



## **VOLUNTARY ACTION IN POLAND**

### **FACTS AND FIGURES**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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

### **1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEERING**

#### **1.1 Social and historical context**

Even though the nonprofit sector emerged in Poland only after the fall of communism, the origins of the voluntary sector can be found in the medieval age. Two main traditions had an impact on the development of voluntary activity until XVIII century: first, traditions deeply rooted in religion and related to philanthropic activities of the Roman Catholic Church, and second, the secular welfare traditions taking form of voluntary interventions of the aristocracy and municipalities to help poor people. The patriotic tradition closely connected to the loss of sovereignty (1795-1918), developed during the period of partition, constituted another source of inspiration for Polish voluntary organisations.<sup>1</sup> Even though, under partition, occupying powers controlled charitable organisations, there was a rapid development of various philanthropic, charitable and educational organisations. It was a response to the need to preserve national identity and reclaim sovereignty, as well as an act of fight against increasing poverty among the Polish nation.<sup>2</sup>

In 1918, when Poland regained its independence, after 123 years of partition, various voluntary organisations played an important role in shaping national identity and reintegrating Polish society.<sup>3</sup> The legal basis for establishing associations was laid down in the Polish Constitution of 1921 and the Law on Associations of 1932. Approximately ten thousand associations and three thousand foundations were registered by the governmental administration (Ministry of Interior Affairs) in pre-war Poland.<sup>4</sup> They were mainly providing education, culture, health, welfare, and sport services. During the II World War, the greater part of voluntary organisations disappeared (ceased to exist).

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<sup>1</sup> Leś E. Nałęcz S. Wygnański J. 2000. *Defining the Nonprofit sector in Poland*, The Johns Hopkins University Center For Civil Society Studies, USA.

<sup>2</sup> Bunsch-Konopka H. 1985. *Historia opieki społecznej w Polsce*, in Staręga-Piasek J. Część II. Warsaw : medical Center for Postgraduate Education.

<sup>3</sup> Leś E. Nałęcz S. Wygnański J. 2000. *Defining the Nonprofit sector in Poland*, The Johns Hopkins University Center For Civil Society Studies, USA.

<sup>4</sup> [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl). [Accessed: 23.03.2005]

The only exception was the performance of the Polish Red Cross and Central Welfare Council, however limited and controlled by the German occupying authorities. The Red Cross, mostly consisting of volunteers, was very active and provided all sorts of support to soldiers and civilians affected by war.

During 1945-1948, voluntary organisations focused on helping the war victims, repatriates, migrants and provided in-kind assistance; run hospitals, schools and elderly homes, and organised extra curricular activities; summer camps, orphanages, and other services for youth.<sup>5</sup> However, independent voluntary work ceased to exist together within the communist era. Not much was changed in terms of legal conditions, yet the practice was different. Associations of a civil nature, including trade unions, had no right to exist and moreover, private ownership was banned. All associations established prior to that time, were detained by the government and had to serve the public good or were simply dissolved. Furthermore, the Catholic Church was subject to repression, and in 1950 was disposed of its charitable function. Lack of the ability to autonomously define goals for organisations and needs of the society seriously weakened the development of voluntary movement. The number of voluntary associations diminished considerably and, above all, citizens were not interested in participating in any organised collective activity – perceived to be compulsory rather than based on free will.<sup>6</sup>

The new era started after the 1989 – the year of the political transformation but changes had already started earlier. The role of the Church and its involvement in welfare work, combating civic apathy and encouraging the struggle for democracy was significant already at the beginning of 1980. Many state controlled voluntary organisations become less active, whereas independent civic initiatives developed. The state tried to control the flow, however with the opposite result. The policies introduced to limit active citizens and keep them away from opposition only strengthened the whole movement and resulted in a new legal and institutional setting for all kinds of civic initiatives and associative actions.<sup>7</sup> Foundations were introduced again in 1984 and could function on the basis of the Law on Foundations, associations operated according to the Law on Associations of 1989, and the Act on the Relationship between the State and the Church of 1989 clearly legalized the position of the Church in Poland. Legislation on other nonprofit organizations, such as trade unions, chambers of commerce and associations of employees, was established in the course of 1990s.<sup>8</sup> During these years the number of foundations and associations boosted significantly.

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<sup>5</sup> Leś E. Nałęcz S. Wygnański J. 2000. *Defining the Nonprofit sector ni Poland*, The Johns Hopkins University Center For Civil Society Studies, USA.

<sup>6</sup> Les E. Nałęcz S. Wygnański J. 2000. *Defining the Nonprofit sector ni Poland*, The Johns Hopkins University Center For Civil Society Studies, USA.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl) [Accessed: 20.03.2005]

The NGO sector has played an important role in building and maintaining democracy since independence in 1989 contributing to the economy through employment and community development and by providing social services, arts, cultural and educational programs.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2 Definition of the nonprofit sector

As derived from the practice of the last 15 years, the nonprofit sector<sup>10</sup> is defined according to five main criteria. Firstly, a nonprofit organisation must be institutionalized or organised to some degree. It can take a legal form through registration in court or at least in the Central Statistical Office. Secondly, an organisation must be independent from the government and able to determine own goals and activities. This is particularly relevant considering communistic suppression of voluntary organisations. The problem arises only when classifying foundations that are established or funded by the state authorities. However, if structurally independent and not under the direct state administration, they are considered as entities of the nonprofit sector. Thirdly, it must be self-governed what is considered as indispensable element of nongovernmental organisation. Fourthly, an organisation is not allowed to share profit with its members as entities, which distribute revenue, are classified as business enterprises. Fifthly, an essential component of the Polish nonprofit sector is volunteerism. According to statistics, the majority of the NGOs do not have paid recruits and rely (at least partially) on voluntary contributions of people. Only state-established foundations and private funded foundations have only paid staff positions and therefore they do not meet this criterion.<sup>11</sup>

From the legal point of view, a non-governmental organisation (NGO)<sup>12</sup> was first defined on 23 April 2003 when the new law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism was adopted. According to this law, "*non-governmental organizations are legal entities or entities with no legal personality created on the basis of provisions of laws, including foundations and associations. Non-governmental organizations are not bodies of the sector of public finances in the understanding of regulations governing public finances, and operate on a not-for-profit basis.*"<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bies A. L. 2002. *Self-regulation in Poland's Non-governmental Sector: Internal and External Dynamics, Mandatory and Discretionary Approaches*. Society for Third-Sector Research, Annual Conference, Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>10</sup> Third sector and non-profit sector will be used interchangeably in the report as to the common use of that term to describe the non-profit sector in Poland. This term refers to a very common division of the socio-economic activities. According to that typology, three spheres are distinguished: (I) public sector, (II) business or private sector, (III) non-profit sector, therefore called a Third sector.

<sup>11</sup> Leś E., Nałęcz S., Wygnański J. 2000. *Defining the Nonprofit sector in Poland*, The Johns Hopkins University Center For Civil Society Studies, USA.

<sup>12</sup> A non-governmental organisation and a non profit organisation will be used interchangeably in this report.

<sup>13</sup> Law on Benefit Activity and Voluntarism, April 24, 2003. Available at:

<http://www.legislationline.org/view.php?document=58031>

### 1.3. Definition of volunteerism

As mentioned above, volunteerism is one of the main components of the Polish Third Sector and was given legal notice in the Act on Benefit Activity and Volunteerism of 23 April 2003. According to the Act, volunteer is “a person who voluntarily, and with no remuneration provides services based on regulations specified in the law (Art. 2.3)”<sup>14</sup>. However, this is not the only definition of volunteering existing in Poland. The most common term used in Poland defines volunteering, as “unpaid activity done of one's free-will for the benefit of others, exceeding the family and friendly relations”<sup>15</sup>. Another classification of volunteering, presented by the Association JAWOR/KLON, refers to unpaid and activities done out of free will and undertaken within the framework of any nongovernmental organisation, religious and cultural movements. It refers to people who contribute their time to nonprofit organisations. For the purpose of this report, these two definitions are not equivalent and will be used in distinctive manner, if relevant, while presenting data: (1) volunteers who undertake unpaid activity for the benefit of others and (2) volunteers who contribute their time to nonprofit organisations.

## **2. EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERING (RECENT DEVELOPMENTS)**<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1 Recent developments in the nonprofit sector

As already mentioned, the Act on Benefit Activity and Volunteerism of 23 April 2003 is the most recent and the most significant development of the Polish Third sector having direct impact on volunteerism. It legally defines volunteering and sets specific provisions related to voluntary activities and represents a strong foundation for the development of voluntary work in Poland. However, the progress is principally in the hands of NGOs and volunteer organisations, and depends on a way the Act is/will be implemented.

According to Polish NGOs and lawmakers it is a “NGO sector Constitution” regulating the relationship between the public sector and the Third sector.<sup>17</sup> It is a fruit of determination of the NGO sector and the sign of government’s willingness to promote the idea of not only volunteering but also civil society as such, and to encourage and facilitate active citizenship. This law addresses

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<sup>14</sup> Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteerism, 24 April 2003. Available at:

<http://www.legislationline.org/view.php?document=58031>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.circle-network.org/activity/newcastle2001/poland.htm>

<sup>16</sup> While presenting the recent development in the Third Sector and volunteering in Poland, the data from the research conducted by the JAWOR/KLON Association will be used. The research was conducted on the study population of 4000 individuals and 950 nongovernmental organisations, on the yearly basis for the last four years, by using the same methods to provide comparative data and to enable comparative analysis. In order to better illustrate the tendencies, to sketch an overview of the Polish context and to make the text more readable, some generalizations will be made. There will be reference to several reports, listed in the references at the end of this document, which were established on the basis of the overall research done by the KLON/JAWOR Association in the course of the last four years (2001-2004). Data derived from different sources will be used as well, however only sporadically as not available, and the source will be clearly indicated.

<sup>17</sup> ICNL news release, May 9, 2003. Available at: <http://www.icnl.org/PRESS/Articles/2003/20030509.htm>.

several key issues important from the perspective of the Third sector: It defines the criteria for public benefit status of Polish NGOs; provides a procedural framework for NGO cooperation with public authorities; introduces a version of the “1% law”, which means that every citizen has a right to donate 1% of its income tax to a selected NGO.

*A complete analysis of this Law and its specific regulations are presented in a report on legal Status of Volunteers in Poland established by the CEV in cooperation with AVSO.<sup>18</sup>*

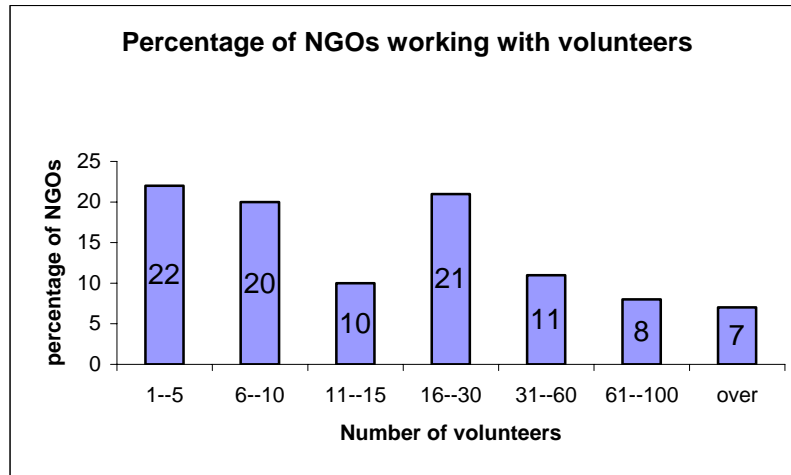
## **2.2 Basic facts on the Polish Third Sector**

- There were 45.891 associations and 7.210 foundation registered in 2004 compared with 36.500 associations and 5.000 foundations in the year of 2002.
- 91% of the registered NGOs were founded after 1989, and 30% are not older than three years.
- 40% of the registered NGOs are located in large cities.
- The largest number of associations and foundations are active in the field of sport and leisure (38.6%), education (10.3%), health protection (8.2%) and regional and local development (6.5%).
- Only 1.4% of the registered NGOs indicate support for other NGOs and civic initiative as their field of interest.
- The revenue of half of the NGOs did not exceed € 3.095 in 2003.
- 30% of the total budget of all NGOs comes from public sector funds (local and regional governments).
- More and more NGOs undertake profit-making activities – 16% of NGOs in 2004.
- 69% of the NGOs use computers in their work, whereas only 33% of the NGOs have access to the Internet.
- The greatest obstacle to undertaken activities, identified by around 80% of the NGO, were the financial means at their disposal
- 35% of the NGOs employ staff (around 64.000 people who are employed in the Third Sector).
- Volunteers that are not at the same time members of the association are involved in the work of 44.4% of the NGOs (around 1 million people)

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<sup>18</sup> The report is available at: [http://www.cev.be/Documents/legal\\_status\\_poland.pdf](http://www.cev.be/Documents/legal_status_poland.pdf)

Graph 1



Source: NGOs in Poland – 2002 research results. The KLON/JAWOR Association

It should be also mentioned, as noticed by Civil Society for Trust in CEE in their research<sup>19</sup>, that local NGOs are mostly dependent on local government decisions regarding funding or providing public workspace what leads to hampering NGOs' independency in their opinions. Moreover, the NGO sector lacks a sufficient legal capacity. This is mostly due to the financial limitations they face - NGOs are very often not able to make use of legal support.

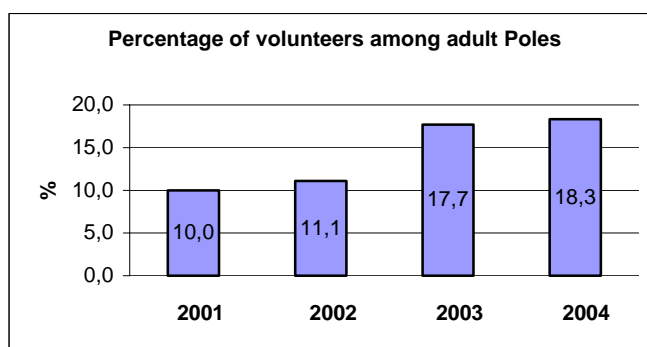
### **2.3 Recent trends in volunteering**

Volunteering has flourished over the past years in Poland. In 2004 around 5.4 million Poles, which is 18.3% of the population, engaged in a voluntary activity compared with 10% in 2001, an increase of 8.3%. According to the KLON/JAWOR Association, the main reason of the increase in voluntary engagement of Poles is the positive change that has been taking place over the past few years in how people perceive voluntary activities. They are more aware of the idea of voluntarism and do not see voluntary work as a compulsory work of a collective nature any more.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> NGO Sustainability Index. 2003. Civil Society for Trust in Central and Eastern Europe. Available at: [www.ceetrust.or/poland:2003Poland/pdf](http://www.ceetrust.or/poland:2003Poland/pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Zawadzki Z. 2004. *Wolontariat w jednostkach organizacyjnych pomocy społecznej*. Pozarządowiec on line. Available at: [www.eswip.elblag.pl/poza/drukuj.php?id=258&nr=66](http://www.eswip.elblag.pl/poza/drukuj.php?id=258&nr=66)

## Graph 2



Source: Wolontariat, filantropia i 1% - raport z badań 2004. The KLON/JAWOR Association

55% of Poles declared no engagement in unpaid social activity in 2004 and the reason for this social passiveness, given by 56.6% of those declaring, was the need to take care of their own family in the first place. About 40% justified it saying that they were not asked for help.

Regardless of Poles' commitment to religion, which in comparison with the Western Europe is very high, it is interesting to notice that engagement in voluntary activities within a religious organisation is relatively low. Only 3% of the Poles volunteered for religious organisation, movements or missions. The European Value Survey<sup>21</sup> conducted in 1999 showed exactly the same tendency; only 4% declared voluntary work for this type of organisations.<sup>22</sup> However, 66% of Poles declared a support in the form of voluntary work or financial contribution for the Church.

In 2004, 45% of NGOs worked with volunteers compared with 47% in the year of 2002. However, the difference is too small to conclude that there is a decrease in voluntary engagement within NGOs. According to 34.2% of NGOs that rely on voluntary engagement of people, the number of volunteers supporting NGOs has increased since 2002, whereas 10% of the NGOs declared that the number of volunteers decreased in the course of the last two years.

The new law regulating voluntary work has definitely had a positive impact on the practice since its adoption. In 2004, more than half of the organisations invested in training of volunteers, both internally and externally organised, to equip them with skills and knowledge necessary to perform their work. This is an increase of 30% in comparison with the year of 2002. In terms of other provisions of voluntary work, unfortunately the progress is not that evident.

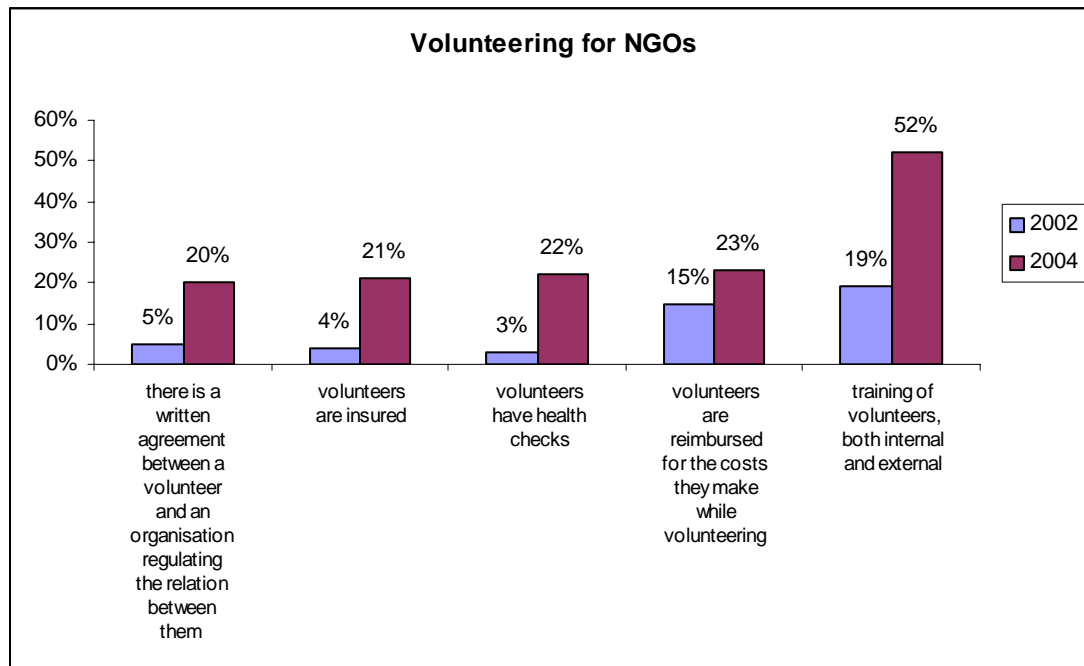
<sup>21</sup> The European Values Study (EVS) is a large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal survey of moral, religious, political and social values. The project was designed to investigate the nature and inter-relationship of value systems, their degree of homogeneity, and the extent to which they are subject to change across time. Study description on Poland available at: [http://www.gesis.org/en/data\\_service/topics/50-CD-ROM/PDF-Files/ZA3794.pdf](http://www.gesis.org/en/data_service/topics/50-CD-ROM/PDF-Files/ZA3794.pdf)

To date there have been 3 waves, the first carried out in 1981, the second in 1990 and the third in 1999/2000.

<sup>22</sup> Wolontariat, filantropia i 1% - raport z badań 2004. The KLON/JAWOR Association

Only 1 out of 5 organisations applied the new set of rules<sup>23</sup>. More specifically, 23% of the organisations reimbursed volunteers for any costs made during their work, which is a raise of 8% in comparison with the year of 2002. Almost the same percentage of respondents reported to insure volunteers working for them and to facilitate health check and training on safe working conditions, which is a rise of 15% in comparison with the year 2002.

Graph 3



Source: Wolontariat w organizacjach pozarządowych 2004. The KLON/JAWOR Association.

The new set of rules are taken into consideration and applied in practice by mostly large organisations working with a bigger number of volunteer. Only 10% of the organisations applied at four out of the mentioned rules, whereas 40% did not apply any of them.

Worth mentioning that together with an increasing tendency of volunteering in Poland, corporate voluntarism has gained popularity. It is a form of voluntary work stimulated and to some extent organised by an employer. Companies, in view of their social responsibility, become involved with the volunteer sector in carrying out different projects to which they contribute by sharing their expertise, facilities and human resources. According to the Business Forum study conducted on 170

<sup>23</sup> The new set of rules contains the following provisions regarding the relation between volunteers and beneficiaries:

- the need for a written volunteer agreement if the services provided by the volunteer are implemented over the period exceeding 30 days. For a period of less than 30 days, volunteer can request a written agreement or a conformation of services provided,
- volunteers providing services are automatically covered by a national health care insurance. If a volunteer is providing services for a period less than 30 days, the organisation is obliged to provide accident insurance,
- ensure safe and hygienic work conditions and comprehensive information on potential risks and risk protection,
- cover travel and other expenses incurred by the volunteer in connection with their service,
- provide 'per diem' subsistence,
- cover training costs if they are provided in the framework of volunteer agreement.

Polish firms, 80% of managers agreed that there is a need for greater engagement in helping local communities and that corporate volunteerism is a way to meet this need.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.4 Social acceptance of volunteering

While assessing volunteerism in the Polish context and analyzing the trends in Polish volunteerism, the influence of the communist regime on how people perceive voluntary work and engage in such cannot be omitted. There is a general reluctance to become involved in mass membership organisations and for collective action resulting from a legacy of communism and compulsory collectivism.<sup>25</sup> As Siciński<sup>26</sup> puts it, “*Compulsory work on a voluntary basis in the communist period produced the term 'social activist' which is sometimes considered in a negative way, rather than a positive one. Voluntary workers' attitudes are not always understood.*”

The fact that only 18% of Poles volunteered in 2004 does imply a very vague image of volunteering and the nonprofit sector in general. 66.1% of Poles reported to believe that if the state fulfilled its duties, there would be no need for voluntary work in the social field. According to 64.7% of Poles, social organisations are in general more willing than public institutions to help the ones in need. According to 32% of respondents, social organisations are not professional and lack a good organisation.

## 2.5 Policy of the government towards volunteering

Since the adoption of the Act on Benefit Activity and Volunteerism of 23 April 2003, the Department of Benefit Activity<sup>27</sup> functioning within the Ministry of Social Policy has taken up the task to promote and support the development of the Third sector along with volunteering at the national level. Apart from serving as a reliable source of information for all interested stakeholders, the Ministry has undertaken an action to educate and inform of the new regulations of voluntary work.

The government has explicitly stated that there is a need to strengthen volunteering to overcome a general apathy and low participation of Poles in its first draft of an action plan entitled “Strategy to Support the Development of the Civil Society for the years 2007-2013”<sup>28</sup>. According to the government, particularly local initiatives play a significant role in promoting active citizenship and shaping the identity of people, and therefore the government has announced to embark on supporting

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<sup>24</sup> Wolontariat pracowniczy. Ministerstwo Polityki Społecznej – Departament Pożytku Publicznego. Available at: <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/?document=391>.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Siciński A. Volunteers at the Heart of Culture: Culture, Civil Society and Volunteerism in Europe. 2001. *Conference Reader*. Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. Available at: <http://www.circle-network.org/activity/newcastle2001/poland.htm>

<sup>27</sup> [www.pozytek.gov.pl](http://www.pozytek.gov.pl)

local initiatives of civic nature, local organisations and all kinds of instruments, which aim at increasing community engagement and civic participation, and creating conditions to undertake awareness rising actions.

### **3. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE**

The government and volunteer organisations (national and regional centers)<sup>29</sup> are the main actors engaged in promoting and supporting voluntary work and the idea of volunteerism across Poland. Many local initiatives, nongovernmental organisation, together with CARITAS and PCK (the Polish Red Cross) play an important role in supporting volunteering. However, their focus is to only encourage people to volunteer rather than to promote the idea of volunteerism. The government, as mentioned earlier, promotes volunteering in the light of the Polish Third Sector development. Its main focus is to provide all interested actors with relevant, up-to date and reliable information linked to the new law regulating the NGO sector. Research activities, awareness rising actions, and the organisation of trainings are all within the scope of activities of that Department.

#### *Volunteer organisations in Poland*

There are 16 Volunteer Centers, operating within the national network of volunteer centers, located in Białystok, Bielsko-Biała, Dzierżoniów, Elbląg, Gdańsk, Kielce, Lublin, Łódź, Piła, Poznań, Rzeszów, Słupsk, Stalowa Wola, Toruń, Wrocław. The National Volunteer Center, located in Warsaw, has been operating since 1993, while during its first years of existence as the only such organisation in Poland and in Central and Eastern Europe. The main aim was to create “a contact point” where volunteers and those interested in their work could meet.

In the midst of 1990s first regional centres came into existence focusing on searching for places for volunteers and on the other hand, gaining people willing to volunteer. The Centres differ as to their scope of activities. However, all of them conform to specific requirements, which need to be met while being a member of the network. All Centres do use the same logo, recruit volunteers according to the same procedures and, apart from specific projects developed independently, they are all involved in common projects within the network.

According to the data from 2003<sup>30</sup>, 22 people are employed on a full time basis, the majority (5) in Warsaw, and 231 volunteers help running the organisations. In total, they have registered 13.595 volunteers, including 3.602 registered in 2003. The Warsaw Volunteer Center again takes a leading

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<sup>28</sup> The first draft of this document is available, only in Polish, at: <http://www.npr.gov.pl/Projekt+NPR+2007++2013/>

<sup>29</sup> Contact details in part 7: USEFUL CONTACTS.

<sup>30</sup> Evaluation of the Volunteer Centres' performance in 2003. February 2004. *Internal document*. Warsaw Volunteer Centre.

position having registered around 3000 volunteers, with Dzierżoniów, Rzeszów and Suwałki on the other side having registered around 250. The number of organisations and institutions registered in the Centres amounts in total to 835, including 249 registered only in 2003. In geographical terms, most organisations (around 300) are registered with Warsaw Volunteer Center, whereas in Wrocław, Dzierżoniów and Piła the number of registered organisations does not exceed 30. In 2003, the Volunteer Centres completed 103 projects, engaging volunteers, mainly in the field of social services. In the context of Polish accession to the EU, some of the centres carried out projects aiming at promotion of a European volunteering.

The Volunteers Centres do provide training for their staff as well as volunteers. Most of the time, the main focus in training provided for volunteers is to explain the idea of volunteering and to equip them with some knowledge necessary from the perspective of voluntary work. Training for supervisors mainly aim at preparing them to work and deal with volunteers in order to encourage them to further engagement. In 2003, 260 training for volunteers took place within their organisations and 121 were organised externally, along with 40 trainings for supervisors organised by the Centres and 26 by external institutions.

In 2003, the following donors financially supported the Volunteer Centres:

1. Stefan Batory Foundation
2. Foundation in Support of Local Democracy (Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej  
[http://www.frdl.org.pl/english/index\\_e.htm](http://www.frdl.org.pl/english/index_e.htm))
3. Polish Foundation for Children and Youth (Polska Fundacja Dzieci i Młodzieży  
<http://www.pcyf.org.pl/>)
4. European Union – Phare Access 2000, 2001, SFP 2001
5. European Commission – Youth Programme
6. MOTT Foundation
7. PFRON
8. Kronenberg Foundation (Fundacja im. L. Kronenberga)  
<http://www.citibank.pl/poland/kronenberg/polish/index.htm>)
9. American Embassy
10. Polish – American Foundation INFRUST Information and Trust
11. Polish Ministry of Education and Sport
12. Local governments

## **4. GENERAL DATA ON VOLUNTEERING**<sup>31</sup>

### **4.1 Volunteer Profile**

Considering the **age groups** of volunteers, young people aged 18-25 constitute the main group of volunteers in the study population. In 2003, out of young people in the study population, 23.8% reported to volunteer in comparison with 15% reported out of people aged 55 and older, who therefore represent the minor group of volunteers. Since 2001 the percentage of young people volunteering almost tripled what may lead to an assumption that volunteering is perceived as pre-professional experience gained while studying and undertaken because it enhances employability of young graduates. According to Siciński<sup>32</sup> “it is a new phenomenon in Poland for voluntary activity to be treated as a stepping stone to a professional career”. It is interesting to note, that the gap between young and older people volunteering is evidently increasing.

An examination of **socio-professional status** of volunteers only supports the tendency noticed while analyzing the age of volunteers. Students and pupils represent the group within the study population that volunteer the most – out of the students and pupils in the study population, 29.6% reported to volunteer in 2004, whereas only 13% of unemployed reported to be volunteers. However, the voluntary engagement of unemployed people almost doubled over the last four years.

Considering **the level of education** of volunteers, which has a direct influence on the voluntary engagement of Poles, it can be generalized that persons with higher education are more inclined to volunteer. This correlation is reflected in the percentage of Poles volunteering – out of highly educated Poles in the study population, 26% reported to volunteer in 2004 compared with only 12.8% of Poles with basic education.

**In geographical terms**, there is no significant difference noticed in the level of voluntary engagement in different regions of Poland. Out of the study population 21.7% reported to be from South-East of Poland, whereas only 16.6% from Central Poland.

In terms of **gender**, no significant difference is noticed between men and women volunteering. Out of men in the study population, 20.9% reported to volunteer in 2004, whereas out of women, 15.9%.

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<sup>31</sup> As in the previous part, the data presented in this part of the report mainly comes from the research carried out by JAWOR/KLON Association for the fourth time using the same methods and questions to provide comparative data and to enable comparative analysis. The research was conducted on a representative sample of people (N=4000) and nongovernmental organisations (N=950). As in the previous section, it will be clearly indicated while referring to a data derived from a different source.

<sup>32</sup> Siciński A. Volunteers at the Heart of Culture: Culture, Civil Society and Volunteerism in Europe. 2001. *Conference Reader*. Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. Available at: <http://www.circle-network.org/activity/newcastle2001/poland.htm>.

Table 1

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Adult Poles volunteering</b>	10%	11.1%	17.7%	18.3%
<b>Age</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Younger than 25	8.1%	11.9%	22.5%	23.8%
26 – 35	7.8%	9.6%	19.4%	16.3%
36 – 45	10.4%	13.6%	18.6%	17.2%
46 – 55	14.5%	13.6%	20.5%	18%
Older than 55	10.1%	7.1%	8.3%	15%

<b>Education</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Primary	6.5%	8.6%	11.6%	12.8%
Vocational	8.9%	9.9%	12.7%	14.6%
Medium	10.4%	12.1%	22.3%	20.7%
Higher	18.5%	16.2%	23.9%	26%

<b>Gender</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Men	8.0%	10.1%	17.1%	20.9%
Women	11.9%	11.9%	18.3%	15.9%

<b>Region</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Central Poland	6.2%	5.9%	9.9%	16.6%
Eastern Poland	8.8%	20.9%	17.3%	16.5%
South-Eastern Poland	14.0%	10.5%	27.0%	21.7%
Southern Poland	8.5%	12.2%	14.8%	18.1%
North- Western Poland	15.9%	9.1%	16.7%	20.6%
Western Poland	12.7%	10.8%	21.3%	18.7%
Northern Poland	7.6%	12.3%	19.6%	17.1%

Source: Wolontariat, filantropia i 1% - raport z badań 2004. The KLON /JAWOR Association.

## 4.2 Motivation of volunteers

The main reasons to volunteer indicated by respondents in 2004 are moral, religious and political motivations (89.4%). These are followed by the “pleasure of performing voluntary work” (76.1%), and the belief that voluntary engagement increases reciprocity (70.1%). Less popular is to volunteer as an act of gratitude for received help (31.5%).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The data is a result of summing up percentages of responses indicating important and very important reasons to volunteer. The KLON/JAWOR Association 2004.

Table 2

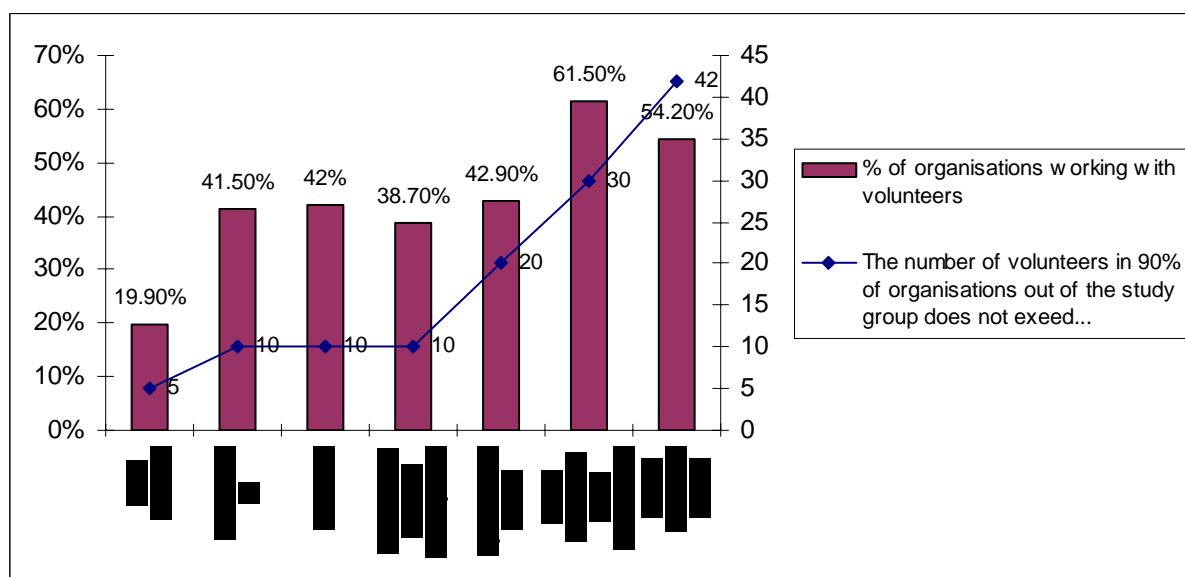
Motivations to volunteer	% of volunteers 2003 <sup>34</sup>	% of volunteers 2004 <sup>35</sup>
Political, moral, religious convictions to help each other	83.0	89.4
It is a pleasure/ interested in volunteering	70.6	76.1
Reciprocity	66.7	70.1
News skills acquisition and personal development	49.2	54.6
I cannot refuse	53.9	52.4
My friends and relatives do the same	36.1	40.1
As an act of repayment/once I was helped	27.6	31.5

Source: Wolontariat, filantropia i 1% - raport z badań 2004. The KLON /JAWOR Association.

### 4.3 Volunteering for NGOs

As mentioned earlier, volunteerism constitutes the main component of the nonprofit sector in Poland. In 2004, volunteers supported the work of 44.4% of NGOs out of the study group. There was a decrease of 2.6% in comparison to the year of 2002. Organisations active in the field of health protection, social services and social assistance constitute a group of NGOs that work with volunteer mostly (out of these NGOs in the study group, 60% reported to work with up to 30 volunteers).

Graph 4



Source: Wolontariat w organizacjach pozarządowych 2004. The KLON/JAWOR Association

Organisations consider volunteers' motivation as the greatest advantage of working with them (71.5%), whereas over half of the organisations (54%) value the lower cost of their labor. The fact that volunteers built ties with the local community pleases 40% of the organisations and their

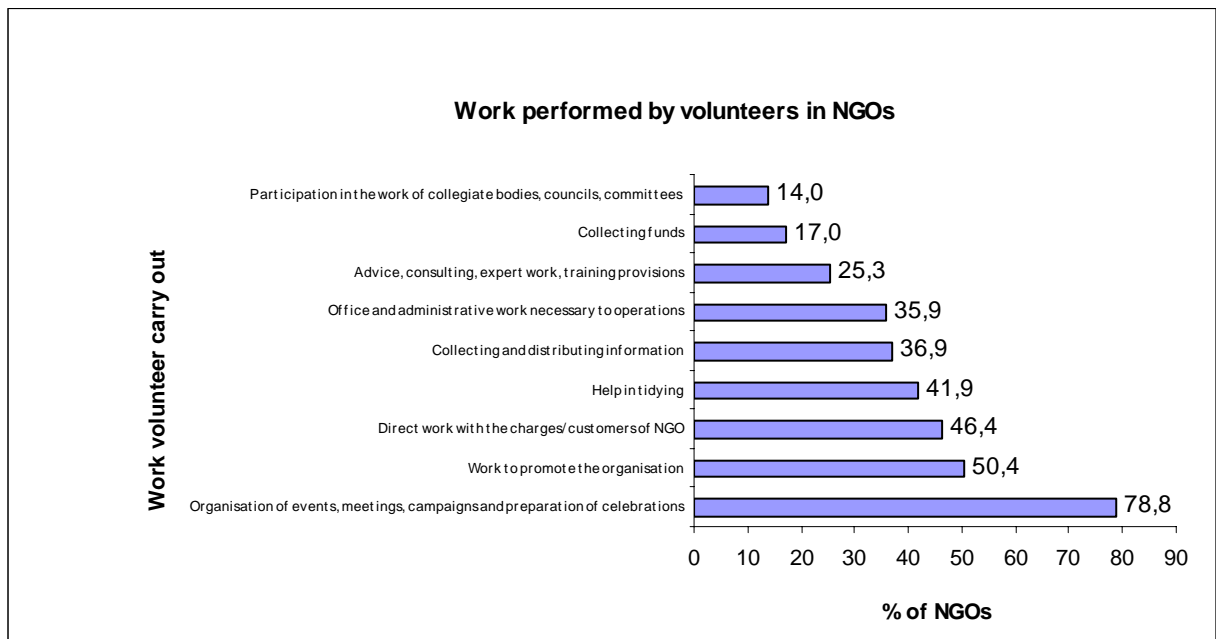
<sup>34</sup> See footnote 24.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

contributions in terms of new competence, skills and ideas is appreciated by 34.5% of the organisations.

The main tasks carried out by volunteers within these organisations, according to 78.8% of NGOs out of the study group, are of organizational nature (organisation of meetings, events etc.). In half of the organisations volunteers work to promote the organisation. In one out of four organisations volunteers play the role of experts. In 41.9% of the organisations on volunteers are used to help in tidying.

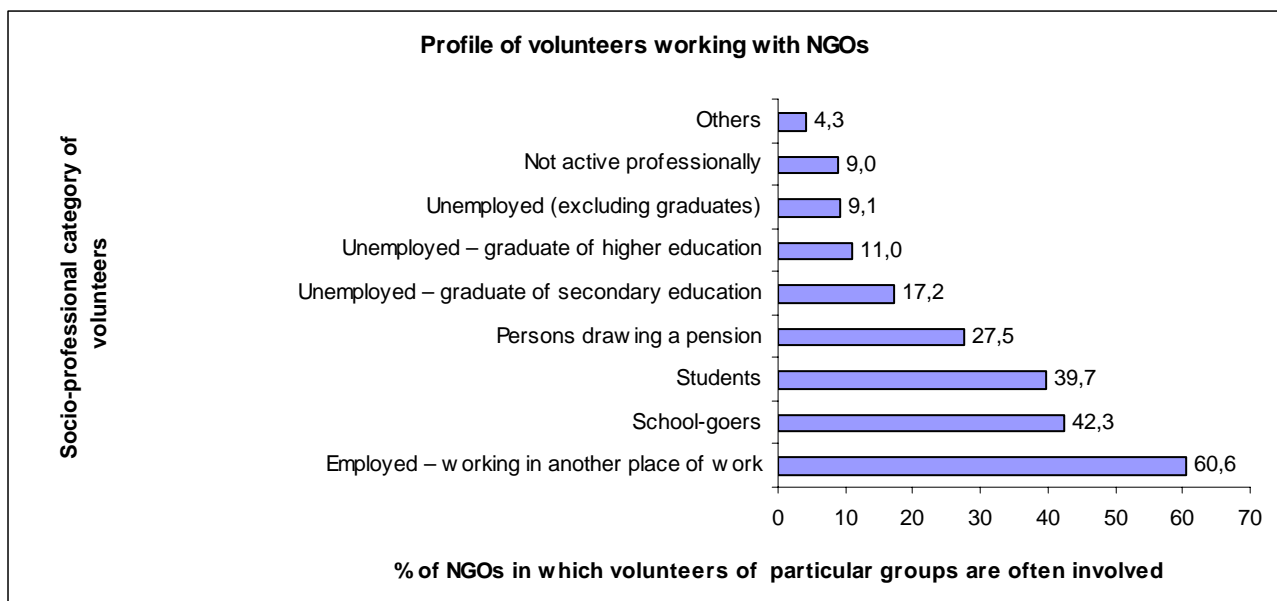
Graph 5



Source: NGOs in Poland – 2002 research results. The KLON/JAWOR Association.

The volunteers who work for NGOs to a great extent are employed elsewhere (60.6% of NGOs out of the study group, reported that such persons are often found among volunteers), school children (42%), and students (40%). Least active are found among those who raise children at home (9%) and unemployed, excluding graduates, (9.1%).

Graph 6

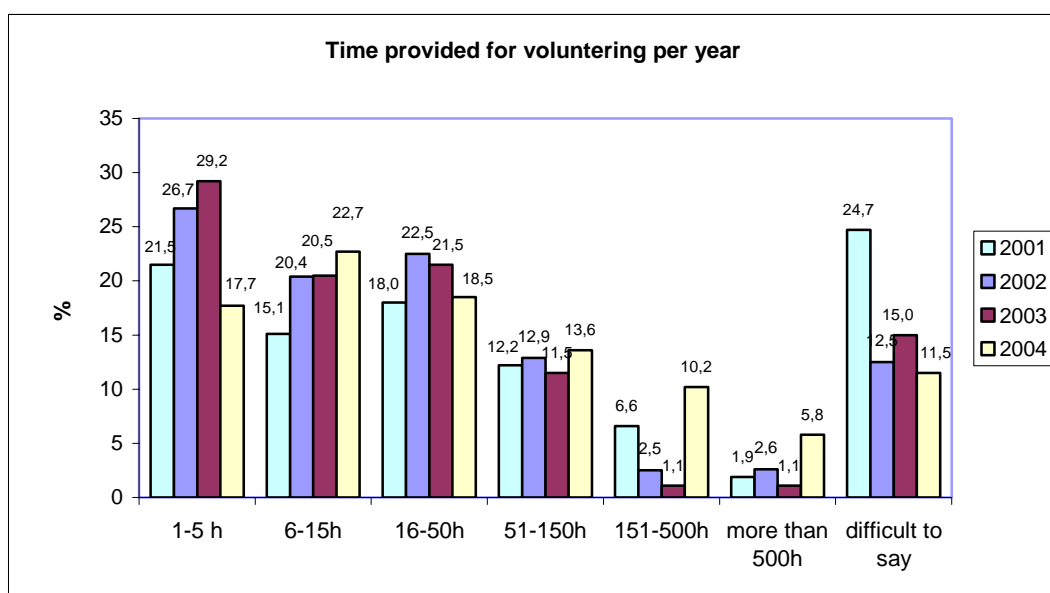


Source: NGOs in Poland – 2002 research results, KLON/JAWOR Association.

#### 4.4 Economic value of volunteering

An analysis of the time Poles provide for volunteering again shows that voluntarism has gained popularity. Percentage of Poles volunteering more than 151 hours a year has almost doubled since 2001, whereas volunteering between 1-5 hours a year fell by almost 12% in comparison only with the last year (2003). Therefore, it can be estimated that the average time dedicated to volunteer in 2004 was around 50 hours of around 18% of Poles.

Graph 7



Source: Wolontariat, filantropia i 1% - raport z badań 2004. KLON/JAWOR Association.

According to the study carried out by the Johns Hopkins University, in 1997 an estimated 16% of the adult population reported contributing their time to NGOs what translated into employment was equivalent with 20.473 full time employees. In terms of employment in NGOs, it meant an increase to 111.460 full-time jobs (paid employees and volunteers), or 1.2% of total employment in the country<sup>36</sup>. The estimated economic value of voluntary work, calculated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent employees (volunteers) by the average wage in the particular industry, amounted to US \$150.8 million<sup>37</sup>.

## **5. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Given the impact the communist system had on the development of voluntary activities in Poland, the last fifteen years mark a significant change in all terms. The re-emergence of the non-profit sector that has played an important role in building and maintaining democracy in post-communist Poland is one of the accomplishments important from the viewpoint of volunteerism. On the other hand, while comparing Polish voluntary reality with other European countries, its underdevelopment becomes visible, in particular in its practical sense. The legal fundamentals to develop voluntary work in Poland have been provided by adopting the Act on Benefit Activity and Voluntarism in 2003, yet the implementation process of these new regulations will now determine the progress.

Considering the profile of volunteers in Poland, although it is not indicated as one of the motives to volunteer, it may be assumed, given the unemployment rate among graduates (around 20% in 2003)<sup>38</sup>, that such a high involvement of students is dictated by the possibility of gaining professional experience and enhancing their employability. Following this assumption, the government should support volunteering as a way to integrate young graduates into the labour market and enhance their employability. On the other hand, there is a group of highly educated Poles who volunteer while being employed somewhere else. Ergo, the participation of other groups of society should be encouraged as to the positive social effect of voluntary work on those engaged and the society as a whole. Not only through actions undertaken at the national level but also through stimulating the grass roots initiatives aiming at involving citizens on a voluntary basis for the good of their communities.

The lack of financial resources is a frequent and common problem with a great impact on the progress of voluntary work and the Third Sector. The ongoing struggle for funding limits the

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<sup>36</sup>Les E. Nalecz S. Wagnanski J.J. Toepler S. Salamon M. Lester, 1999. Poland : *A Partial View*, Global Society Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector, Johns Hopkins University. p.328

<sup>37</sup> Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. 2004. The Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore, Maryland. Last updated 10 Mar 2005. Available at: <http://www.jhu.edu/cnp/research.html>

<sup>38</sup> OECD, Country statistical profile 2005. Available at: <http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/viewhtml.aspx?QueryName=22&QueryType=View&Lang=en>.

possibilities and narrows the scope of activities. For half of the organisations it is one of the reasons to rely on voluntary contributions of people.

Bearing in mind the past, the progress made by Poland since 1989 is enormous, however it is only 18% of population that engage in volunteering. The mindset of Poles constitutes a barrier to increase participation in voluntary engagement. The civic apathy and reluctance to collective action is still to be tackled, at best by involving all stakeholders at all levels. The European Roadmap 2010<sup>39</sup>, prioritising issues to address and presenting an action plan in five major areas: promotion and recognition, support and facilitation, and networking, may be an inspiration and guidance for Polish stakeholders from the public, private and volunteering sectors in taking the process further by working together.

Finally, the lack of up-to-date figures on the economic value of volunteering should be addressed to reflect the financial contribution made by volunteers to the national account. More research should be conducted in order to estimate volunteering by not only the non-profit organisations, but also by the public institutions.

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[www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl) (portal of the non profit sector in Poland available in Polish and English)

[www.wolontariat.org.pl](http://www.wolontariat.org.pl) (website containing information and references on volunteering in Poland available in Polish and English)

[www.pozytek.gov.pl](http://www.pozytek.gov.pl) (website of the Polish Ministry of Social Affairs, the Department of Public Benefit dealing with volunteering)

<http://www.legislationline.org/index.php?topic=2&country=31&org=0&eu=0> (Legislation related to the Polish Third Sector)

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