



## Volunteerism in Austria Facts and Figures

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	2
<b>1. CIVIL SOCIETY IN AUSTRIA</b> .....	2
1.1 Social and historical context .....	2
1.2 Basic facts on the Austrian Third sector .....	5
1.2.1 Definition of the non-profit sector .....	5
1.2.2 Foundations in Austria.....	5
1.2.3 The attribute of common interest .....	6
1.2.4 The new association law of 2002 .....	6
1.2.5 Public sector – NPO relations.....	7
<b>2. EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM</b> .....	9
2.1 Definition of volunteerism.....	9
2.2 Social acceptance of volunteering .....	10
2.3 Government policy towards volunteering.....	12
2.3.1 Austrian Council for Voluntary Work .....	13
2.3.2 Awards for volunteers and supporting business .....	14
2.3.3 TRIGOS awards for business .....	15
2.3.4 Austrian Volunteer Passport.....	15
2.3.5 General promotion of volunteerism .....	16
<b>3. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE</b> .....	16
<b>4. GENERAL DATA ON VOLUNTEERING</b> .....	19
4.1 Trends in volunteering .....	19
4.2 Volunteer Profile.....	20
4.3 Motivation of volunteers.....	21
4.4 Time spent on volunteering in different domains .....	22
4.5 Economic value of volunteering .....	23
<b>5. CONCLUDING REMARKS</b> .....	23
<b>7. REFERENCES</b> .....	24
<b>7. USEFUL CONTACTS</b> .....	25
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	25

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## INTRODUCTION

This facts and figures report will present the state of volunteerism in Austria and give information on the societal and state context as well as on the reasons for Austrians to volunteer. The first chapter will focus on Austria's civil society. After describing the historical context, we will see recent developments and understand the close relationship between the Austrian non-profit sector and the state. The second chapter starts with the Austrian definition of volunteering and shows the acceptance volunteering has among business and government. In this sense it also treats in detail the evolution of government action in favour of volunteerism during the last years. Next, we will examine the infrastructure for volunteering, that is at local level dominated by the "citizens' bureaus" initiated by the Austrian government and closely linked with the regional volunteer centres. The fourth chapter finally gives information on the extent of volunteering, the areas in which it is done and the profile and motivation of volunteers.

### 1. CIVIL SOCIETY IN AUSTRIA

#### 1.1 Social and historical context

Austrian civil society is certainly stronger than those of the former communist countries, but compared to other European countries, its civil society (together with Germany) is not as strong as often assumed. Compared to the former communist countries, voluntary organisations in Austria and Germany *"have the support of a much better infrastructure, but it is one that has led to very archaic structures in civil society, is closely linked with the state, and in many areas completely financed from state coffers (...). It thereby forfeits, to a great extent, its control and self-organizational function. Particularly with the backdrop of the European Union, which after the East European countries have joined, will more than ever be dependent on the participation of its citizens in civil society, this is a disturbing omen."*(Matthias Freise 2005:33)

Emil Brix even talks of a "retarded" civil society in Austria compared to other European countries.

*"The (...) tradition of strong state rule, the dominance of political parties in society and corporatism have led to lots of stability, but little civil society"*<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by the Facts and Figures Author: "Die josephinische Tradition hoher staatlicher Regierung, die gesellschaftliche Dominanz politischer Parteien und der Korporatismus haben viel Stabilität, aber

Austrian Society is indeed strongly marked by *corporatism*. Since the end of the Second World War the system of *social partnership* (“Sozialpartnerschaft”) is in place and the four participating institutions are anchored in the Austrian political system. The established representative institutions are the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB), the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), the Federal Chamber of Labour (BAK) and the Chamber of Agriculture (LK). Their cooperation is explicitly voluntary. The Trade Union Federation is organised as a registered society or association, while the three chamber organisations are self-administrating entities under public law with compulsory membership. Since 1957, the co-operation of the social partners has taken place mainly through an institution called the Parity Commission. This commission consists of top representatives of the government and the four major interest groups. The ‘social partnership’ is an evidence of an inclusive culture of negotiation and dialogue. The social partners achieve compromises that consider their common medium-term goals and society’s interests as a whole while defending their heterogeneous membership’s interests. The aims of the social partnership have developed over time and the Social Partnership Agreement of 23 November 1992 not only states goals such as full employment, stability and growth, but also participation in European integration, the internationalisation of the Austrian economy, the promotion of human skills and talents, the maintaining and improvement of labour conditions, full employment and environmental sustainability.

This cooperation between state and society is a unique way of reconciling and balancing interests between different stakeholders. In this system the public sector, parties, business and trade unions managed to successfully conciliate their interests. This also means that these professional organisations had a strong influence in politics:

*“Many of these associations, e.g. the unions, are part of the nonprofit sector themselves. Consequently, some of the large Austrian NPOs have unusually strong political power. Moreover, many large NPOs have close links to public institutions. This often leads to an implicit division of labor: the public sector finances services that that nonprofit organizations provide.”* (Karin Heitzmann and Ruth Simsa 2005: 723)

This financing role of the state is more deeply dealt with below (see 1.2.5)

Society in a political sense in Austria is thus determined by consensus and compromise, but also by strong divisions, that make compromise only necessary. Traditionally the Austrian society is separated into so called *camps* (“Lager”). The three camps are the conservatives, the labour movement and the Catholic Church. From these three camps emerged numerous associations that have shaped the Austrian Third Sector. All three

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wenig Bürgergesellschaft gebracht." ("Civil Society in Österreich", 1998, S. 16). The quote is available at [http://www.ngo.at/organisation/org\\_cs.htm](http://www.ngo.at/organisation/org_cs.htm).

parties had tried to keep their followers attached to them, creating often associations that are open only to their supporters. Good examples are some sport clubs in which in the past partisans from other camps were not allowed to become members. Austrian civil society is still marked by this traditions and the opinion is widespread that it is not possible to implement action without the support of one of the camps.

Going back into history allows to better understand the specific development of the Austrian civil society:

*“ Before the two World Wars, the Austrian bourgeoisie was comparatively weak, while the aristocracy, military and church had an enormous influence on society. As these groups had strong links to the state, their joint interest led to a strong etatism and a dominant role for civil servants in Austria. This background had a strong influence on the size, shape and characteristics of the sector and resulted in close links many NPOs still have with the state.*

*At the same time, however, the third sector organizations have also been founded in relation to the labour movement. Thus, many forerunners of today’s large and established NPOs, such as unions or big NPOs providing social services, were originally radical alternatives to the dominant state and church. Many associations were established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by either the social-democratic movement, the conservative Christian-Democrats or the church to bind their clients to their ideology in various fields. Various forms of self-help initiatives and private charities emerging from either religious or conservative traditions or the labor movement can be considered forerunners of today’s NPOs.” (K. Heitzmann and R. Simsa 2005: 714 f.)*

After the Second World War this tradition was taken up again, although modified to some extent and democratised. It were the two political camps, who in fact created the *social partnership*, thus institutionalising neocorporatist policies. This allowed to somehow bridge the gap between the left and right wings of the third sector. Only in the 1980s independent NPOs emerged, that dealt with topics like human rights, women’s liberalisation, development aid or ecology.

A unique of Austrian civil society are the strong impact, some NPOs (for example trade unions) have on politics through the social partnership model. This interlinked relationship between civil society organisations and politics works is both ways, as the phenomenon of the societal “camps” and their attached NPOs prove.

## 1.2 Basic facts on the Austrian Third sector

### 1.2.1 Legal definition of the non-profit sector

Although the Austrian non-profit sector has a long tradition, the notion of “non-profit organisation” does still not exist in Austrian law. As early as in 1867 Article 12 of the *Staatsgrundgesetz* authorised Austrians to gather in associations. Today more than 100 000 associations are registered in Austria, and many of them depend on the work of volunteers. In principle NPOs can chose between several legal forms, the association being however the most prevalent one thanks to its comparatively simple accounting rules (c.f. 1.2.4). Foundations and cooperatives are the next prominent groups.

**Table 1: Types and Number of Organizations that could belong to the Non-profit Sector in Austria – 2000/2001**

Legal form	Number in 2000/2001
Associations	104 203
Private Foundations	2 200
Public Foundations	648
Cooperatives	1 999

Source: K. Heitzmann and R. Simsa (2005: 717)

The only label for NGOs the Austrian law provides for is that of *general interest*. However, it is only important for tax reasons and not all NPOs are recognised automatically as being of general interest, as the definition is very narrow (c.f. 1.2.3).

### 1.2.2 Foundations in Austria

Apart from the associations, foundations can play an important role in civil society. In Austria, however, *private* foundations are a very recent phenomenon and only few of them are attributed the label of *general interest*. Private foundations have only been introduced in 193 by the *Law on Private Foundations* (“Privatstiftungsgesetz”). The law allowed for the first time the creation of private foundations, which could also pursue commercial aims. Apart from the about 648 public foundations, which are by definition of general interest, only a small number of the private foundations have received this label. In 1996 only 10% of the 200 then existing private foundations pursued the general interest according to the strict definition of the Austrian tax law.

In this respect Austria differs from other European countries where private foundations serve more often the society’s interest. In Germany for example, that has a longer

tradition of private foundations, there are 12 500 foundations out of which 95% are recognized as being of general interest. Knowing that the German definition of *general interest* is significantly broader, this fact, however, is not responsible for the big differences. In Austria the great majority of foundations have been created for fiscal reasons. In fact the law of 1993 had been introduced to prevent the drain of property to other countries. Until 1993 in Austria foundations could only be created for charitable aims and those of public utility. The impossibility to create self-interested foundations led to an outflow of Austrian property to foundations in other countries. To counteract this phenomenon the 1993 law was created allowing for private foundations. For this reason many of the newly founded foundations in Austria serve a primarily private interest. However, foundations of general interest exist, even though this statute is rather difficult to achieve because of its narrow definition.

### 1.2.3 The attribute of common interest

The question whether an association or a foundation pursues a common interest is important only for fiscal reasons. The notion has actually been introduced by the tax law itself and is so narrow that it does not apply to many non-profit organisations. To benefit from tax alleviations bodies of *general interest* have to pursue either aims of public utility, charitable or parochial goals. To attain this status, associations and foundations must not take any other action than that leading to the realisation of one of these aims. In other words, the bodies have to defend these aims exclusively, directly (not using other bodies to realise them) and have to fix these basic principles in their statutes.

A promotion of the collective good is given only when the association or foundation promotes collective welfare in the range of intellect, morals or material well-being in an altruistic manner. The label “benefiting the general public” does not fit to restricted groups, as for instance associations with a limited number of members or if the number of those benefiting is permanently small, because it is linked to regional, professional or other specific criteria. So, the fact that an association is not profit-making does not automatically lead to the status of *general interest*. There are for instance some sport clubs and professional organisations who are not profit-making, but who are not recognised as being of ‘general interest’ because their membership is by definition restricted.

### 1.2.4 The new association law of 2002

On 1 July 2002 the new association law came into force. Following the International Year of the Volunteer 2001 this law reformed the old association law from 1951. It brought some simplifications with it as well as the acceleration of the administrative procedures. Thanks to

the new law the federal police and local administration are responsible for the authorisation of new associations and for changes of the statutes. Following this law, a centralised register of societies will be created. The register will be available in the near future and is part of the Austrian e-government strategy.

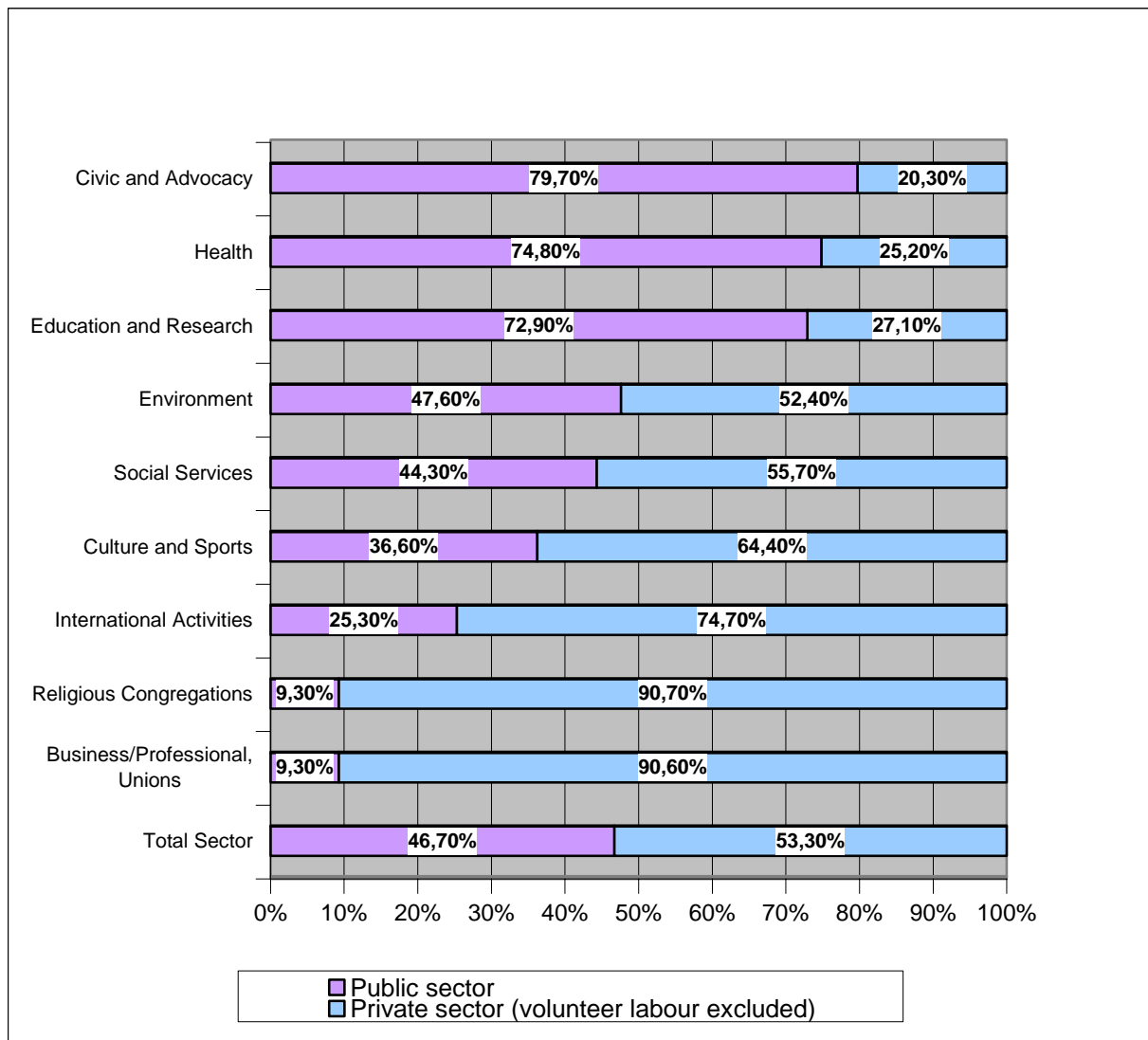
The Association law from 2002 has impacts within associations, too. They are now divided into two groups, namely in “big” and “small” associations. The former have an annual budget of less than EUR 1 000 000 and the latter a budget that lies above this line. Small associations only have to make profit and loss accounts whereas the big associations are also obliged to create a balance sheet as formerly only companies did. The accounts of the big associations need to be checked by a certified auditor and presented by a supervisory body to the membership.

This reform attests to the recent awareness of the increasing economical impact of non-profit organisations and of the fact that they are more and more taking over services that were formerly provided by public bodies. In some way this implies also a new appreciation of the work of associations.

#### 1.2.5 Public sector – NPO relations

As stated before the Austrian state has a strong impact on civil society. This corporatist tradition, which is rooted in Austrian history, also leads to the fact that a large part of the Austrian NPO sector is rather dependent on state subsidies. Although in general state subsidies for NPOs are somewhat shrinking, in some sectors the Austrian NPOs and with them Austrian volunteers are taking over more and more former state functions, as the public sector is outsourcing a big number of services. According to Karin Heitzmann and Ruth Simsa, 46.7% of the revenue of the non-profit sector in 1997 came from the state. The sectors “civic and advocacy action”, “health” and “education and research” are those that are most depended on state financing, all of them receiving significantly more than two thirds of their budget from public sources. The table below shows the share of NPO revenue that came from the public sector in 1997.

**Table 2: Share of Revenue from the Public Sector in Nonprofit Activity Fields in Austria in 1997**



Source: Karin Heitzmann and Ruth Simsa (2005: 721)

In recent years however, the state’s capacity of funding the social sector has been declining. This leads to the fact that NGOs are gradually taking over the provision of some social services. As the old system is changing, Austrian membership in the European Union opened new ways for associations to receive funding and to start transnational cooperation.

Non-profit organisations in Austria are largely depending on volunteers for fundraising and other engagement. The Caritas in the state of Tirol, for instance, employs 200 people. In addition to that 3000 volunteers are working for the Caritas institutions, collect money or engage in Caritas projects all over Tirol.

## 2. EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM

### 2.1 Definition of volunteerism

As there is no law on volunteerism in Austria, the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection<sup>2</sup>, that is responsible for volunteering, sticks to the official definition used in the “Volunteers Action Programme“ written by the *Austrian Council for Voluntary Work* (“Österreichischer Rat für Freiwilligenarbeit”). According to this definition, voluntary work is characterised by the following features:

- voluntary, but within a strict framework;
- for the benefit of the community or a third party rather than one’s own or the family’s or own household’s benefit;
- work rendered without any relevant consideration in the form of pay for a gainful activity;
- of a given duration or regularity;
- non-binding within the scope of (further) training (internship or work within an organisation not in addition to paid work);
- usually within the scope of an institutional organisation, platform, initiative, group – without obligation as a citizen (community service in lieu of compulsory military service);
- includes both informal (family, neighbourhood) and formal (groups, associations, institutions, etc.) work.

Voluntary work should be distinguished from honorary service where individuals are elected to an unpaid office within an institution for a limited period and are accountable for their work in such “office”. This applies both to functionaries in associations and all persons serving in their “office” due to statutory regulations (laws governing the school system, labour law, social insurance laws, etc.), such as head pupils at school, works council members, members of public corporations or political functionaries such as members of local government.

It is interesting to note that informal volunteering within the own family seems to be included into the official definition. In this respect, the Austrian definition is much larger than that of a number of other European countries. This seems, however, somewhat paradoxical,

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<sup>2</sup> CEV has been provided with the Austrian definition of volunteering by Dr. Erika Winkler from the Centre for Ageing, Population and Volunteers' Policies within the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection.

given bullet point two, which states the voluntary activity should benefit a third person. This contradiction well reflects the general difficulty of defining volunteering.

## **2.2 Social acceptance of volunteering**

According to Karin Heitzmann and Ruth Simsa (2005: 723) private and corporate giving is generally rather scarce in Austria. The reason for this is the quasi absence of tax alleviations for donations. The only exceptions exist for some specific research activities. This does not mean, however, that Austrian business is not aware of the concept of corporate social responsibility or of the benefit volunteering brings to society. The high number of volunteers in Austria (33% of the population) also shows that volunteering is nothing exceptional and in fact widely known.

In 2005 the Austrian Ministry for Social Security has commissioned a survey among 400 Austrian companies of all sizes and from a wide range of branches<sup>3</sup>. This study has revealed that skills and competences gained through volunteering are widely recognised by Austrian business. In the course of this survey, conducted at the end of September 2005, telephone interviews were made with 400 companies.

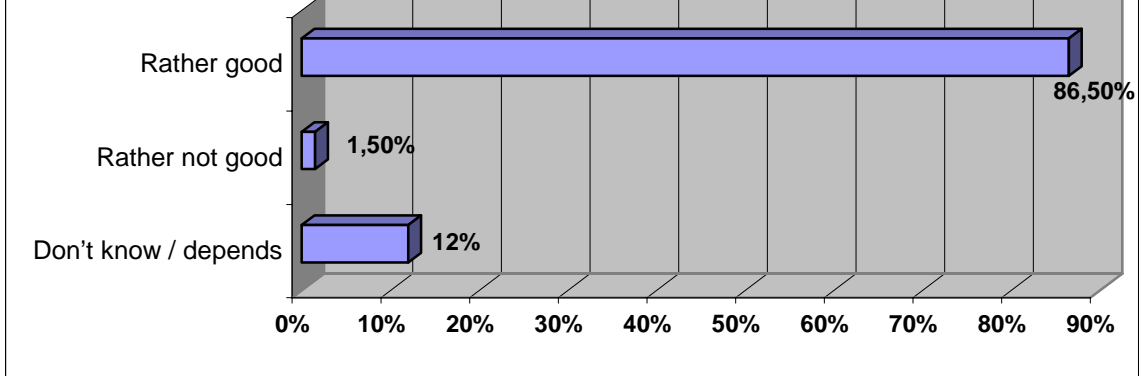
Approximately 86 % of the interviewed thought that it is “very important” or “rather important” that people are engaged on a voluntary basis outside their employment. Especially small enterprises of 20 employees or less adhered to this opinion. About 86.5 % of the interviewed found it “rather good”<sup>4</sup> if their employees volunteer in their leisure time. Especially those under 35 years of age approved voluntary engagement.

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<sup>3</sup> This survey was carried out by “Public Opinion” and its results are published on the official Austrian website on volunteering [www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at). The direct links are included in the References (7.)

<sup>4</sup> The question asked was “If you learn that one of your employees that he/she is volunteering in his/her free time, do you think this is rather good or rather not good?”

**Table 3: Employer's opinion on the possible volunteering of their employees**



Source: Company Survey 2005 commissioned by the Austrian Ministry

As many as 93 % of the companies' representatives fully (55%) or partly (38%) agree with the view that through volunteering people can acquire experiences, skills and competences that are also useful for their job<sup>5</sup>.

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

Concerning volunteering experiences of applicants, 42 % of the interviewed employers affirmed that a proof of having done voluntary activity would improve the chances of employment of an applicant. The Question asked was the following:

*“Let's assume that somebody applies for a vacancy in your company and provides evidence on the voluntary work has done and the skills he has acquired through it: Would this improve or downgrade his chances of employment or would this have no impact what so ever?”*

Have no impact	43 %
Rather improve chances	42 %
Undecided/depends	15 %
Rather downgrade chances	1 %

<sup>5</sup> The question asked was: “It was claimed, that in volunteering in one's free time one acquires experiences, faculties and skills that profit also one's job. Do you agree with this view fully, partly or not at all?”

It thus became visible that Austrian employers generally consider volunteering as something positive and that more half of them are convinced that voluntary engagement can profit the job. They are joined by the volunteers themselves who are aware that by doing voluntary work they develop their skills and competences (c.f. 4.3).

### **2.3 Government policy towards volunteering**

The Austrian government has in recent years amplified its efforts to promote voluntary engagement. In 1997 the Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection, which deals also with volunteering, has initiated the creation of “Citizen’s Bureaus” (Bürgerbüros) at local level that were meant to serve as a platform for the coordination of voluntary engagement and to which in about half of the cases real volunteer centres were associated (see chapter 3).

The international year of the volunteer in 2001 has kick-started another set of government actions. The Austrian government actively participated in it by creating the “Austrian National Committee for the International Year of the Volunteers 2001”. Constituted on 4 December 2000, it was meant to work on the valorisation and recognition of voluntary work and the improvement of the environment for volunteering. The committee consisted of more than hundred members from all strands of Austrian society. What is remarkable is that it again reflects the Austrian corporatist tradition described above. Amongst others, the three traditional camps and the military are represented.

The National Committee was presided by the federal Ministers for ‘Social Security and Generations’ and ‘Home Affaires’. A large range of stakeholders were represented: All political fractions (conservatives, liberals, social-democrats and Greens) of the Austrian federal and state parliaments, eleven federal ministries, the regional governments, the Federation of Austrian Communities and the Federation of Austrian Cities. Among the members there were also interest representations, as for instance the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, the Austrian Trade Unions Federation, the Austrian Academy of the Sciences or the Austrian Institute for Youth Research. The Federation of Austrian Newspapers represented the media. Other members came from organisations active in the fields of social services, family, retired, women, youth, sports, education, culture, self-help, disaster relief, civil protection, from the fire brigade and from the military.

Within the Committee eight working groups were established that worked on different aspect of volunteering in Austria.

- “Valorisation and Recognition of Voluntary Engagement”: public relations for volunteering and possibilities of a certificate for voluntary activities

- “Quality Assurance”: Discussion of questions regarding the assurance of quality especially regarding training of volunteers
- “Insurance Protection of Volunteers”: aims at an arrangement valid for the whole of Austria, that should lead to standardised contracts for all institutions and organisations
- Discussing possibilities of integrating voluntary activity in the education system
- Recruitment and placement of volunteers
- Recognition of voluntary engagement in the public service, reflections about making volunteering an admission criterion
- “Business Support for Voluntary Work”: reflecting of the encouragement of social sponsoring by enterprises and the commitment for executives to volunteer in some extent
- Legal questions concerning the modernisation of associationism

The government actions following the International Year of the Volunteer were all results of the work started during 2001 by the Austrian National Committee.

### 2.3.1 Austrian Council for Voluntary Work

The *Austrian Council for Voluntary Work* (“Österreichischer Rat für Freiwilligenarbeit”) created in 2002 by the Austrian government can be seen as the institutionalisation of the Austrian National Committee for the International Year of the Volunteers 2001. It serves as a consultant to the government and is part of the volunteering infrastructure at national level. Less than half the size, the Council still regroups the most important actors of Austrian civil society, reflecting once more Austria’s corporatist tradition. Out of the 45 Council members<sup>13</sup> are representatives of the federal ministries and three come respectively from the federations of towns, communities and the federal states. Six members represent different business and labour federations, 19 members come from NPOs and NPO networks working with volunteers and 4 members represent the four political groups in the Austrian parliament.<sup>6</sup>

The Austrian federal minister for social security, generations and consumer protection (presently Ms. Ursula Haubner) holds the presidency of the Council. Two officials from this ministry also assure the day-to-day management. They are assigned to the Centre for Ageing, Population and Volunteers' Policies within the ministry.

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<sup>6</sup>A complete list of the council members is available at <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/cms/upload/pdf/Freiwilligenrat-Mitglieder.xls> .

The creation of the *Austrian Council for Voluntary Work* had been one of the key claims voiced during the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001. According to the decision of the Council of Ministers on 17 June 2003 the function of the Council for Voluntary Work is the interest representation of volunteers and their organisations. It also serves as a platform for networking among volunteer organisations. Furthermore, it performs an advisory function for volunteering vis-à-vis the Austrian Federal Government. Its task is to facilitate volunteering in Austria by abrogating barriers and by formulating recommendations for promoting volunteering of all ages in Austria. Thanks to the 19 members from associations, active in the field of volunteering, the Council is able to reflect the manifold domain of volunteering in Austria.

The first constituting meeting was held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2003 where the four working groups of the Council were established.

The working groups are assigned to the following topics:

- Valorisation and recognition of voluntary activities and promotion of youth volunteering
- Volunteer placement, formation, education and training of volunteers, volunteer management in NPOs
- Legal status of volunteers and legal framework for their activities
- Cooperation between the public authorities, business and NPOs

### 2.3.2 Awards for volunteers and supporting business

In the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001 Austria decorated for the first time the “Volunteers of the Year”. It was an initiative to show to the public that voluntary engagement is not taken for granted and that volunteers merit public recognition. Each year about 20 volunteers receive awards in six categories. These are:

1. Serving the World: National and international natural disasters
2. Serving Austria and its citizens: 60 years of the II. Republic and of reconstruction
3. Serving solidarity between generations: Promotion of relations between the old and the young
4. Serving people with disabilities: Help them to have an everyday life that is worth living
5. Serving health and sport: Motivation and support of a healthy lifestyle
6. Serving the cause: Media and companies actively supporting volunteering

Selection criteria are the uniqueness of the engagement, its originality, its duration, the person's pro-activeness and the aspect of sustainability in the project.

A list of the winners of the last years is available on the Internet<sup>7</sup>.

### 2.3.3 TRIGOS awards for business

In 2004 seven Austrian organisations have created the TRIGOS awards for Austrian companies committed to *Corporate Social Responsibility*. The organising NPOs are Caritas, the Austrian Red Cross, SOS-Kinderdorf, WWF, the Austrian Industrialists' Association, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and HUMANS.WORLD.

Awards are assigned in the categories "Society", "Workplace" and "Market". In each of the categories a big, a medium-sized and a small enterprise are chosen. However, only in the first "society" category there is actually a link with volunteering. The categories cover the following topics:

- Companies complying with the **Society** category have formed partnerships with NGOs, give their employees exemptions for civic engagement, make donations or help organising public relations campaigns for causes like disaster relief, poverty reduction, education, quality of life, culture, sport or ecology.
- The category **Workplace** awards companies that promote training, work-life balance, professional integration of disadvantaged groups, gender equality, diversity or health. Possible activities of eligible companies are therefore integration projects, training campaigns, flexible working-time models, support of families, health initiatives, etc.
- The third category **Market** applies to companies that are in touch with interest groups, care about the sustainability of their products or commit themselves to transparency and fair prices. They can receive the awards for cooperative product development, consumer-friendly communication, dissemination of norms in the supply chain or proactive crisis management.

In 2005 there were 72 submissions out of which 27 were nominated and finally 10 chosen. The jury is composed of 7 representatives of the organising organisations and three external scientific experts.

The homepage of the TRIGOS project is [www.trigos.at](http://www.trigos.at)

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/cms/front\\_content.php?idcat=4](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/cms/front_content.php?idcat=4)

#### 2.3.4 Austrian Volunteer Passport

With the aim of promoting voluntary engagement and of encouraging volunteers to self-confidently show their voluntary activity to their environment, the Austrian government in 2005 has created the *Austrian Volunteer Passport* (“Österreichischer Freiwilligenpass”). Especially young people were targeted with this initiative that was meant to underline that voluntary engagement is being recognised and that it “pays off” in some way. This passport allows volunteers to document all the voluntary engagement they have undertaken during their life.

At the same time the passport shall make employers understand, why they should opt for employees that are engaged in a voluntary activity. The study mentioned under 2.2 has revealed that Austrian business in its majority appreciates volunteering. As many as 42% of the interviewed have stated that a documentary proof on voluntary activities including the special skills and competences gained through it, would rather improve a person’s chances of being hired.

The Volunteering Passport not only accounts for the voluntary work its owner has completed, but also objectively documents the skills and competences the person has gained through it. For this reason the Austrian Economic Chamber and the Austrian Employment Service, too, support this certificate.

Vice versa, the Volunteering Passport is also an instrument to raise interest for volunteering among job seekers of all ages, as it proves that volunteering is a means of widening one’s skills and competences in the context of job coaching and job-seeking.

#### 2.3.5 General promotion of volunteerism

In order to promote volunteering on a large scale the Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection has created a special website on volunteering in Austria ([www.freiwilligenweb.at](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at)). This web site serves as an information tool on all aspects of volunteering. It covers volunteering policy, information about all Austrian volunteer centres, information about projects, awards, and other information on volunteering. It enables people to find out about the volunteer opportunities in their region and generally covers all aspects of volunteering infrastructure in Austria.

### **3. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Austrian Council for Voluntary Work is the most important volunteering infrastructure at national level. Although it has only a consultative role vis-à-vis the Austrian government, its recommendations have so far been put into practice, thanks to the close linkage between the

Council and the Ministry in charge of volunteering. Unlike other European countries, as for instance the Netherlands, there is no national volunteer centre in Austria. The Austrian Caritas, however, together with the Caritas of the diocese of Innsbruck has tried to lance a country-wide pool of volunteer centres (“Interessensgemeinschaft Freiwilligenzentren Österreich”)<sup>8</sup>. Yet, the success of this initiative is still rather limited as only three other volunteer centres are at present participating. These are the volunteer centre of the federal state of Tirol, the voluntary association “Help and Hobby” (“Hilfe und Hobby”) that belongs to the Caritas in the archdiocese of Salzburg, the volunteer centre of the city of Graz, that is assigned to the “Volkshilfe Steiermark” (a secular organisation, labelled ‘of general interest’), and the “Ehrenamtsbörse Wien” assigned to the “Wiener Hilfswerk” (secular organisation).

As already stated, the Austrian government has taken many actions in order to support volunteering. It has done so, even before the IYV 2001. In order to promote citizen engagement in Austria, in 1997 the Austrian Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection developed the concept of the *Bürgerbüros für Jung und Alt* (citizens’ bureaus for the old and the young), a community office charged with the facilitation of voluntary engagement of all ages at community level. This initiative was meant to serve as a kick-off for the creation of new platforms for voluntary engagement. Importance was attached to the ‘principle of locality’. *Bürgerbüros* should serve as contact points in the direct social environment of citizens. However, they should in no way be in concurrence to already existing initiatives of the retired or to other welfare institutions. On the contrary they were meant to compliment and support the work of the existing institutions.

There were three calls for bids from 1997 onwards for the initiation of respectively 10 *Bürgerbüros*. In the first call 10 candidates received an initial aid of then 100 000 Austrian Schillings (EUR 7,267.28) that were earmarked for office infrastructure and promotion. Staff costs are not provided for in the kick-off aid. The 20 *Bürgerbüros* created thanks to the first two calls were mostly established as associations to guarantee the follow-up of the project. Only in the last call in 2002 those candidate communities were chosen, where the *Bürgerbüro* was integrated into an already well-functioning support association (Trägerverein).

The selection criteria the candidates had to fulfil were the following:

- Creation of a *Bürgerbüro* as a platform for voluntary engagement and own initiatives
- The creation of an association of *general interest* with a board consisting mainly of retired persons or since 2002 the existence of a support association

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<sup>8</sup> Their homepage is <http://www.freiwilligenzentrum.at> .

- Engagement for a long-term support for the *Bürgerbüro* by the local community or by the sponsoring organisation, especially by providing for premises, by taking over the material costs and by support in terms of staff.
- Staff's participation in the trainings and networking meetings organised by the Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection
- Documentation of all the *Bürgerbüro*'s activities (placement of volunteers, initiatives and events)

Today there are 28 Bürgerbüros in Austria. 15 of them are linked with *regional volunteer centres* (Freiwilligenbörsen). The official website on volunteering of the responsible Austrian ministry provides a list with all volunteer centres, their contact details and a description of their activities<sup>9</sup>.



Source: [http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/pages/npo\\_hand/bb.php](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/pages/npo_hand/bb.php)

In order to facilitate the creation and maintenance of the associations coming out of the first two calls, the ministry proposed the following actions.

- Initiators of citizens' bureaus were provided with a qualified consultancy service for questions concerning evaluation, documentation and programming
- The ministerial department created a standardised statute for the associations.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/pages/frw\\_boersen/index.php?form\\_name=start](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/pages/frw_boersen/index.php?form_name=start)

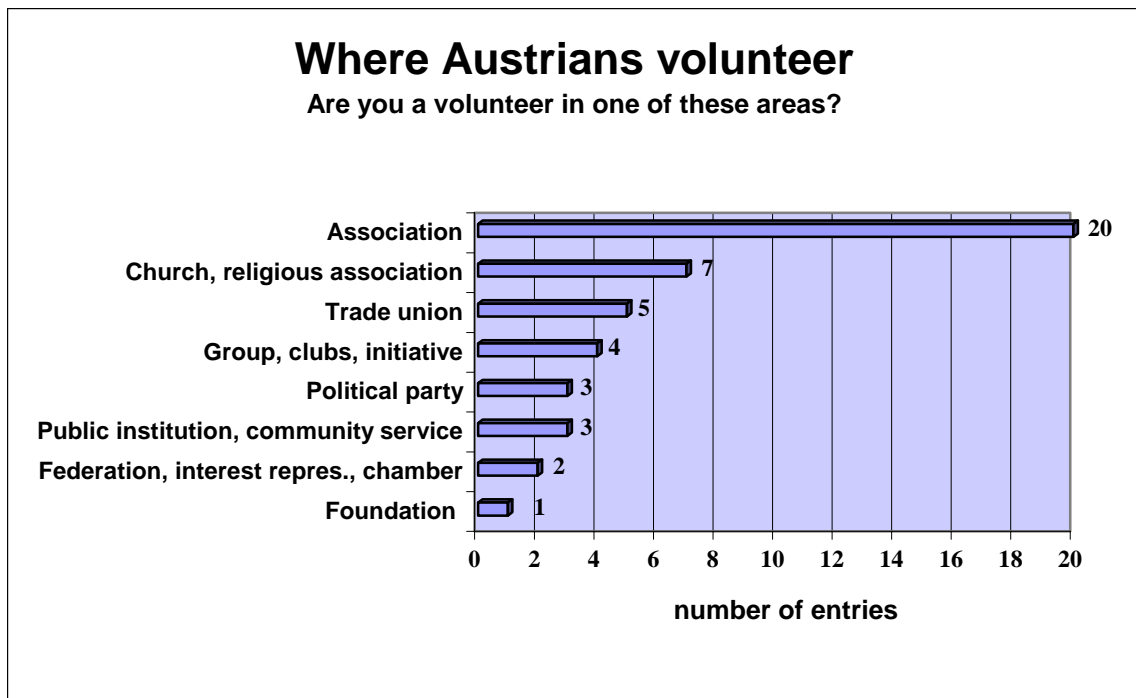
- Once a year the citizen bureaus are visited by an evaluator and a moderator for the solution of possible problems.
- Training sessions on association business were offered for the staff of the citizens' bureaus.
- The ministry helped in the public relations and the advertisement of the citizens' bureaus and their services.

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

In Austria 33% of the population were engaged in volunteering in 2005, spending on average 20.3 hours per month on a voluntary activity. Most of them volunteer in associations and their reasons for getting engaged are today often more of a personal than of an altruistic nature. The Austrian Ministry for Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection has commissioned a survey at the research institute "Public Opinion". In this study conducted in the mid of October 2005, 1013 Austrians were interviewed about their volunteer engagement and the so acquired qualifications and competences. Most of the data invoked in this chapter is taken from this survey.

##### **4.1 Trends in volunteering**

Over the last years the number of hours spent by volunteers active in the fields like culture, recreation or sports has increased. It seems that domains that have a "fun effect" are becoming more attractive. Other fields such as social services, environmental conservation, animal protection, emergency and mutual aid in neighbourhoods become less important. A field that has before 2005 not been considered in surveys on voluntary activity is the domain of self-help groups and citizens' action committees and groups. This domain shows a rather strong level of engagement. It happens that the potential for civic engagement in the local community and in the proximity is getting stronger.



Source : Public Opinion Survey 2005<sup>10</sup>

Almost one volunteer in ten is active in sports, eight percent are engaged in the field of recreation and sociability and seven percent are active in the fields of church/religion and culture respectively. As many as six percent engage in the auxiliary fire brigade, rescue, civil defence or emergency aid.

#### 4.2 Volunteer Profile

In Austria, men (37%) are somewhat more active than women (30%). Concerning age groups in society people between 30 and 50 years are the most engaged (35%). The next group are the over 50 years old (33%). The least active group (30%) are young people between 16 and 29 years of age. The number of hours spent on volunteering differs largely depending on the person. People engage between one and 180 hours per month. Generally men spent somewhat more time than women on volunteering. On the average men are engaged 21 hours per month where as women volunteer 19 hours. Most of the time is spent in the fields of sport and social service provision.

The Austrian survey has shown that volunteers are often all-rounders and perform a variety of different tasks. At the average they exercise three or four different activities simultaneously. Most of the people engage in two fields although there are examples of persons having up to 12 engagements at a time.

<sup>10</sup>

<http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/cms/upload/bilder/PrasentationENDBERICHTFassung261105ENDGULTIG.ppt>

According to the results of the survey commanded by the Austrian Ministry, education plays a certain role for the probability that people volunteer. 37 % of the Austrians having obtained the university entrance qualification (Matura) volunteer, where as the percentage of volunteers among those having attended secondary school that does not lead to the Matura is only at 34 percent. Of those with the lowest education (having obtained the lowest secondary school diploma) only 30% volunteer.

### 4.3 Motivation of volunteers

In Austria, people volunteer not anymore for altruistic reasons only. Recreation and sociability are the two most important reasons why people become engaged in volunteering. However, right behind figure altruistic motives in the list like helping others and doing something for society. Generally volunteers seem very well aware of the fact that voluntary engagement also gives something back to them, be it in a personal or a professional sense. They are aware that being volunteers they develop their skills and learn new things. One can thus distinguish three broad categories. The first range of motivation is the “fun aspect”, the second largest is the “social aspect” and the third and comparatively small group are more “self-centred” motivations.

The table below show the reasons Austrian volunteers mentioned for their engagement. They answered to the following question: “*There are many reasons for volunteering. Which of these considerations were for you the main reason(s) for performing a voluntary activity?*”

Activity	%
Fun, taking pleasure in the activity	71
Meet nice, congenial people	54
Help others	52
Doing something for society	51
Because it gives my life a meaning	42
Do something in compensation to job life	29
Enlarge one’s knowledge, gather experience	27
Take over responsibility	26
Gain recognition of other people	24
Realise my interests	22
Have the opportunity to be creative	22
Be able to realise myself	21
Gain knowledge of the human nature	17
Learn problem solving	15
Taking own decisions	13
Benefit from it for the job	13

No clear statement	3
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Source: Public Opinion Survey 2005<sup>11</sup>

These trends have already become visible in former research. Hermann Denz<sup>12</sup> from the Institute for Sociology from the university of Innsbruck used the findings of the Value Survey to compare the motivation of volunteers in 1990 and 1999 and to show that personal benefit has overtaken the sentiment of moral duty to engage in volunteering. Generally the motive of responsibility has sharply decreased where as personal motivation went up. The figures below show this very clearly. Denz affirms that the only age group where duty is still more important than personal benefit is that of the people over 60 years of age.

*“There are many different reasons for engaging on a voluntary basis. I am going to read you several propositions to this. Could you please tell me, how important these reasons are for you?”*

Motivation	Survey 1990	Survey 1999
Sense of duty, moral commitment	70 %	53 %
Religious conviction	28 %	30 %
To change sth. politically or socially	31 %	39 %
To learn sth. new and to make valuable experience	66 %	59 %

Source: Value Survey 1990 and 1999 (categories important and very important counted together), representation by H. Denz (2000:3)

#### 4.4 Time spent on volunteering in different domains

Austrian volunteers spent an average of 20.3 hours per month on voluntary engagement. Some sectors are however more invested in than others. The domain, where the volunteers spend most of their time is sport, followed by the field of ‘care of the elderly and handicapped and visiting’. Next comes working with young people in a non-school context. The forth category are politics. Austria thus considers engagement in political parties as volunteering – a view that is not without controversy. The least amount of time is spent in domains such as adult education and professional representation.

**Table: Hours spent per month on volunteering in different domains**

Domain	Hours/month
Sports	14,54
Care of the elderly, handicapped, visiting	13,89
Youth work outside school	11,24
Politics	11,18
Auxiliary fire brigade, rescue, emergency aid	10,69

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/cms/upload/bilder/PrasentationENDBERICHTFassung261105ENDGULTIG.ppt>

<sup>12</sup> H. Denz : *Veränderungen der Zivilgesellschaft in Österreich*, 2000, <http://www.univie.ac.at/OEGS-Kongress-2000/On-line-Publikation/Denz%20Zivilgesellschaft.pdf>

School, kindergarden	10,13
Church, religion	9,71
Neighbourhood aid	9,27
Selfhelp groups, citizens's initiatives, and groups	9,01
Culture	8,18
Militia, army	7,89
Leasure, sociability	7,62
Environment, conservation, animal protection	7,26
Other	6,79
Adult education	5,89
Professional organisations	5,16

Source: Survey Public Opinion 2005<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.5 Economic value of volunteering

According to calculations of the Austrian Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection based on the Survey conducted by Public Opinion in October 2005, Austrian volunteers spent 545 million hours volunteering in 2005. This number can be converted into 261,883 full-time jobs and these jobs are equivalent to 8.19 % of the employed persons.

According to the same calculation and assuming an hourly wage of EUR 10.00 Austrian volunteers create a value of EUR 5.45 billion per year.

### 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Austria has a rich civil society and, as far as associations are concerned, can look back at a long history. Since 1867 Austrians have the right to form associations and today more than 100 000 associations are registered, out of which many are depending on volunteers. Hence, it is not surprising that volunteering is a phenomenon that is well anchored in the Austria civil society. In 2005, as much as 33% of the Austrian population volunteered.

Austria's Civil Society is strongly marked by a corporatist tradition and by the prominent role of the state. This is also reflected by the rather strong dependency of some non-profit organisations on state funding. As in most of the European states, NPOs together with volunteers are taking over more and more services once performed directly by the state. This could in part explain the recent attention paid by the Austrian government to the voluntary sector. In the mid-90s the Austrian government has for instance initiated the creation of *citizens' bureaus* intended to facilitate civic engagement at local level. In many

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<http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/cms/upload/bilder/PrasentationENDBERICHTFassung261105ENDGU LTIG.ppt>

cases, regional volunteer centres were attached to these bureaus. The International Year of the Volunteer in 2001 has kick-started another set of government initiatives. Among those figure the Volunteers of the Year Awards (2001), the creation of the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work (2003) and the Austrian Volunteer Passport (2005). But not only the Austrian government considers volunteering as important, but also Austrian business does, as a study from October 2005 shows.

The economic value created by volunteering (5.45 billions in 2005) is huge and volunteers and business commonly recognise the utility of volunteering both for society as a whole and for the individual volunteer. The importance of the personal dimension of volunteering is rather new. In fact, today Austrian volunteers get engaged mainly for reasons linked to self-realisation than for the mere sense of duty, which has not always been the case.

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## **7. USEFUL CONTACTS**

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Volunteer Centres in Austria

<http://www.freiwilligenzentrum.at/>

Volunteer Centre in Tirol

<http://www.freiwillige-tirol.at/>

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