



VOLUNTARY ACTION ITALY

FACTS AND FIGURES

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INTRODUCTION

This study aims to provide comprehensive information as well as statistics and data on volunteering in Italy. First of all, it gives an overview of the historical, political and social framework regarding volunteering in Italy and describes, with regards to the most recent developments, the kind of relationship and collaboration that has been taking form between voluntary organizations and the public administration. Secondly, it explores the volunteering infrastructure, its nature, activities and types of services provided. Furthermore, the study provides broad data on features of the volunteer population and the sectors in which volunteers are active. This data comes from the last two-year study (2004/2005) carried out by ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, and regards voluntary organizations listed in regional and province registers at 31st December 2003. Finally, concluding remarks are focused on possible future development of volunteering with special attention to the role that it might play in the definition of a new model of social protection.

1. DEFINITIONS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Definition of the third sector

The third sector, also known as “third way”, “civil economy”, “social private sector” etc., constitutes a veritable galaxy of different types of organizations. The common element that unites all these forms is that they are all private, non-profit making organizations whose scope is that of social utility and solidarity. They all aim to foster direct citizen participation, amplify their specific activities, provide services and redistribute resources.

The development of the third sector in Italy goes back to the mid 1970 when the dyadic system, made up of the Market and the State, became obsolete, as it was no longer capable of satisfying all the needs and emerging instances of an evolving society.

A richer and more differentiated civil society has emerged ever since, characterized by the growth of a strong participatory spirit of the middle class that brought to the development and the reintroduction of different kinds of organized forms. Some of these, such as volunteering and associationism, had already been established in Italy, but received now a much higher attention with regards to the political and cultural role they play. The evolution or the creation of new actors was the direct consequence of the changing needs and expectations of citizens for a better quality of life (social and health services closer to citizens, the environment, life long learning, civil protection). There was also a significant change in the relationship between the State and the citizens, who were now capable of greater participation and organization in answering to the needs of society and dealing with issues of “general interest”, by operating directly on the territory.

The third sector has not been yet placed into a juridical framework that encompasses the entire sector, rather, laws have been provided for its specific components¹. The choice of recognizing the various actors and institutions of the third sector in a separate manner is unique in Europe. In any case, recent studies have reached an agreement in defining the characteristics of a third sector organization. Following this definition, a third sector organization is a body that:

- Is not profit distributing;
- Must have a private, juridical nature;
- Has a formal statute;
- Is self-governing (must not be manipulated or controlled by either the public or private areas);
- Must have a certain quota of voluntary work (that becomes the main quota in voluntary organizations).

Special legislation in Italy requires a sixth requisite which consists in the “democratic nature” of the organization (election of leading positions and effective member participation, Law no. 266/1991, Law no. 383/2000).

1.2 Definition of ‘voluntary organization’ and ‘volunteering’

Voluntary organizations are therefore a component of the Third Sector. A voluntary organization (VO) is an organized group, endowed with its own autonomy and identity, capable of working towards objectives that are of a solely solidarity nature. Volunteers form the backbone of a voluntary organization: they are responsible for taking decisions and they are the ones who determine which objectives shall be pursued.

The *Framework law on volunteering*, law no. 266/91² recognizes the social value and function of volunteering as an expression of participation, solidarity and pluralism. This law officially defined in 1991 the characteristics of voluntary organisations and the aspects that regulate the relationship between the VOs and the public administration, together with the juridical recognition of public entity partners. More recently, a definitive legitimization came about with amendments to the Title V of the Constitution (*Constitutional Law* no. 3/2001, art.118, last paragraph)³. In the *Framework law on volunteering*, 6 criteria are listed to define and recognize a VO. Only the simultaneous presence of these following 6 criteria let an organization be admitted in the Regional Voluntary Register.

¹ Italian legislation has so far identified five components: Non-governmental organizations (Law no. 47/1987); Voluntary organizations (Law no. 266/1991); Social cooperatives (Law no. 381/1991); Foundations of banking origin (Law no. 461/1998); Social Promotion Association (Law no. 383/2000).

² *Framework law on volunteering* no. 266/1991 available at: <http://www.volontariato.org/leggequadro.htm>

³ *Constitutional Law* no. 3/2001 available at: <http://www.senato.it/parlam/leggi/01003lc.htm>

- 1) Composition: volunteers who give spontaneous and gratuitous services must make up VOs prevalently. Paid staff is admitted exclusively in the limits necessary for the regular functioning of the organization or when needed to qualify or specialize the activity carried out.
- 2) Juridical form: VOs can choose the juridical form that is most suitable (as long as it is compatible with the solidarity aim).
- 3) Structure and functioning: VOs must have a democratic structure where elections are held in order to choose the governing positions. The statute of VOs must also foresee specific criteria for the admission and exclusion of members, and define their duties and rights.
- 4) Gratuitousness: Absence of profit making objectives, gratuitousness of the associative position and of the services provided by members.
- 5) Solidarity: VOs pursue a solidarity aim and are led by a solidarity purpose.
- 6) Obligations: VOs must prepare an annual budget where declaring their assets, the contributions received, etc.

Voluntary activities can be carried out within public/private bodies, within a voluntary organization or by the volunteer alone.

A volunteer is a person who freely carries out an activity for the benefit of others or the community, without financial gain. The best definition of a Volunteer was probably given during the International Year of Volunteers (2001) in the Charter of Ethics of volunteering⁴: “*A volunteer is a person, who, having carried out the duties of every citizen, places her/his own capacity at the disposal of others, for the community or for all humanity. She/he operates in a free and gratuitous manner promoting creative and effective responses to the needs of beneficiaries of her/his own action and contributing to the realization of common goods*”.

Volunteering has therefore two particular and distinctive characteristics:

- The gratuitousness nature of the action (volunteers can receive reimbursement for documented expenses at the very most);
- The spirit and aim of solidarity that lead the action. People volunteer for the defense of rights; for helping others in needs; for the protection, development and greater availability of common goods to increase the quality of the life of citizens.

1.3 Historical evolution of volunteering

Volunteering is not a new phenomenon in Italy. The first organized forms of volunteering can even be tracked in the 13th century, with the *Confraternite di Misericordia* based in Tuscany. These organizations, dedicated to charitable activities, represent in fact the most ancient form of volunteering

⁴ This document was drafted by FIVOL, The Italian Foundations for Volunteering. The whole document can be downloaded in Italian at: <http://www.fivol.it/>

in Italy. Founded in Florence in 1244, they increased and developed and count now 700 organizations. Other groups developed from the 19th century ongoing, such as the *Gruppi del Volontariato Vincenziano*, who concretely expressed the dictated of the Church's social doctrine. Other forms of citizens solidarity, based on the values of socialism, sprang up in the second half of the 19th century in the form of *Pubbliche Assistenze, Società di Mutuo Soccorso e Case del Popolo*.

However, the phenomenon was marginal and strongly characterized by a compensatory, charitable valence, separate from the public welfare system, which, moreover, had a secondary place in public authority policies up to the 1970s.

As stated above, the mid 1970s were a somewhat turning point following the modernization and decentralization of the welfare system. From a traditional reparative and charitable role, it moves on to pursue one of prevention and social promotion, with the intent of removing the causes that produce discrimination, social hardship, environmental degradation and poor quality of life. Various factors contributed to this important change:

- The deep crises of the welfare state⁵, which had become more and more inefficient in responding to the differentiated social needs as a consequence of deep cuts in social expenses.
- Important welfare reforms (from presidential Decree No. 616/1977⁶ to the Law No. 833/1978 *Institution of National Health System*⁷ which acknowledge the role of volunteering in the art. 45). According to these reforms, volunteers collaborates with public services, and at times substitutes them, especially in case the State is unable to curb the emerging social problems such as youth hardship, the degradation of urban outskirts, the break up of the family unit and the new poor. These reforms followed the administrative decentralization of social competences that made local authorities responsible for elaborating and managing social policies.

Along side with the factors already mentioned, that stimulated the development of the entire third sector; there were a few ones that favoured specifically the growth of volunteering:

- The institution of *Caritas* (1971)⁸ which has the promotion of volunteering among its objectives, and which organized a conference⁹ that convened for the first time all the voluntary organization.
- The birth and development of the *Movimento del Volontariato italiano* (Italian Voluntary Movement) in 1978, and the biennial conventions on volunteering held in Tuscany. The one held in

⁵ This expression indicates a state that tries to guarantee a minimum level of social security to the population by replying to the needs of health care, social assistance, education etc.

⁶ See the text at: http://www.terzaeta.com/news/leggi/dpr240777n616/art_17-30.html

⁷ This Law is available at: http://www.tutori.it/L833_1978.htm

⁸ Caritas was set up in Italy in 1971 following an idea of pope Paolo VI. It was created as a pastoral entity with the aim to promote charity within the Christian community.

⁹ Naples, 1975, "Volunteering and Human Promotion".

Viareggio in 1980 was a historical event because it sanctioned the self-awareness of volunteering as a political subject¹⁰.

- A growing attention from public institutions towards volunteering. In the 1980s public institutions' attitude switched from the formal recognition of volunteering as a complementary resource, to the full acknowledgement of its importance and contribution made to public policies.

1.4 Policy of the government towards voluntary organisations: Volunteering in the new welfare system

The sudden development of the not for profit sector is accompanied in Italy by a trend that gives the third sector, in its various components, a decisive role in carrying out a new welfare system.

The 1990s brought big legislative changes regarding voluntary activity, from the Volunteering Framework Law 266/1991, defining the characteristics of voluntary organisation, to Law no. 383/2000¹¹ regulating social promotion organizations, which, with the introduction of specific national and regional registers, sheds further light on the situation and allows organisations to find their own place. Very important were also the laws that introduce profound changes in the relationship between the State and local autonomous authorities and between local autonomous authorities and the citizens and their organizations¹². These changes reflect a new conception of the welfare system and political organisation of the state whose key principle is the decentralization of competencies and decisions regarding expenditure, and the conception of an integrated system of services and intervention in which all actors in a given territory can concur. These laws reformed the institutional competencies following the principle of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity.

The political inclination to consider volunteering to be a resource in the health care was reaffirmed and legitimated, after Law 833/1978¹³ (see paragraph 1.3), with Legislative decree No. 502/1992 *Riordino della disciplina in material sanitaria*¹⁴ that provides for forms of participation of citizen organizations committed to safeguarding of the right to health care, to planning, to monitoring and assessing health care services at a regional and district level. This aspect was reaffirmed in Legislative Decree No. 299/1999 *Norme per la razionalizzazione del Servizio Sanitario Nazionale*¹⁵ (*Rules to rationalize the National Health Service*), which foster welfare integration, the qualification

¹⁰ The National Convention of Viareggio dealt with the issue: "Volunteering, society, and public powers" indicated the "need to promote a juridical regulation of the relationship between the public and private sectors".

¹¹ This law can be downloaded at : <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/003831.htm>

¹² Law No. 142/1999 Ordinamento delle autonomie locali ; Law No. 241/1990 Nuove norme in materia di procedimento amministrativo e il diritto di accesso ai documenti amministrativi (Law on transparency) ; Law No. 59/1997 Legge delga per il conferimento di funzioni alle Regioni e agli Enti locali ; Law No. 127/1997 Misure urgenti per lo snellimento dell'attività amministrativa e dei procedimenti di decisione e di controllo ; Legislative Decree No. 112/1998 Conferimento di funzioni e compiti amministrativi dello Stato alle regioni ed agli Enti locali (in which the functions of the State are transferred to the Regions and local authorities); Law No. 3/2001 Reform of Book V of the constitution.

¹³ This Law is available at:http://www.tutori.it/L833_1978.htm

¹⁴ This Legislative decree is available at : <http://www.tsrmanap.org/dec.leg.vo%20502.htm>

¹⁵ Legislative decree No. 299/1999 available at :

http://www.ministerosalute.it/ecmimgs/C_18_normativa_4_listafila_file_0_linkfile.pdf

of services provided, and involves the citizens and consumer organizations in the processes of evaluation.

With the *Framework law for the realization of integrated system of social services and interventions*, No.328/2000¹⁶, that aimed at promoting an “integrated system of social services and interventions” the government went just in the directions of creating the co-responsibility of voluntary organisations and of other third sector’s entities with regards to all decision-making processes on social policies, especially at a local level. This is an indisputable affirmation of the very importance of volunteer organizations, called upon to become partners of the public authorities. Finally, the article no. 118, last paragraph of the reform of Book V of the Constitution¹⁷, further stresses and highlights the importance of volunteering. It acknowledges that the pursuit of the “general interest” is not the exclusive competence of public institutions, but also regards the actions of citizens. This is the absolute and definitive legitimization of the autonomous contribution of citizens in the creation of a welfare mix.

Law No. 328/2000 also sanctioned a citizens’ participative role in planning, project making and evaluation of social policies. The importance of this law lies in the weight given to programming in the framework of a local, solidarity-based welfare system that gives responsibility to all the social actors involved (welfare mix or plural welfare). The Area Plan (Piano di Zona)¹⁸ foreseen by the law is a programming instrument that is created with the collaboration of all the active subjects of the territory, therefore also involving voluntary action. Local authorities in fact involve voluntary organizations in many phases during the construction of the Area Plan. Their contribution is very important for conducting the first analysis of the community’s needs and resources. Volunteering has in fact a deep knowledge of the territory in which operates and can therefore act in order to safeguard the most vulnerable subjects’ rights, especially when passing from the first phase of analysis to the following phase in which priorities of action and objectives are set by local authorities. Voluntary organizations can be valid partners in providing services to people, and have a role also in the final assessing of the Area Plan, when new ideas and careful consideration are needed to re-start the all process. Voluntary organizations are thus seen as subjects that contribute to the direct participations of citizens in the assessment of the quality of the services system, projects, etc.

In recent years, voluntary organizations have increasingly requested public recognition. The high number of organizations enrolled in those registers created by Law No. 266/1991 indicated that

¹⁶ This law is available at : <http://www.parlamento.it/leggi/003281.htm>

¹⁷ “ The State, regions, provinces, Cities and Municipalities foster the autonomous initiatives of single citizens and/or groups of citizens; to carry out activities of general interest on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity”.

¹⁸ Six municipalities out of ten have already drawn up their Social Plan in collaboration with other actors in the territory. This clearly means that public authorities have recognized that volunteering has a role of primary importance in safeguarding and fostering citizens’ rights, and underline the importance of its eminently political function. Volunteering is not only seen as a local actor that participates in the elaboration of social and public health care planning, but is more and more appearing as an effective partner along side public administrative authorities which guarantees a precise vision of the needs of society, sustained by a mission of social justice and the willingness to develop a better quality of life for all.

VOs are now capable of being operative, by taking on a public function. In fact, there has also been a growth in contracts and agreements between the public sector and VOs for the management of specific interventions or services.

2. VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS' RECENT TRENDS

2.1 Last ISTAT's Survey¹⁹

ISTAT²⁰, the National Institute of Statistics, carried out a two-year study (2004/2005) regarding voluntary organizations listed in regional and province registers at 31st December 2003. All following data therefore resulted from the mentioned study that was published in October 2005²¹.

At the end of 2003 21.021 voluntary organizations were listed in the public registers (with a rise of 14,9% in comparison with 2001 and an increase of 152% compared to 1995, date of the first ISTAT survey on volunteering). This significant growth depended both on the birth of new organizations (8.530) and on the public registration of already existing organizations (4.148).

On the whole the analysis of last survey's results confirms a few characteristics of voluntary organizations in Italy, such as:

- A stronger presence of VOs in the northern regions, even if in the last few years VOs increased at a bit quicker rate in the centre and south of Italy;
- VOs have mainly a small organizational dimension both as regards the number of active volunteers and the amount of economic available resources;
- Volunteers are mainly men; aged between 30 and 54; graduated (high school), and are employed;
- VOs are still especially actives in the field of health care and social assistance;

2.2 Geographic range of VOs

In 2003 a big majority of Voluntary Organizations (60%) were situated in the North of Italy (31,5% in the North East, 28,5% in the North West); 19,3% in the Centre and 20,7% in the South and Islands²².

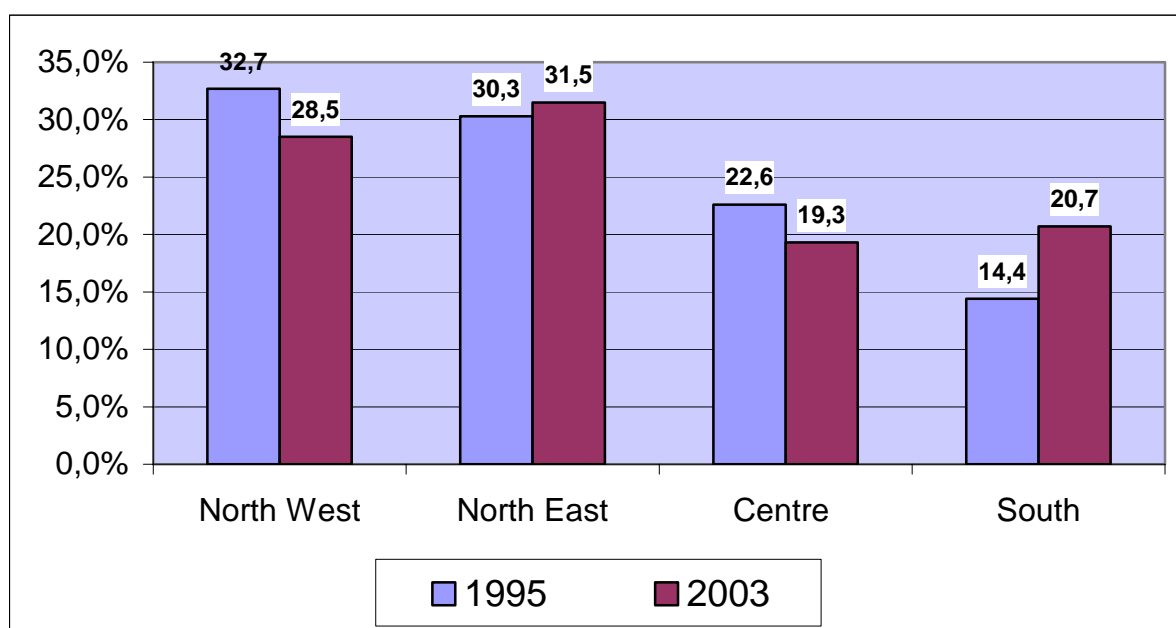
²⁰ ISTAT, The National Institute of Statistics, is a public body of research. Founded in 1926, it is the major "producer" of official statistics in Italy. It works in complete autonomy and in interaction with the scientific world.

²¹ The complete document is available in Italia at:

http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20051014_00/statbreve_volontariato2003definitivo.pdf

²² The subdivision of Italy into areas includes the following Regions: *NorthWest* - Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardia, Liguria; *North East*- Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna; *Central* - Toscana, Umbria, Marches, Lazio; *South* - Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria; *Islands* - Sardenia and Sicilia.

Graphic 1 - Geographic range of VOs in year 1995 (8.348 units) and year 2003 (21.021)



As we can see in Table 1, between 1995 and 2003 the rate of growth was highest in the regions of Centre and South of Italy – Sicilia, Molise, Campania, Basilicata e Marche.

The organizational density is in Italy of 3,6 organizations per 10.000 inhabitants. We can find some values above the national average in Trentino Alto Adige (17,9 organizations per 10.000 inhabitants), Valle D'Aosta (7,4), Sardegna (6,5) and Toscana (6,0). Again, southern regions are the ones which shows the lowest values: Abruzzo and Calabria (2,2), Campania (1,7), Sicilia, Puglia and Lazio (1,3).

Considering the number of organizations (in each single region at the end of 2003) in connection with this index of density, Trentino Alto Adige and Toscana appear to be the only regions in the centre north where the highest number of organizations coincides with a density well above the average.

Table 1 – Voluntary organizations listed in regional registers at the end of years 1995, 2001, 2003

Regions	1995		2001		2003		% Variation		No. Org. per 10.000 inh.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	2003/1995	2003/2001	
Piemonte	693	8,3	1384	7,6	1626	7,7	134,6	17,5	3,8
Valle D'Aosta	35	0,4	73	0,4	90	0,4	157,1	23,3	7,4 ²³
Lombardia	1687	20,2	3154	17,2	3499	16,7	107,4	10,9	3,8
Trentino Alto Adige	404	4,8	1560	8,5	1727	8,2	327,5	10,7	17,9
Veneto	872	10,5	1907	10,5	2018	9,6	131,4	5,8	4,3

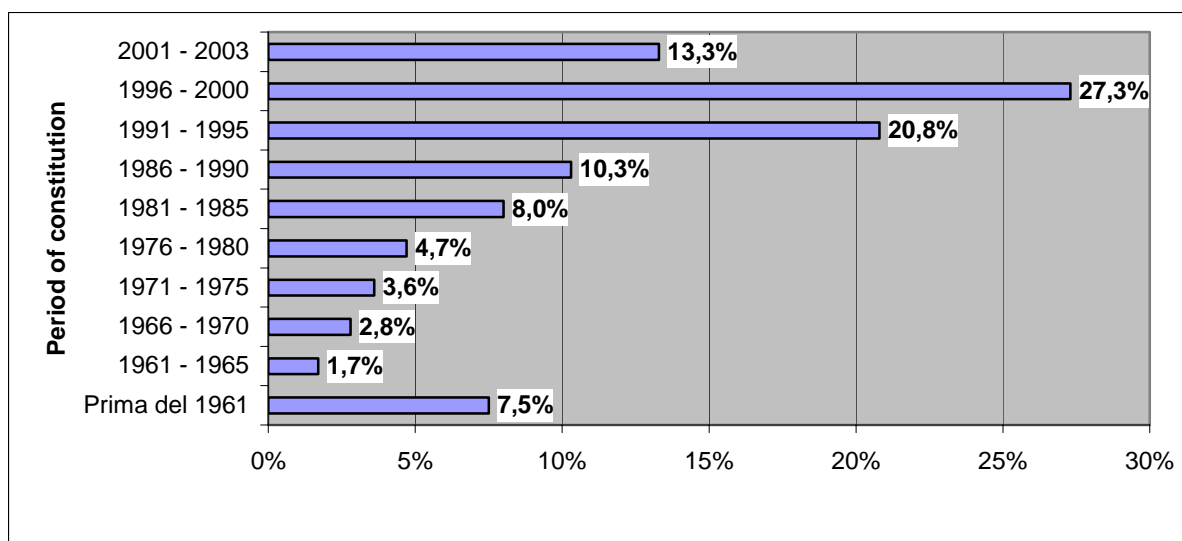
²³ The highlighted values in this column are well above the national average.

Friuli Venezia Giulia	236	2,8	631	3,4	701	3,3	197	11,1	5,9
Liguria	314	3,8	631	3,4	762	3,6	142,7	20,8	4,8
Emilia Romagna	1018	12,2	1907	10,5	2180	10,4	114,1	14,3	5,3
Toscana	1340	16,1	1894	10,4	2144	10,2	60	13,2	6
Umbria	173	2,1	393	2,1	460	2,2	165,9	17	5,4
Marche	178	2,1	637	3,5	799	3,8	348,9	25,4	5,3
Lazio	194	2,3	516	2,8	661	3,1	240,7	28,1	1,3
Abruzzo	90	1,1	254	1,4	283	1,3	214,4	11,4	2,2
Molise	24	0,3	130	0,7	166	0,8	591,7	27,7	5,2
Campania	173	2,1	763	4,2	964	4,6	457,2	26,3	1,7
Puglia	162	1,9	422	2,3	530	2,5	227,2	25,6	1,3
Basilicata	56	0,7	205	1,1	253	1,2	351,8	23,4	4,2
Calabria	188	2,3	363	2	448	2,1	138,3	23,4	2,2
Sicilia	55	0,7	491	2,7	642	3,1	1067,3	30,8	1,3
Sardegna	451	5,4	978	5,3	1068	5,1	136,8	9,2	6,5
ITALIA	8343	100,1	18293	100	21021	100	152	14,9	3,6
Nord West	2729	32,7	5242	28,7	5977	28,5	119	14	3,9
Nord east	2530	30,3	6005	32,8	6626	31,5	161	10,3	6,1
Centre	1885	22,6	3440	18,8	4064	19,3	115	18,1	3,7
South	1199	14,4	3606	19,7	4354	20,7	263	20,7	2,1

2.3 Structural characteristics

The most part of voluntary organizations, listed in regional registers at the end of 2003, are rather 'young' organizations. They have mostly been created since 1991, when regional registers were established within the frame of the law on voluntary organizations, No. 266/1991. As we can see in Graphic 2, 61,4% of organizations was constituted from 1991 to 2003. During this period of time, the five years from 1996 to 2000 knew the highest percentage of newly registered organizations (27,3%).

Graphic 2 – Voluntary Organizations per period of creation



As regards the number of volunteers operating in these organizations, more than half of voluntary organizations in 2003 (53%) count no more than 21 volunteers. It has been observed that with the increasing number of voluntary organizations during the last few years, the average number of volunteers per organization decreased: the average number of volunteers was 58 in 1995 and 39 in 2003.

2.4 Sectors of activity and categories of direct users

Health care and social assistance are, and have always been, the sectors in which the majority of voluntary organizations operate. Nevertheless, considering the 1995-2003 period, there has been a decrease in these sectors while the ones of culture, recreation, civil protection and environment protection have known a little but stable rise.

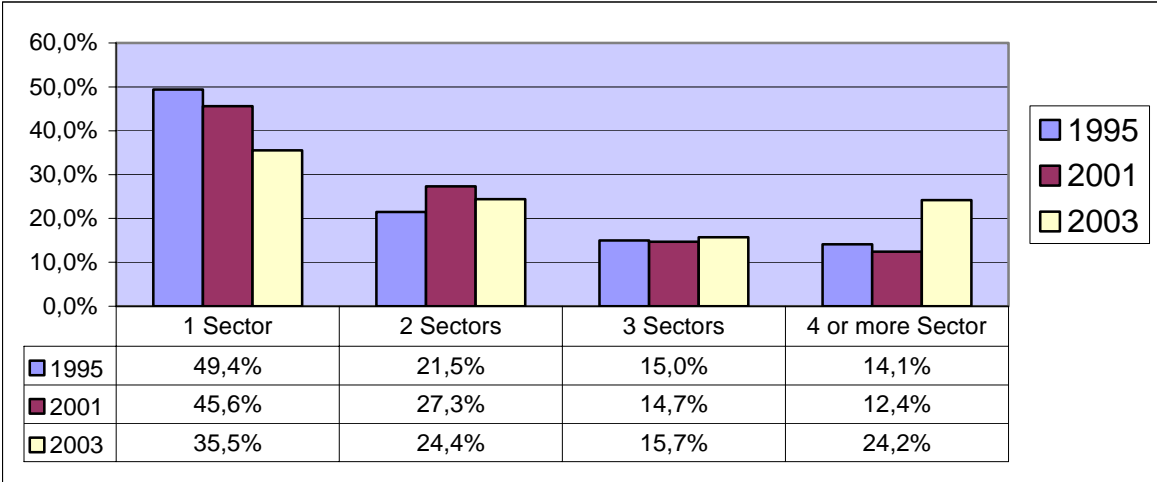
Table 6 – Voluntary organizations per main sector of activity in 1995, 2001, 2003

Sectors of activity	1995	2001	2003
Healthcare	42,4%	33,1%	28,0%
Social assistance	30,5%	28,6%	27,8%
Culture and recreation	11,7%	14,9%	14,6%
Civil protection	6,4%	9,8%	9,6%
Education	2,8%	3,3%	3,2%
Environment conservation	2,2%	3,8%	4,4%
Civil Rights	2,2%	2,4%	2,8%
Sports	1,8%	1,9%	2,0%
Other	-	2,2%	7,6%
TOTAL	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

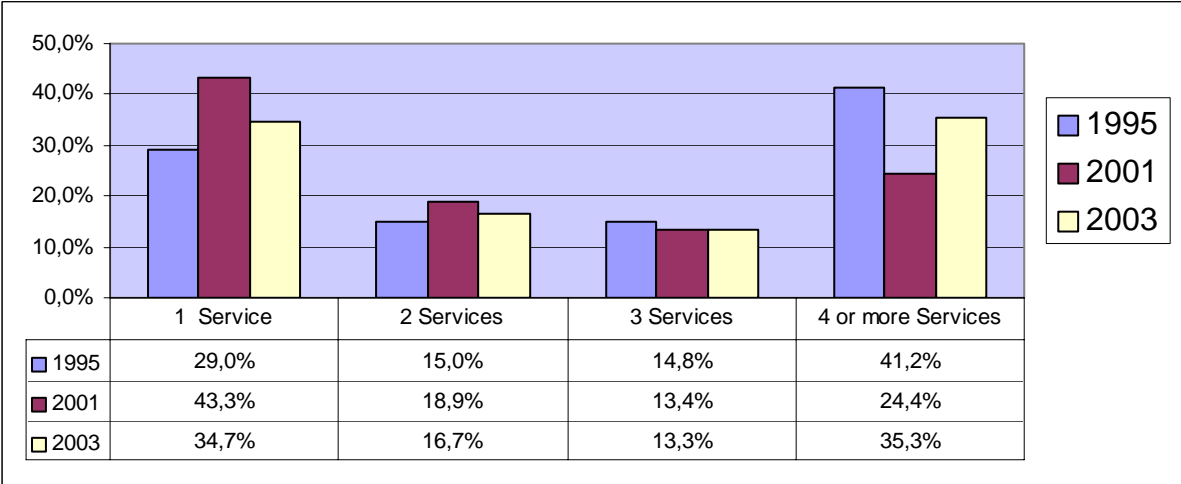
In 2003 35,5% of voluntary organizations affirmed to operate in one sector, 24,4% in two sectors, 15,7% in three sectors and 24,2% in four or more sectors (graphic 7).

In the last few years the dominant trend has been characterized by a fall in the degree of specialization. Organizations operating in one sector decreased, and increased the number of organizations operating in two or more sectors.

Graphic 7 – Voluntary Organizations per number of activity’s Sectors



Graphic 8 – Voluntary organizations per number of provided services



Voluntary organizations provide many different kinds of services. Services of listening, moral assistance (19,9%); bloodletting (17,4%), recreation and entertainment (14,5%); social inclusion (13%); organization of specific seminars 12,9%; organization of performance of entertainment (12,6%) and of music, theatre, performance (12,1%); information campaigning (11,8%); assistance at home (11,8%); helping in transportation of elderly people and of people with handicap (11,4%); medical aid and transportation of sick people (10,7%); information on civil rights (9,3 %); fist welcome (8,6%) etc.

There was a significant increase in the number of organization that directly provides services. In 2003 there were 15.625 organizations, 74,5% of all registered organizations, with direct users (they were 5.650 in 1997²⁴, 48,2%; and 13.451 in 2001, 73,5%).

²⁴ It is not available a comparable survey on users in 1995.

The number of direct user also knew a rise: from 2,5 millions in 1997 to 6,8 millions in 2003. The average number of users per organizations has remained quite stable (445 in 1997 and 448 in 2003). As we can see in the table below, the large majority of direct users consist in people who are sick or affected by traumas.

Table 7 – Voluntary organizations’ direct users per different categories in 2003

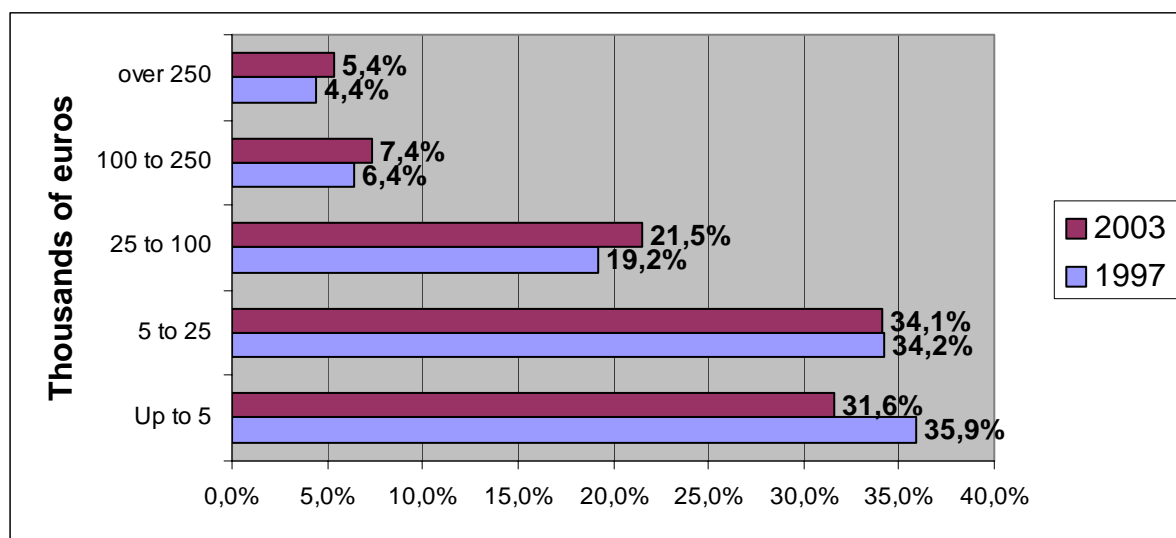
Categories of Users	Number	%
Sick people and affected by traumas	3.550.778	51,6
All sufficient elderly	643.706	9,4
Underage (up to 18 Years)	525.760	7,7
Immigrants	295.218	4,3
Disable people	194.545	2,8
Non Economic all sufficient individuals	170.882	2,5
Relatives of people with discomfort	167.198	2,4
Non all-sufficient elderly	149.425	2,2
Homeless	72.273	1,1
People with other kind of discomfort	66.913	1
Terminal ill people	66.161	1
Inmates and ex convicts	58.655	0,9
Alcohol addicted	39.275	0,6
Psichic ill people	35.937	0,5
Nomads	30.078	0,4
Drug- addicted	26.734	0,4
Refugees	23.038	0,3
Foster parents	15.377	0,2
Positive to HIV virus	12.976	0,2
Girl with children	12.500	0,2
People abused	11.623	0,2
Prostitutes	8.193	0,1
Victims of earthquake and floods	5.674	0,1
Others	680.130	9,9
TOTAL	6.863.049	100

2.5 Income of VOs

The total income of voluntary organizations was 675 millions of euros in 1997²⁵ and reached 1.630 millions of euros in 2003 (equal to 1.426 euros if we consider the price level of 1997). The average income per organization increased too, from 58.000 euros in 1997 to 77.000 euros in 2003 (equal to 67.000 euros at the price level of 1997). As a consequence, the distribution of VOs on the base of their income has shifted towards higher incomes (see graphic 9). In 2003 65% of organizations declared an income lower than 25.000 euros (70,1%) in 1997. Those with an income higher than 100.000 euros increased from 10,8% in 1997 to 12,8% in 2003.

²⁵ There are not available comparable data for year 1995.

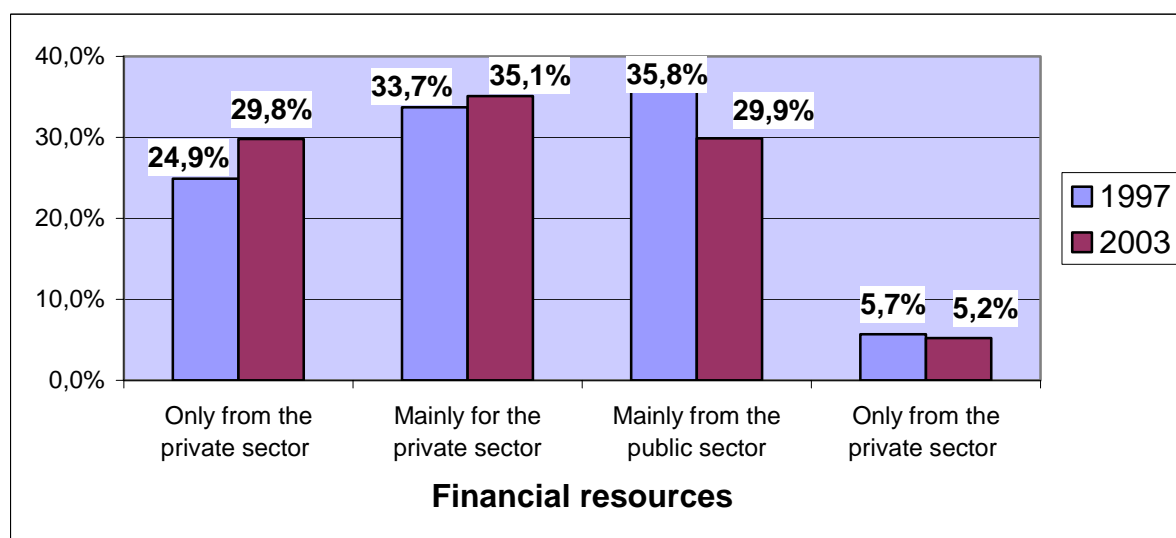
Graphic 9 – Class of incomes in Years 1997 and 2003. Values are considered at the same level of prices of 1997.



From a geographical point of view the distribution of incomes is not balanced. In the central regions of Italy (especially in Tuscany) we find nearly one third of total incomes. The South regions gather only 13,4% and the north regions (north east and north west) register nearly 60% of total incomes. The average income per organizations in 2003 registered the same pronounced differences: 97.000 euros in the central regions; 67.000 euros in the northern regions and 44.000 euros in southern regions.

Finally, as regards financial resources of voluntary organization, we can clearly see that in 2003 the part of funds coming from the private sector has increased while funds from public origin has fallen. (graphic 10).

Graphic 10 – Voluntary organizations per financial resources



3. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1 Voluntary Support Centres²⁶

Voluntary support centres (Centri Servizio per il Volontariato) which support voluntary organisations and citizens involved in volunteering, were founded in Italy following the approval of Law no. 266/1991 *Framework Law on Volunteering*, in compliance with its Art. 15. Their mission is to support and qualify voluntary activity. To this end, they provide services for voluntary organisations, both to those listed in regional registers and those who choose not to register. As set out by the Ministry of the Treasury Decree of 8 October 1997 regarding *Procedures for the constitution of special funds for volunteering in Regions*²⁷, some of the most important voluntary support centres' tasks are:

- Creating means and initiatives to stimulate the growth of solidarity, promote new voluntary initiatives and empower the existing ones;
- Offering qualified counselling and support as well as instruments for the planning, set up and running of specific activities;
- Organising training and qualification programmes for members of voluntary organisations;
- Offering information, news, documentation and data on local and national voluntary activities.

The voluntary support centres are financed through a Special Fund made available by foundations of banking origin. They must provide a contribution (no less than one fifteenth of their incomes) for the establishment of voluntary support centres. Every region has then a Special Fund managed by a controlling body: The Management Committee (*Comitato di Gestione*)²⁸.

These regional controlling bodies, that hold office for two years, approve the programmes set up by the centres and monitor their implementation

3.2 Nature, composition and relations with the territory

The voluntary support centres are private bodies that carry out activities of common interest. Networks of voluntary organisations manage the majority of centres. The non-voluntary partners

²⁶ Data taken from *Centri di servizio per il volontariato in Italia. Storia, attività e prospettive, Rapporto IV, Centri istituiti sino al 2004 (Voluntary Support Centres in Italy. History, activities and perspectives, Fourth Report, Centres set up until 2004*, realised by the *Csv.net* and *Cesiav* research group (Research and Initiative Centre for associations and the voluntary sector), Rome 2005. Unless otherwise stated the data refer to 2003 activities. Statistics provided by *Cesiav* in collaboration with the *ISTAT*, the National Statistical Institute.

²⁷ This decree also sets out the procedures for the institution of voluntary support centres.

²⁸ The Management Committee is made up of: One member representing the pertinent Region, designated according to the specific regional provisions; Four representatives of the largest voluntary organisations in the region - listed in the regional registry - nominated according to the specific regional provisions; One member nominated by the Minister for Labour and Welfare; Seven members nominated by the Savings Banks involved in Special Fund setting and their authorities; One member nominated by the Association among the Italian Savings Banks; One member representing the local authorities of the Region (association of the provinces and association of the municipalities), nominated according to the specific regional provisions.

amount to 8%, an important figure in establishing relations, though still quite small. There are 4.565 voluntary organisations that are members of voluntary support centres, of which almost 500 are umbrella organisations: thus representing at least 25% of the Italian voluntary sector.

Up to now, 72 voluntary support centres have been set up in all Italian regions. Of all the voluntary support centres that have been founded, 10 are regional and the remaining have a provincial dimension. In the regions where there are provincial voluntary support centres, these are generally members of regional coordinating bodies. At a national level, a National coordination body for voluntary support centres (Csv.net)²⁹ represents all the supporting centres. It collaborates with and assists the centres in their relations with national political and institutional authorities; it organizes meetings to exchange ideas and experiences, fosters the co-ordination of activities, cultural and professional development, and also work groups on specific issues.

All the voluntary support centres autonomously manage local structures, even at the very micro-territorial level. There are two common ways of proceeding: branches and committees. The “branch” provides services, which is active in the voluntary support centre’s area of competence, while the “committee” provides the services, which is present in the voluntary support centre’s area of competence but is governed in collaboration with the local voluntary organisations.

Table 2 – Territorial Distribution of VSCs

Territorial range						Service centres operating in 2003				
Geographical area	VSCs	Territorial range of VSCs				Central Offices	Branches		Committees	
		Sub-Provincial	Provincial	Interprovincial	Regional		VSCs	N.	VSCs	N.
North West	25	-	24	-	1	25	20	65	7	1
North East	18	-	17	-	1	18	13	58	9	3
Central	6	-	2	-	4	6	6	61	3	21
South	19	2 ¹	16	-	1	19	6	11	1	2
Islands	4	-	1	2	1	4	3	49	1	3
Italy	72	2	60	2	8	72	48	244	21	30

3.3 Human resources and services

Most professionals operating in the volunteer support centre centres have previous experience in the field of volunteering and the third sector. There are three main types of operators: managerial staff (general coordination, production of services); operational staff (secretarial office, administration,

²⁹ See more at: <http://www.centriserviziovolontariato.it/CSVSites/CSVnet/home.asp>

branches, supply of services) and consultants (for the more highly specialized tasks). The centres also make use of volunteers and young people carrying out a National Civil Service who are, nevertheless, a minority support to the more professionalised operators.

There are currently 519 employees with an open work contract (representing a workforce equivalent to 300 full-time jobs) and 169 workers with project-specific work contracts (temporary). If we consider the commitment made by volunteers (such as the 700 members of the executive councils, the leaders of work groups and commissions, or the presidents and vice-presidents that often carry out almost full-time unpaid work), but also the type and quality of employment of the operators, the sheer scale of the phenomenon becomes clearly visible. Operations are carried out by reducing the central apparatus to the necessary minimum, entrusting a part of the service provision to collaborators or external structures that are usually paid.

It should be also pointed out that volunteer support centre provide services mainly for voluntary organisations and volunteers, and to a smaller extent for other organisations (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Number of Services Provided by Volunteer Support Centre for different type of organisations

	2003	2002	2001
Type of organisations receiving help by VSC	No. of services provided by VSC	No. of services provided by VSC	No. of services provided by VSC
Voluntary organisations listed in the regional register	46,677	45,838	16,926
Voluntary organisations not listed in registers	24,202	28,012	11,979
Social promotion organisations³⁰	5,117	3,270	2,542
Social cooperatives³¹	663	638	272
Other not for profit organisations	2,478	5,273	2,161
Local organisations	1,967	1,831	1,358
Profit-making organisations	301	331	634
Individual volunteers	14,529	10,125	5,784
Others	-	824	6

³⁰ The “social promotion organisations” (*associazioni di promozione sociale*), must principally utilise volunteers for their activities, though they can also pay some of their members, and may also carry out activities only for their members, which voluntary organisations are prohibited from doing.

³¹ “Social cooperatives” are cooperatives that carry out activities for weak and disadvantaged categories of persons, or they may produce goods and services with the participation of these persons, and must have volunteers among their members.

Total services provided by VSC	98,164	96,142	41,662
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There are a variety of services provided by each voluntary support centre whose peculiar characteristics are influenced by the type and extent of local voluntary organisations' needs. Nevertheless, there is a substantial unity with respect to the fields of intervention and the extraordinary growth in the number of services provided (see table 4).

Table 4 – Types of services provided

Types of Services provided by VSC	2003		2002	2001
	Increase % 2001/2003	No. of services	No. of services	No. of services
Logistics	155,7	39.321	20.145	15.379
Communication	132,1	10.095	6.576	4.349
Information and dissemination (no. of newspaper articles)	47,1	75	60	51
Counseling and assistance	100,1	53.857	38.750	26.914
Hours of training	57,8	29.076	20.952	18.431
Promotional activities	115,2	1.907	889	886
Support to social projects	123,4	1.392	890	623

Logistics services can be distinguish in: providing office space and communication services (postal address, e-mail, telephone, fax etc.); use of computer at the centre for free; supplying computer programs; loan of equipment; loan of materials and premises for events, conferences and shows; etc. These represent a basic service for almost 10,000 organisations in Italy.

Counselling and advisory services provided by VSCs include: information, guidance and assistance to facilitate “being a volunteer and doing volunteering”. One group of counselling services is mainly directed towards groups and individuals during the constitution phase of their association and to help voluntary organisations cope with the legislation and the regulations (legal-juridical counselling services; fiscal and administrative; social security; labour and human resource management).

The other group of counselling services, more complex also because they often involve new types of professionals or multi-skilled staff, can be grouped together as “counselling services that improve access to opportunities”. They provide consultancy in the fields of:

- training: basic training regarding volunteering and specific training in certain areas of intervention;

- project planning skills for public tenders and for access to funds;
- National Civil Service and European Voluntary Service; etc.

Training continues to be among the most pervasive of services, since it closely involves the volunteers in organisations. In 2003, the voluntary support centres organised more than 1.800 seminars and courses for 23.362 participants. A particularly engaging activity is the joint planning of training schemes: about half of training sessions were created out of the initiatives of either the voluntary organisations or the local or issue-based organisation networks, that also end up being involved in the management and evaluation of the results.

The communication services have two main purposes: Informing the voluntary organisations quickly and directly, so that they can better seize opportunities and disseminating the initiatives of the organisations to create greater public awareness of volunteering and of its value.

Most centres periodically publish information and documents, inform via the Internet and with e-newsletters and have a press office.

The promotion of volunteering “to give a future to organisations and to foster active citizenship”, is a collection of services and activities that links many of the interlocutors within society together and represents the lifeblood of the centres: meetings and conferences; promotional campaigns; organisation and public jamborees; exhibitions, sports shows; publications etc.).

In 2003, the number of initiatives and the economic investment doubled that one of the previous year, and almost one third of the total promotion activities involved initiatives with schools and for young people. This activity of awareness-raising among the young is strictly connected to the life of organisations: 64% of promotion activity is conducted in partnership with voluntary organisation networks; half proposed by the organisations and half by the voluntary support centres.

The services regarding support of social project planning, provided only by some of the voluntary support centres, involves the supply of funds or the co-funding of projects of voluntary organisations or associations. Some 72% of services involve resources made available by public tender, regulated by transparent and joint selection systems. Also, 58% of initiatives are proposed by the voluntary organisations and created in collaboration or entrusted directly to the voluntary organisations.

3.4 Social accounting and quality system

The accessibility to services and the transparency of activities carried out are codified in about 60% of voluntary support centres, through regulations that govern access to services and/or charters for public service. Furthermore, the national coordination body for voluntary support centres (Csv.net)³² promotes the use of social accounting systems to identify, clarify objectives and elaborate strategies, improve work processes and develop relations with the institutional interlocutors. Working “towards social accounting” is an endeavour that is common to all the voluntary support centres, with the aim of improving the accountability of their own activities, through clear and shared guidelines on the types of services and on the needs of the voluntary sector. Linked to this is the path towards the acquisition of quality certification, to which many voluntary support centres are committed.

The ultimate aim is to obtain clear criteria to assess the impact of activities of voluntary support centres on the growth of the volunteering in Italy.

4. FIGURES ON VOLUNTEERING³³

4.1 Volunteer Profile

We would like to precise that all the data presented refer to volunteers operating in those bodies that the Italian law defines as Voluntary Organizations (see paragraph 1.2). As we have seen the third sector in Italy is not regulated by one single juridical framework. There are in fact different specific laws for each different component³⁴. This study and ISTAT’s research have not considered people volunteering in other organizations (NGOs, social cooperatives etc.) It is therefore important to remember that there is a component of volunteering, even though a minority component, whose weight in “volunteering Italian geography” has not been taken into consideration.

At the end of 2003, the VOs listed in regional registers had on the whole 12.000 employees and 826.000 volunteers. The number of employees had increased of 77% from 1995, and the number of volunteers had risen by 71%.

Between 1995 and 2003 employees especially increased in the south of Italy (+281,4%), in the North East (+202,6%) and in the North West (+128,7%) while they decreased in the Centre (-16,4%).

Graphic 3 shows the geographical distribution of volunteers that reflects the geographical distribution of organizations, with a slightly higher concentration in the north regions (59,9% in 2003). Between 1995 and 2003 the rate of growth was highest in the regions of Southern Italy. In the North, the east regions knew a higher increase than the west regions. In the centre of Italy, especially in

³² The link of the National coordination body of Volunteer Support Centres (Csv.net) is: <http://www.centriserviziovolontariato.it/CSVsites/CSVnet/home.asp>

³³ All data reported in this chapter refer to a two-year study (2004/2005) carried out by ISTAT³³, the National Institute of Statistics and regard voluntary organizations listed in regional and province registers at 31st December 2003.

³⁴ Italian legislation has so far disciplined five components: Non-governmental organizations (Law no. 47/1987); Voluntary organizations (Law no. 266/1991); Social cooperatives (Law no. 381/1991); Foundations of banking origin (Law no. 461/1998); Social Promotion Association (Law no. 383/2000).

Toscana and Umbria, a less strong increase of volunteers was registered so that the percentage of volunteers measured in 2003 appears minor to the one registered in 1995.

Graphic 3 – Volunteers per geographical area in 1995 and 2003 (percentages)



Compared to year 1995, in 2003 the average number of volunteer per organization decreases of 21 in the centre and north east of Italy, and decreases of 15 in the in the south and in the north west of Italy.

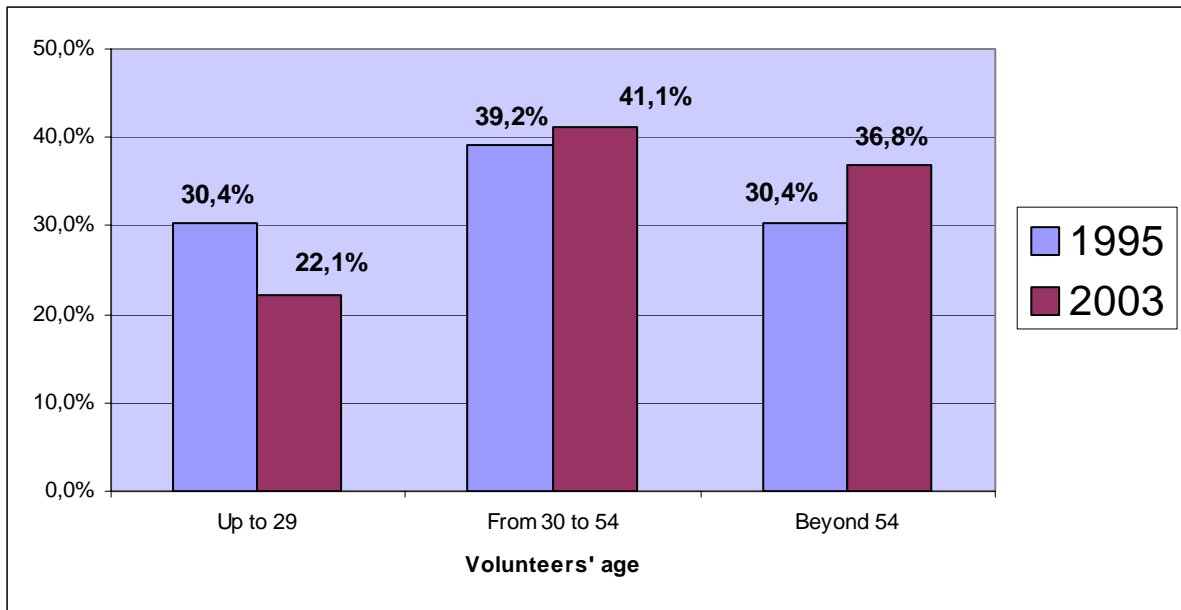
Table 5 - Number of volunteers per geographical area in 1995, 2001 and 2003

Geographical area	Volunteers in 1995	Average number per organization in 1995	Volunteers in 2001	Average number per organization in 2001	Volunteers in 2003	Average number per organization in 2003
North West	148.151	54	200.954	38	234.857	39
North East	150.575	60	218.530	36	260.298	39
Centre	122.770	65	152.576	44	176.808	44
South	60.485	50	123.274	34	153.992	35
Italy	481.981	58	695.334	38	825.995	39

Even if the number of female volunteers increases compared to the past (40,1% in 1995 - 45,6% in 2003); male volunteers are still more numerous in 2003 (54,4%).

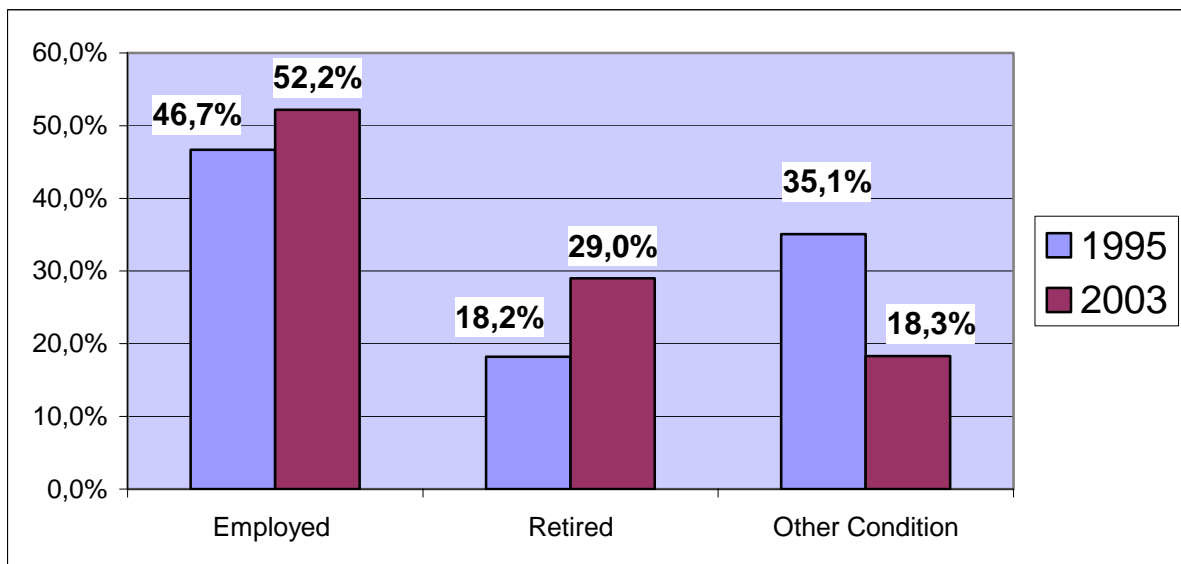
Volunteers belong to all age groups (Graphic 4) with prevalence in the central class of age (from 30 to 54). However, it is the elderly that have known the biggest increase since in 2003 (from 30,4% to 36,8%.)

Graphic 4 – Volunteer per age group in 1995 and 2003



In graphic 5 we see that in 2003 52,2% of volunteers are employees, 29,5% are retired and an 18,3% is represented by students, housewives, unemployed people and others. Among male volunteers the number of employed people is relatively higher (59,4%). In 2003 the number of employed and retired volunteers is higher compared to the year 1995.

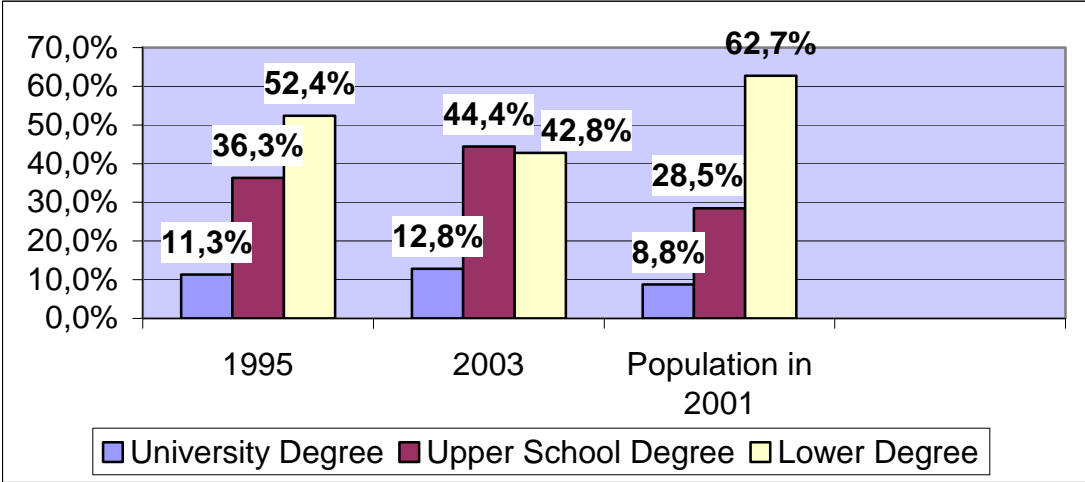
Graphic 5 – Volunteers’ professional status in years 1995 and 2003



In graphic 6 we consider the educational degree of volunteers and discover that only a small number of them has a university degree (12,8%) in 2003, while 44,4% have an upper school degree and the remaining 42,8% have a lower school degree. Female volunteers are generally more educated than male volunteers (14,6% have a university degree, 47,2% have an upper school degree against

11,3% of male volunteers with a university degree and 42,1% with an upper school degree). On the whole, from 1995 to 2003 there was a general increase of volunteers in possession of higher school degrees.

Graphic 6 – Volunteers’ School Degree in years 1995 and 2003 (compared with the population’s school degree in 2001)



Unfortunately, there are no specific figures on motivation of volunteers. We can very generally say that most of volunteers in Italy are motivated by personal, cultural or religious reasons.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the last decades volunteering has been developing and growing in Italy both from a quantity point of view, as well as from a quality side. Many new organizations were created and were more and more able to deal with complex tasks and to become a true partner for the public sector. Volunteering has known many changes and had an important role in the re-definition of the welfare system in Italy.

Ideally, these changes should go in the direction of giving birth to a “Welfare Community”: a community not only characterized by a *mix* between the public and the private sector, but where the *mix* refers to the institutions and the civil society, working together in order to find and give the better answers to social needs.

The shift from the Welfare State to the Welfare Community would therefore require a transformation in the roles covered by all the major actors involved, and volunteering is one of them. Volunteering seems to be particularly able to deal with the relationship aspects of problems/needs/social emergency situations. In some cases, we have in fact to face changes also affecting the nature of social needs, where needs in terms of lack of income get less prior to needs regarding human relations and solidarity. The definition of a new social model should thus pay greater attention to human relation needs and a true welfare community can come to life only by rebuilding, within the civil society, ties of solidarity, human relations and of social participation.

This new welfare model needs the contributions of private and public subjects that must work connecting with each other, setting up different way of collaborations: outsourcing, subsidiarity etc. Coherently with the Law No. 328/2000, the State should have a role of warrantor toward citizens and a role of coordination and promotion toward the third sector, always respecting its autonomy.

Volunteering, together with the other components of the third sector, is thus bringing new planning and management resources that will give an important contribution to the definition of an appropriate system of social protection.

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SPES – Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio, *Volunteering Across Europe. Organizarions, promotion, participation*, Roma, Stampa River press Group Srl, 2003.

7. USEFUL CONTACTS

Find the addresses of all Volunteer Support Centres in Italy at the link of the National coordination body of Volunteer Support Centres (Csv.net) :

<http://www.centriserviziovolontariato.it/CSVsites/CSVnet/home.asp>

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Fax: ++39(0)645422576

infospes@spes.lazio.it

www.spes.lazio.it

FIVOL – Fondazione Italiana per il Volontariato (Italian Foundation for Volunteering)

<http://www.fivol.it/>

Other Useful Link

Website of the Ministry of Welfare

<http://www.welfare.gov.it/Sociale/volontariato/centriServizio/default.htm>

Website of the Civil Protection

<http://www.protezionecivile.it/volontariato/index.php>

European Portal for Youth

http://europa.eu.int/youth/volunteering_-_exchanges/index_it_it.html

Information on volunteering

<http://www.volontariato.org/>

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