the future Germany may abolish its compulsory military service and therewith the alternative civil community service for conscientious objectors. Regarding the possible effect on the voluntary welfare sector, the commission presented a concept for expanding and renewing voluntary service programmes in its Manifesto. The proposals stimulated a broad public debate. In order to develop a wider and attractive range of voluntary service opportunities that go beyond the “classical” areas, pilot projects were financed in collaboration with the Robert Bosch Foundation. Finally, the recommendations of the Manifesto had an impact on the renewed legislation for voluntary service programmes that went into effect on June 2002.

There has been no firm database on volunteering in Germany available until the late 1990s. In order to examine all forms of volunteering, including civic engagement in informal organisations, the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) initiated the First National Survey on Volunteering. Almost 15.000 residents aged 14 and above were interviewed over a period of three months, from May to July 1999. To facilitate comparative empirical data about the development of the voluntary sector the second national survey was performed with the same number of interviewees from April to July 2004.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Robert Bosch Foundation (1998) Youth Renewing the Fabric of Society. A Call for Voluntary Service in Germany and Europe, Stuttgart

With the aim of designing concrete political strategies and measures to encourage voluntary civic activities the German Federal Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag) set up a Study Commission on the Future of Civic Activities on 15.12.1999.<sup>10</sup> This Commission comprised eleven Members of the Bundestag as well as eleven external experts and had the task to analyse and assess the current situation of voluntary civic activities in Germany. With regard to volunteering the following recommendations for action from the commission's final report were important.<sup>11</sup> In order to promote a volunteer oriented society the commission proposed to develop networks at federal, country and local level which partly existed in some fields, to create an infrastructure that brings together government players, the voluntary sector and civil society. Further it suggested to establish a "culture of recognition" with regards to various forms of appreciation such as training for volunteers. The commission recommended also reducing bureaucracy regarding funding of the voluntary sector, reforming the tax law on donations and non-profit status, compensation for expenditures and ensuring adequate third-party liability and accident insurance. To develop the issues regarding civic activities in a durable and sustained manner a permanent commission attached to the Bundestag should be established.

Also several conferences, meetings and events organized within the framework of the International Year of Volunteers 2001 can be seen as remarkable steps towards public and political awareness on volunteering.<sup>12</sup>

### **3. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE**

On the level of executive power the responsibilities for issues relating to voluntary civic engagement are split between the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ) and the relevant Ministries of the States (Bundesländer). Since 1999 there has been a division in charge of volunteering in the BMFSFJ. Meanwhile, all States define a formal responsibility for volunteering within the state administration; volunteering is integrated into either the social ministry or the ministry of internal affairs. Several states are running campaigns or programmes to promote or support voluntary work. On the level of legislative power there has been established a sub-committee on civic engagement (Unterausschuss Bürgerschaftliches Engagement) for the 15<sup>th</sup> parliamentary term of the German Parliament (until 2006).

In order to strengthen and promote civic engagement in the various fields and forms there is a platform on the national level, called the Federal Network on Civic Engagement (Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement, BBE).<sup>13</sup> Founded in the follow up process of the Study Commission's recommendations in 2002, it currently brings together 154 actors of the civil society (organizations, founda-

---

<sup>9</sup> first results are available: [http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Pressestelle/Pdf-Anlagen/zweiter-freiwilligenurvey-kurzfassung\\_property=pdf.pdf](http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Pressestelle/Pdf-Anlagen/zweiter-freiwilligenurvey-kurzfassung_property=pdf.pdf); a final report will be published in 2005

<sup>10</sup> Deutscher Bundestag ed. (2002) Enquete-Kommission »Zukunft des bürgerschaftlichen Engagements«: Bericht. Bürgerschaftliches Engagement: Auf dem Weg in eine zukunftsfähige Bürgergesellschaft. Opladen

<sup>11</sup> Deutscher Bundestag ed. (2002) Civic Activities: Towards a Civil Society with a Future. Summary of the Study Commission's Report

<sup>12</sup> further information at the brochure for the International Year of Volunteers of the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2001) Freiwillig! Was ich kann ist unbezahlbar

<sup>13</sup> see: <http://www.b-b-e.de/>

tions, federal and local governmental institutions as well as business representatives = full members; institutions without national relevance, sponsors and individuals = cooperating members). Anyone who is either acting in the field of voluntary civic engagement or supporting it could become a member. The BBE organizes conferences and contributes to the public discourse on voluntary civic engagement. Furthermore, it publishes various materials on voluntary civic engagement and serves as a forum for exchange of best practice. To manage its conceptual and thematic work, the BBE set up 8 project groups:

1. Legal framework
2. Qualification and education
3. Voluntary services
4. Perspectives of engagement on local level
5. Migration / integration
6. Corporate Citizenship
7. Civic engagement and social welfare system
8. European civil society and civil dialogue

Nevertheless, the BBE is a relatively new network and receives no public funding besides the financing of its coordination office. It is not yet as strong as a national platform could be.

Nowadays, the voluntary sector is marked by a structural heterogeneity. The pre-existing organisations changed their focus on volunteering and issues related to civic engagement and at the same time a vast variety of new organisations has been developed. Recent parts of the infrastructure are **regional volunteer agencies** or centres (Freiwilligenagenturen). There has been a boom of establishing volunteer agencies across Germany since 1997. For example, the Caritas launched the first pilot project with 16 volunteer centres across Germany in late 1996. Currently there are approximately 150 of such volunteer centres.<sup>14</sup> According to a survey comprised 80 volunteer agencies in Germany there are three main characteristics regarding tasks and objectives of volunteer agencies.<sup>15</sup>:

- They aim to be a bridge between potential volunteers and volunteer involving organisations; they try to match individuals who wish to volunteer with organisations that offer suitable opportunities.
- They offer training programmes and seminars for volunteers as well as support for organisations to improve on a volunteer friendly infrastructure.
- They promote volunteering to the general public.

One of the findings of the survey were the different models of how volunteer agencies are organised.<sup>16</sup> 34% are directly hosted by a “peak” welfare organisation, 30% belong to an independent association or club, another 15% are within a compound structure and local communities host 14% of the volunteer agencies. However, an “independent” organisation founded for the special task to run a volunteer agency may in the end be connected to a “peak” welfare organisation. Finally, that implicates a dominating position of the welfare organisations in hosting and running volunteer agencies.

Furthermore, the survey intimated the diversity amongst the agencies due to different resources and capacities. There are agencies organised completely by volunteers and also agencies run by paid staff.

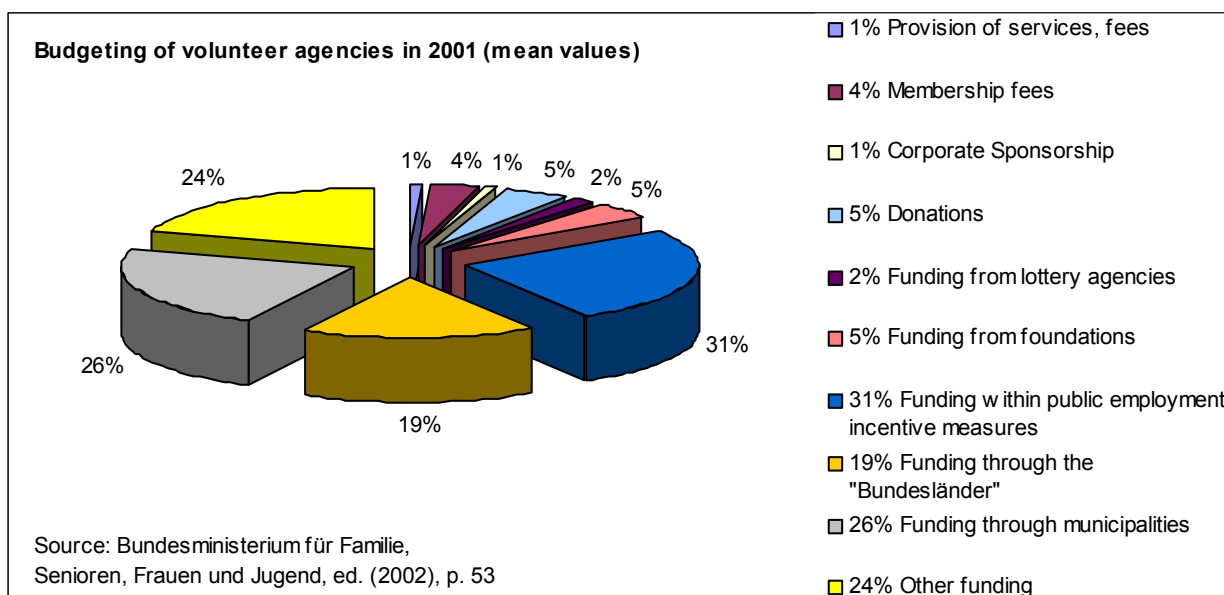
---

<sup>14</sup> see: <http://www.bagfa.de/site/agenturen.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, ed. (2002): *Freiwilligenagenturen in Deutschland – Ergebnisse einer Erhebung der Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen*. Berlin, p. 29 and p.97

<sup>16</sup> Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, ed. (2002) p. 43

Funding varies significantly from year to year, from region to region and generally consists of a mixture as showed in the graphic below:



Most of the volunteer agencies are gathered under the roof of the national organisation for volunteer agencies (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen e.V., BAGFA).<sup>17</sup> It is a forum of local and regional volunteer centres or volunteer agencies that was founded in 1999. There is also a network of volunteer centres on the country level (Bundesländer) working under the umbrella of the BAGFA. The main task of the BAGFA network is to support the expansion of volunteer centres across Germany and to develop standards for volunteering. Therefore it channels information, provides advice and gives professional opinions to the public discourse. Members meet two times a year on a conference that concerns the strategic policy of the BAGFA as well as the exchange of best practices.

In addition, there are around 120 special agencies for active senior citizens, so called **senior offices**, (Seniorenbüros).<sup>18</sup> Compared to the volunteer centres they concentrate on a specific target group, retired people, but their aims are very alike. The senior offices also have a national umbrella organisation (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Seniorenbüros e.V.) established in 1995 that is functioning as a platform for the senior offices.

Furthermore, there are numerous offices for information and support of **self-help** and **mutual aid groups** (Selbsthilfekontaktstellen) that also consist on voluntary engagement.

However, the actual impact of all these agencies on volunteering should not be overestimated. The Second National Survey found out that only a minority of voluntary active citizens (4%) got the impetus from special agencies and offices. For the majority, the main incentive came either from other volunteers

<sup>17</sup> further information: <http://www.bagfa.de/>

<sup>18</sup> see: <http://www.seniorenbueros.org/bueros.html>

who perform key functions in organisations or groups (44%) or from the immediate personal environment, mostly friends and acquaintances (39%), as well as from family members (14%).<sup>19</sup>

#### **4. GENERAL DATA ON VOLUNTEERING**

##### ***Sectors and Tasks***

According to the Second Survey on Volunteering a total number of 36% of the citizens in Germany devote time to some form of volunteering and assume longer term tasks and duties in clubs, societies, initiatives or projects.<sup>20</sup> As compared to 34% actively involved citizens in 1999, this number shows a slight increase of 2%. Another 32% (1999) and 34% (2004) was actually involved in some organisation, but did not assume any concrete voluntary task or duty (Figure 1). If the average voluntary activity is applied to a total of 63.000.000 citizens above the age of 14 this means approximately 22.000.000 German citizens were involved in some kind of volunteering in 1999.<sup>21</sup>

The National Survey differentiated 14 fields of activity (Figure 2). Most of the volunteers are engaged in the areas of leisure time activities such as “Sports and recreation”, “Leisure and social activities” and “Culture and music”. There, the most commonly voluntary activities performed were related to *organising and conducting meetings* followed by *work that needs to be done*. These activities range from being a trainer for a football club, organising theatre events, being responsible as treasurer, or honorary board member. In many of these cases volunteering is part of group or community activities in the personal milieu. Areas that comprise fewer citizens and that are more directly related to social and political engagement are “Professional advocacy outside the workplace” and “Political advocacy” (pillar 7-9). The major tasks in this area are concerned with providing information or lobbying and are mostly done within a party or a trade union. Providing personal care represented the major task in the “Health sector” and the area of “Social welfare”, this includes for instance support for senior citizens as well as care for disabled.

The most important organisational framework in which voluntary activities are performed is a “club” or a society. This is the predominant organisational form in the field of “Sports and recreation”, and other leisure oriented areas. Self-organised structures such as initiatives or projects are less significant, but are often found in areas of “School or nursery school” and “Other local civic activities”.

As above emphasized on voluntary services in Germany the numbers show its importance.<sup>22</sup> In 1993, approximately 7.100 young people between 17 and 26 were acting as volunteers within the Voluntary

---

<sup>19</sup> Die Freiwilligensurveys 1999-2004. Erste Ergebnisse und Trends, presented by Dr. Gensicke, Thomas / Geiss, Sabine, October 2004

<sup>20</sup> Executive Summary on the Second National Survey, 2004:

<http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Pressestelle/Pdf-Anlagen/zweiter-freiwilligensurvey-kurzfassung.property=pdf.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Rosenblatt, Bernhard (2000)

<sup>22</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2003) and Bundesarbeitskreis “FSJ” (2003)

Year of Social Services. The number of participants increased to roughly 13.900 and included the participants of the Voluntary Year of Ecological Services. Around 15.000 young people took part in a voluntary service in 2002. The majority of volunteers are young women who finished either the A-level (Abitur) or the Secondary School (Realschule). However, the number of young men has increased during the last years.

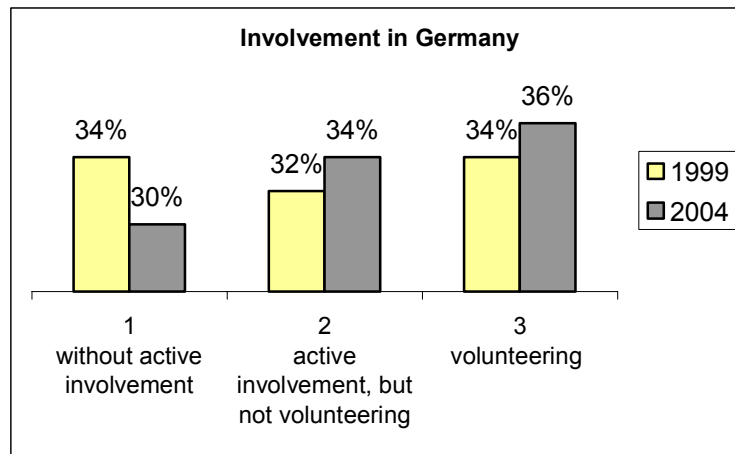


Figure 1<sup>23</sup>

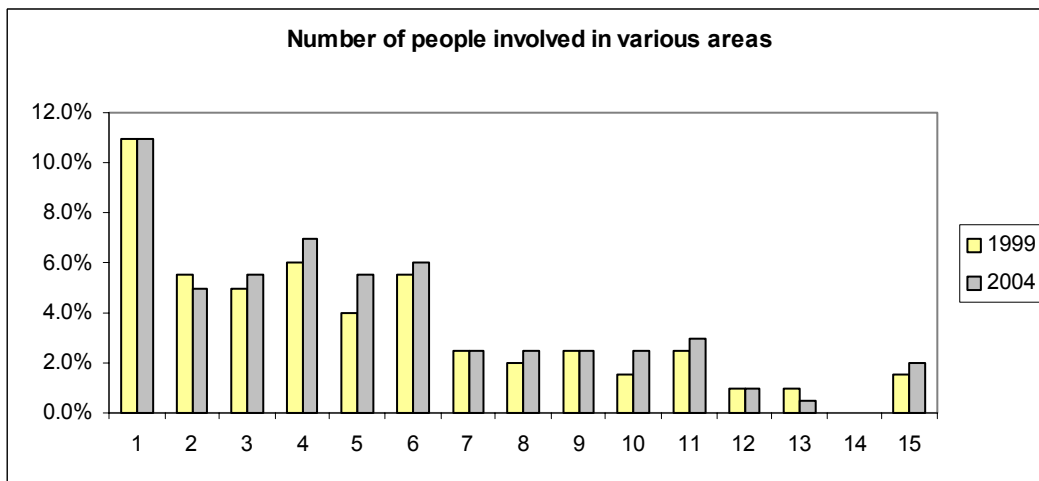


Figure 2

	1999	2004
1 Sports and recreation	11.0%	11.0%
2 Leisure and social activities	5.5%	5.0%
3 Culture and music	5.0%	5.5%
4 School or nursery school	6.0%	7.0%
5 Social welfare	4.0%	5.5%
6 Church or religious organisations	5.5%	6.0%
7 Professional advocacy outside the workplace	2.5%	2.5%
8 Environment, nature conservation and animal welfare	2.0%	2.5%
9 Politics and political advocacy	2.5%	2.5%
10 Youth work outside school, adult education	1.5%	2.5%
11 Accident, rescue and voluntary fire services	2.5%	3.0%
12 Health sector	1.0%	1.0%
13 Law and crime	1.0%	0.5%
14 Economy self-help	0.0%	0.0%
15 Other local civic activities	1.5%	2.0%

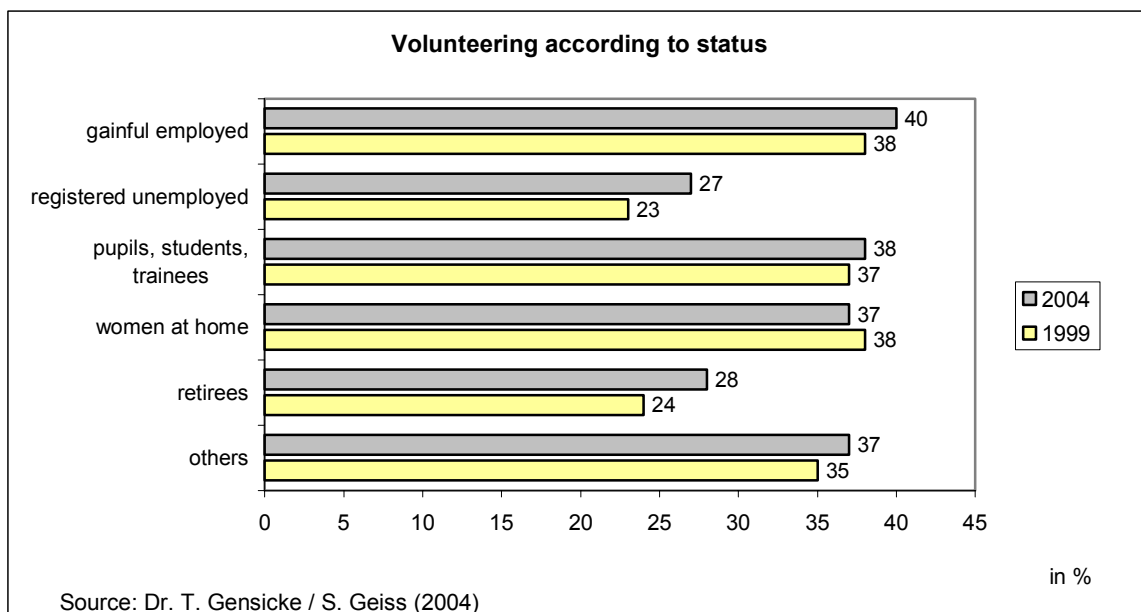
<sup>23</sup> Source: Die Freiwilligensurveys 1999-2004. Erste Ergebnisse und Trends, presented by Dr. Gensicke, Thomas / Geiss, Sabine, October 2004

## Volunteering Profiles

Generally, the degree of volunteering tends to vary with different focuses in the various population groups. There are specific aspects of social inclusion and position that clearly seem to be in correlation with the willingness for voluntary work. For example:

- a large circle of friends and acquaintances,
- close links to church,
- gainful employment,
- higher education, and
- a higher professional position

are factors that apply to those who actively participate.

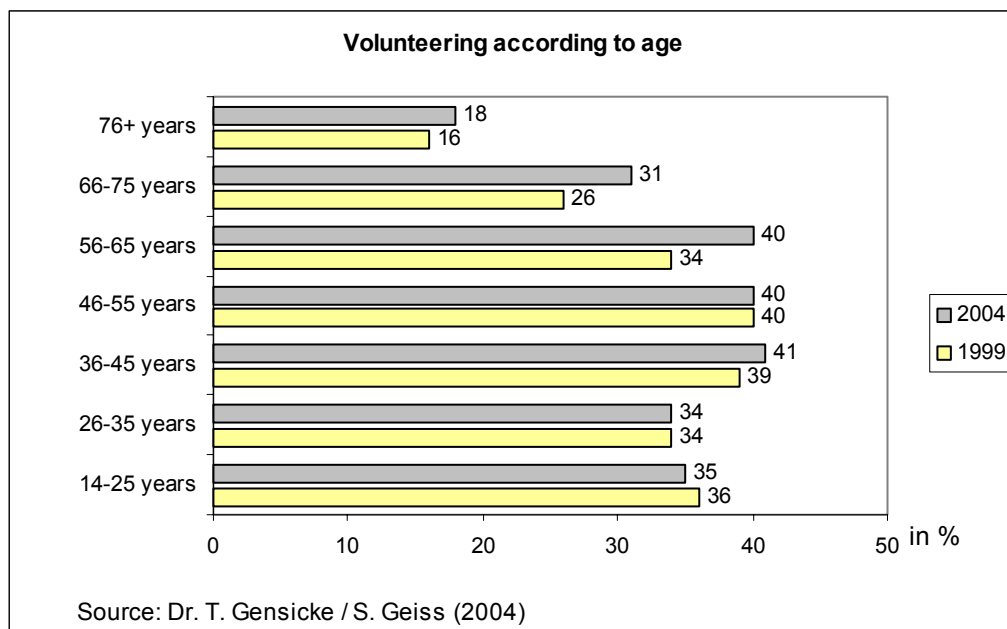


As shown by the 14<sup>th</sup> Shell Survey on Young People (14. Shell Jugendstudie) and corresponding with the National Survey young people aged between 14 and 24 form an active group within society.<sup>24</sup> Although volunteering by young people mainly takes place within traditional organisations, there has been little change. Young people tend to be engaged short-term and prefer concrete projects and non-formal kinds of organisations. In general, boys and young men are still dominating in performing voluntary activities in clubs and societies dealing with sports and recreation, accident, rescue and voluntary fire services. Girls and young women mostly volunteer in less structured forms of organisations such as schools, churches and social activities, where they are responsible for pupils committees or youth clubs. According to the Shell Survey 35% of the young people aged between 12 and 25 are steadily performing voluntary work within society. Only 24% are without any active participation. The survey also shows that students with 44% are most likely to volunteer.

<sup>24</sup> further information about the survey (questionnaire) among 2.515 young people in Germany done in 2002: <http://www.shell-jugendstudie.de/>

According to the National Survey of 1999 the important gender-related finding was that fewer women than men volunteer; 30% of the female and 38% of the male population.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, women devote significantly less time to their tasks assumed voluntarily. In general, women and men favour different areas of volunteering. While women make up the majority in fields such as “Schools or nursery schools”, “Social welfare”, “Church and religion organisation” and the “Health sector”, men dominate in all the other areas. Also characteristic for men is that they were more likely to occupy positions of responsibility. Regarding family life, volunteering is stronger among those living in a family with young children than those in other household circumstances.

The fastest growing group of volunteers are older citizens up to 55 years with an increase of 6%. Longer life expectancies and shorter working periods raise the importance of the so-called post-work phase. In 2004, 40% of citizens aged between 56 and 65 years and 31% aged between 66 and 75 years assumed voluntary work.



Several studies are describing differences in voluntary work between the western and the eastern (new) states, but the situation is converging.<sup>26</sup> During the political transition many citizens gave up their voluntary work. At the same time there was a sudden decreasing of members in clubs and societies and much of the GDR infrastructure of voluntary work was dissolved. Still fewer citizens in the eastern states are members of clubs, societies, churches and religious groups, trade unions and parties. Nevertheless, as stated in the National Survey, there is an increase of volunteering in the eastern states of 3%, compared to 1% in the western states. In all, there are 31% of the citizens in the eastern states and 37% of the citizens in the western states who volunteer.

<sup>25</sup> Rosenblatt, Bernhard (2000), p.113-119

<sup>26</sup> see H.K. Anheier, E. Priller, Annette Zimmer (2000)

## *Training of Volunteers*

Training of volunteers differs a lot and depends on the voluntary work performed. Roughly 70% of all volunteers stated in 1999 that they participated in training. The highest number of participants in courses and further training refers to areas such as “Accident, rescue and voluntary fire services” and “Health sector”, due to specific knowledge demanded from volunteers working in these fields. In each area approximately 50% of the volunteers stated, that training was compulsory. Training is mostly organised by clubs or societies that belong to one of the “peak” welfare organisations.

Specific training for volunteers also takes place within the framework of the voluntary service programmes.<sup>27</sup> The host organisations of all the various services have to provide pedagogical support and 25 compulsory seminar days, which prepares the volunteers for their service. Furthermore, the seminars offer the possibility to have a look at specific issues about civil society as well as social, environmental and cultural topics.

An important provider of general training in the voluntary sector is the *Akademie für Ehrenamtlichkeit in Deutschland* (Academy for Volunteering Germany), a centre of competency in volunteer-management as well as NPO-management.<sup>28</sup> The Academy primarily provides training for those working in the voluntary sector, but not for volunteers themselves. Since 1998 it has been offering seminars, qualification programmes and workshops to the following issues: volunteer management, organisational development, association management, volunteer coaching, fundraising and encouraging citizen competence. Furthermore, the academy provides consultation and supervision in every area of volunteer management and gives information and publications on its homepage.

## **5. FINAL REMARKS**

Germany has a long and diverse history of voluntary work. Since the mid 1990s the situation has been characterized by an intensive political debate towards public awareness and improvement on voluntary work. Moreover many new organisations dealing with volunteering were founded and the “peak” organisations of the social welfare renewed and transformed their attitudes towards volunteering. In this sense there have been improvements in the follow up process of the Study Commission’s recommendations on building up infrastructure and organisations at local, state and federal level. There is now a division of the BMFSFJ in charge of volunteering, the states integrated voluntary work within the administration and, there is a sub-committee on civic engagement of the German Federal Parliament that aims to develop the legislative process towards voluntary work. Furthermore, with the BBE there is now a national platform that brings together the various actors in the field. Likewise, the National Survey on volunteering shows much progress has been made in the field of compiling statistics and comparative values about voluntary work.

---

<sup>27</sup> Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (2003), p.16 and p.68

<sup>28</sup> see: <http://www.ehrenamt.de/>

However, there are still things that need to be improved in order to bring voluntary work on a substantial basis. Some tasks tend to be urgent. Firstly, it is very important to foster the newly originated volunteering infrastructure. For example, the financial situation of the volunteer agencies seems to be extremely difficult. They do not have enough financial resources to ensure a strategic development of their aims and to become development agencies that also create and run their own projects in the field of volunteering. Although the situation of public budgets is quite limited, there is still no federal funding of volunteer agencies. Secondly, the current statutory accident insurance and third-party liability for citizens volunteering should be extended to cover further fields. At present, a draft for a new act to improve on the insurance for citizens that are committed to voluntary work will be discussed.<sup>29</sup> And thirdly, bureaucracy should be reduced, such as the present public funding and governing grants practice could be simplified.

Finally, the number of citizens, who are volunteering in Germany, remains quite stable according to the Second National Survey. Growing groups are senior citizens, unemployed and citizens in the new states, especially women.

## **6. USEFUL CONTACTS**

<http://www.bmfsfj.de/Politikbereiche/freiwilliges-engagement.html>

(official homepage of the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth for voluntary work, German)

<http://www.b-b-e.de/> (homage of the federal network for civic engagement, German)

<http://www.ehrenamt.de> (Academy for Volunteering Germany, profile in English)

[http://www.maecenata.de/index\\_en.html](http://www.maecenata.de/index_en.html) (civic engagement, only certain pages available in English)

<http://www.freiewohlfahrtspflege.de/english/index.html> (general information about the non-statutory welfare services in Germany, English)

## **7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This country report was written by CEV trainee Annett Wiedermann and edited by Markus Held, CEV Coordinator. CEV would like to thank especially Thomas Reichenau, from the Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik e.V., Projektbüro 2. Freiwilligensurvey, and Prof. Dr. Thomas Olk, from the Martin-Luther-Universität Halle/Wittenberg, for their contributions and comments as well as Shirley Bwyne, from VDS, for her proofreading.

---

<sup>29</sup> Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Verbesserung des unfallversicherungsrechtlichen Schutzes bürgerschaftlich Engagierter und weiterer Personen« - BT-Drs 15/3439