



VOLUNTEERING IN SWEDEN

Facts and Figures Report



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This report is part of the series “Facts and figures on volunteering in Europe”, giving an overview of the volunteering landscape in different countries of Europe. The country reports can be downloaded from www.cev.be.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sweden is one of the most comprehensive welfare states in the world disposing of a generous social welfare system covering free access to services such as schools, child, health and elder care, pensions and various economic security systems financed through public taxation. Public social spending in 2003 amounted to 31,3 % of GDP, the highest percentage among the OECD countries (average being 20,7 % of GDP).¹ When describing the Swedish welfare state, voluntary work might easily be overlooked: The state is seen as the primal deliverer of welfare, even though active citizens taking responsibility may contribute to a healthier welfare society in more than one way, since it benefits both the volunteer and the receiver of the voluntary actions. What is more, voluntary work and informal helping has generally quite an unclear legal status in Sweden.

The welfare model of Sweden allows for the existence of civil society organisations and, as we shall see, Sweden has a long tradition of large popular movements. The lack of a strong independent church and the fact that the strong state is decentralized in the areas of social welfare and education make volunteering in Sweden a vital contribution to democracy and an instrument of political mobilization.² Voluntary organisations with a social emphasis have existed in Sweden during the whole of the 1900's. The distribution of responsibility for social work has varied between the public and the voluntary sector, the voluntary sector gaining more and more responsibilities as of 1990. Sweden has developed into something that could be called "a welfare mix"³: A strong foundation for associational life and traditions of active citizenship on the one hand, and a strong state on the other, that are seen to be complementary to each other in creating the basis for the Swedish welfare.

Voluntary work is seen as an independent force on its own, distinct from paid work, work in the household, and not comparable to paid work in the caretaking sector.⁴ However, as will be discussed in this facts and figures report, voluntary work has a rather unclear status in Sweden. Even though volunteering constitutes a significant

¹ OECD 2007: Selection of OECD Social Indicators: How does your country compare?, OECD Social Welfare Statistics, http://www.oecd.org/topicstatsportal/0,3398,en_2825_497118_1_1_1_1_1,00.html. Last visited 6.6.2007.

² Van Hal, Tirza, 2004. p. 200.

³ Lindgren, 2001.

⁴ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p. 31.

part of societal life, there is no legal framework or specific governmental policy for volunteering. The problem of definition makes it hard to put the concept of Swedish volunteering into a European context. The first part of the report will look at the attitudes towards volunteering- mainly how the concept of volunteering is perceived in Sweden and how to define it in the Swedish context. Thereafter, the background for volunteering is discussed, with the popular mass movements as its traditional foundation. The emerging new volunteering infrastructure, composed of regional volunteer centres and the national volunteer centre Volontärbyrån, will be presented in chapter 4. General data on the sectors, profiles, target groups, training, motivations and economic value of volunteering in Sweden is presented in Chapter 5, followed by the legal structure and government policy and support for volunteering in chapter 6. Finally, some of the newest trends in volunteering in Sweden will be explored in chapter 7.

2 ATTITUDES TOWARDS VOLUNTEERING

2.1 The non profit sector and volunteering

In Sweden there is no official definition of non-profit organization or of volunteering. Many terms are used for describing a very heterogeneous sector, but no term covers more than 50 % of the organisations.⁵ However, there seems to be general acceptance that volunteering is

“The time and effort that is freely given; unforced and unremunerated, by individuals to non-governmental and public organisations”⁶.

The particular characteristics of voluntary activity in Sweden can only be understood when taking into account the following concepts. Lundström and Wijkström (1995) mention “the public good”, which is captured in the Swedish words “*allmännyttig*” and “*ideell*”. Whereas “*allmännyttig*” refers more directly to the public good, the word “*ideell*” is somewhat harder to translate. The terms are used interchangeably in the Swedish legislation. The input to the activity and its aim (*ideellt verksamhet* and *ideellt syfte*) consist of unremunerated work (*ideellt arbete*). Lundström and

⁵ According to a Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Project survey in 1993/1994, involving 2500 associations and foundations that choose between 7 alternative terms for categorizing themselves.

⁶ Van Hal, Tirza, 2004. p. 201.

Wijkström suggest the English terms “altruistic”, “nonprofit”, “voluntary”, and “public good” but stress the fact that none of these terms captures the true meaning of the Swedish word. Within the nonprofit sector (that is, the *ideell sektor*) a distinction has to be drawn between the efforts of the private realm and those performed by volunteers in different forms of the public sector and semi public sector (such as volunteer centres).⁷ The voluntary sector in Sweden (*frivilligsektor*) within the nonprofit sector refers in general to social service delivery, with focus on the activity being voluntary.⁸ For the purpose of this report, the term non profit will be used for describing both the sector and the organisations that work for the public good and in Swedish would be “*ideella*”.

2.2 Definitions of voluntary organisations and efforts

Despite the lack of a legal definition, the following definitions of voluntary organisations and voluntary efforts are generally agreed upon:

- *Voluntary organisations: Organisations or associations that are founded on the basis of common ideas or interests, that have some sort of public character and organizational form, that can be established and dissolved without decision from public authorities, that build on voluntary commitment and a personal membership of some kind and are not looking for private financial gain.*
- *Voluntary efforts: Efforts of work without remuneration, that are in principal freely chosen and are carried out in an organizational framework. This organizational framework would be voluntary organisations, the public sector or companies.*⁹

A volunteer in this sense is a person who carries out voluntary efforts. For the purpose of this report the term “volunteer” will be used, which is used as an equivalent to the Swedish terms “*frivillig*” and “*volontär*”, that in the Swedish language can be used interchangeably. A volunteer centre in the Swedish context has a rather loose

⁷ Lundström and Wijkström, 1994, p.7.

⁸ Ibid., p.9.

⁹ Socialstyrelsen 1993. The definitions were originally used in the survey “*Frivilligt socialt arbete – Kartläggning och kunskapsöversikt*”, SOU 1993:82.

organisational framework with some of them being associations. They have a semi public character since the coordinator in the centre often is publicly financed, but the activities are not performed under the auspices of the municipality.¹⁰

2.3 Perceptions of volunteering

There has recently been a discussion between the social voluntary work organisations and the public authorities on the important aspects of the term “voluntary social work” (*frivilligt socialt arbete*) in Sweden. There is some disagreement on the question of definition, especially regarding the organizational aspect. The social director in one of the Swedish municipalities was of the opinion that the whole idea of the term is the networking, the cross-sectoral involvement of life in the association, the public sector, private entrepreneurship and the different dimensions ranging from family life to the political level, something that could be called “untraditional partnerships”.¹¹

A rather clear distinction is drawn between “informal work” and “voluntary work”: the latter is taken out in a formalized setting while the former is unorganized. The general view of the distinction seems to be that the informal work is completely unorganized and is conducted on the basis of the individual thinking of the helper in that moment in time, whereas the voluntary work is performed within a framework of an organization. Informal work might transform into voluntary engagement, but much of the informal work will never reach this stage.¹²

The national population survey (*Befolkningsstudien*) of Sweden in 2005 examined volunteering and informal help and care. It was conducted through interviews with 2000 individuals of the age 16-84 years,¹³ and will be used on different occasions throughout this report. One of its main findings was that volunteering is considered a force on its own in the Swedish context. The individuals were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “If the government took its full responsibility there would

¹⁰ This approach was taken by Statskontoret (Swedish Agency for Public Management) in the report “Utblick mot frivillig verksamhet. En studie av frivilligcentraler och nykooperation samt föreningslivet i Kallhäll och Stäket (1994:19).

¹¹ Flemström, 2007, pp.2-3.

¹² Comment of the Forum for Voluntary Social Work, see http://www.socialforum.se/se/Asikter/Spelreglerna/Forum_komm_Flemstrom/. Last visited 24.4.2007.

¹³ Percentage of answers: 70 %.

be no need for voluntary work”. Only one fifth of the asked agreed with the statement, but this figure has doubled since the 1990’s.¹⁴

Most people also disagree with the statement “voluntary work is a threat to paid work and is used to make cuts in the expenses of society”, to which only every seventh person shows support, and two thirds of the asked agreed with the statement “volunteers give something else than what paid professionals offer”.¹⁵

3 EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERING IN SWEDEN

3.1 Background

It is possible to divide the history of Swedish voluntary work into three different periods, namely 1) 1810-1870, the era of charity organizations, 2) 1870’s until World War II, popular mass movements (*folkrörelser*), and 3) the welfare state and contemporary nonprofit organisations from after World War II until the 1990’s. This is however a rough division and different types of organization overlapped at different times.¹⁶

When Sweden was industrialized, the British voluntary concepts of private philanthropic initiatives as a solution to social distress were copied. This happened in the beginning of the 19th century, but it was not until 1903 that the charities¹⁷ became organized, through the establishment of the National Association for Social Work (*Centralförbundet för socialt arbete, CSA*). This was a turning point because the CSA worked to change state welfare policies, and so many leaders on non-profit organisations came to occupy posts in the social welfare state bureaucracy.¹⁸

The popular mass movement was another model. Emphasis should be put on the fact that the movements are “popular”- they mobilize the people. These movements emerged around Europe as a response to undemocratic societies in the late 19th

¹⁴ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.11.

¹⁶ Chartrand, 2004, p.33.

¹⁷ It must be noted that the Swedish counterpart (“*välghörelhet*”) for the English word “charity” has a somewhat narrower meaning (exclusively used for social welfare activities). Today, not many organisations label themselves “charity” since the word in Swedish has a negative connotation “stemming partly from the poor, helpless human beings heavily dependent on a wealthy, paternalistic, sometimes capricious upper class”. Lundström and Wijkström, 1994, p.7.

¹⁸ Lundström and Wijkström, 1994. p. 3.

century and a call for change.¹⁹ The term “*folkrörelse*” indicates a strong bond of trust between the movement and the general public.²⁰ In Sweden this normally includes the religious movements, the temperance movements²¹, the union and the political labor movements, other political movements, as well as movements within the fields of education, consumer cooperation, farmers, disabled people, pensioners, women, youth, sports, peace and environment. Many are based on opposition to the existing social and political environment work towards change. The largest of these popular movements are the sports movements, that emerged between 1870 and 1880, the Social Democratic Party that was founded at the end of the 1880’s, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation around 1890, followed by the labour movements and the consumer cooperatives.²² For Sweden, the labour movements in particular have been of great significance for the societal development. The movements stressed the education of the people as a “weapon” against injustice in society, and the social democratic party, which has formed government on several occasions in Sweden since 1932, emerged out of the labour movement.²³ Despite the welfare state the popular mass movements have not disappeared completely.

After World War II, the development of the welfare state went hand in hand with the evolution of nonprofit organisations. The welfare state started taking over many fields from the traditional charity organisations, but the nonprofit organisations did not disappear from the arena. Instead, they mainly built on the principle of self-help.²⁴ In the context of volunteering it can be said that the popular mass movements have laid the foundation for a tradition of active citizenship in Sweden.

3.2 Current developments

A special feature of the Scandinavian tradition of popular mass movements is that voluntary work is performed in connection to the membership and the democratic processes within an organization. This concept is slowly disappearing, and a new trend, more similar to other countries, is emerging where the individuals who volunteer do not necessarily take part in the activities of the organisation as such: Volunteers are no longer necessarily members of the organization they engage with.

¹⁹ The Baltic Sea Academy, 1998, p.11.

²⁰ Lundström and Wijkström, 1994, p. 8.

²¹ Temperance movements attempt to reduce or even prohibit alcohol consumption.

²² Lundström and Wijkström, 1994, p. 4.

²³ The Baltic Sea Academy, 1998, pp. 11-14.

²⁴ Chartrand, 2004, p.38.

This seems to be particularly true in the social field: People are ready to volunteer without being willing to take up responsibility for the organisations.²⁵

4 INFRASTRUCTURE

4.1 The emergence of volunteer centres

It is only during the last 15 years that a targeted volunteering infrastructure with volunteer centres and agencies has emerged – despite the long tradition of volunteering in Sweden with its rich organisational life and popular mass movements. Volunteer centres and agencies as a new feature in the Swedish volunteering landscape facilitate the connection between organisations and individuals and people in need and people wanting to help among the people that do not necessarily adhere to movements. Today, Sweden has both regional volunteer centres that mostly match individuals with individuals and the national volunteer agency *Volontärbyrån*, which matches individuals with organisations.

4.2 Mapping of Swedish volunteer centres

A recent study by the National Board of Health and Welfare in Sweden is the first to map all volunteer centres in the country.²⁶ A volunteer centre according to this study is an information office, a contact point between people who wish to engage in voluntary actions and those looking for volunteers (i.e. organisations or individuals). It aims at promoting voluntary work in local areas and at raising awareness on the importance of volunteering; it should facilitate the conditions so that organisations, groups and individuals can take action in the local area and function as a complement to the public and the private sector.²⁷ This also includes volunteer centres that do not contain the word “volunteer centres” in their names, such as “resource banks”, “day centres” or “meeting points”.

²⁵ Jeppsson Grassman, 2005, p.31.

²⁶ Socialstyrelsen: *Frivilligcentraler i Sverige- en kartläggning*. Report by the National Board for Health and Welfare 2007.

²⁷ “En frivilligcentral är ett informationskontor för frivilliga uppgifter, en kontaktpunkt för människor som önskar göra frivilliga insatser (till enskilda eller till organisationer) och de som har behov av att få t.ex. hjälp av frivilliga, en verksamhet som har till uppgift att synliggöra det frivilliga arbetet i närområdet och visa hur viktigt det är med frivilliga insatser, en verksamhet som bör underlätta förhållandena så att organisationer, grupper och enskilda kan göra insatser i närmiljön och en verksamhet som ska fungera som ett komplement till den offentliga och privata sektorn.” Socialstyrelsen 2007 p.16.

This kind of volunteer centres started to emerge in the beginning of the 1990's. From 1993 until 1996 public grants to establish volunteer centres were part of the government support to non-profit organisations.²⁸ The first centre started up in the municipality Haga of Örebro in 1993, by the foundation CESAM (a collaboration of different stakeholders such as the municipality and the educational sector) that had undertaken a study visit to Norway to gather inspiration, as volunteer centres at that time already played an important role there. The Haga volunteer centre then served as a model for the forthcoming centres around the country.²⁹

CESAM encountered, however, an unexpected opposition in the initial phase. While established organisations considered the opening of volunteer centres to be a good idea, they expected themselves to be the ones to implement. Political opposition stemmed from a worry that this was a way to diminish the welfare society; trade unions were afraid that this would remove jobs; and social insurance offices worried about the fact that unemployed were not allowed to perform voluntary work. Today, however, the anxiety has lessened and the activities thrive.³⁰

In the beginning of November 2005, the National Board of Health and Welfare study shows that there were 69 volunteer centres in Sweden that fall under the definition. 60% started before the year 2000 and the rest ever since. There are significant regional varieties; whereas Götaland (the southern part of Sweden) has the most volunteer centres (38) the Norrland (the Northern part of Sweden) has only 5.³¹

According to the same survey of the National Board for Health and Welfare, around 80% of the volunteer centres engage between 1 and 49 persons for voluntary social efforts under their auspices. 12 % engage between 50 and 74 persons and a few centres engage 75 persons or more.³²

²⁸ Socialstyrelsen 2007, p.8.

²⁹ Socialstyrelsen 2007, p.13.

³⁰ Summary of seminar on volunteer centres in Sweden on 1.2.2007. Available at <http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Aktuellt/Nyheter/2007/nytt070207.htm>. Last visited 20.4.2007.

³¹ Socialstyrelsen 2007, p.19.

³² Socialstyrelsen 2007, p. 29.

4.3 The National Volunteer Centre- *Volontärbyrån*

The national agency in Sweden for volunteering, “*Volontärbyrån*” (The Volunteer Agency), started in 2002 as a pilot project under the responsible organization *Forum för Frivilligt Socialt Arbete* (Forum for Voluntary Social Work). *Volontärbyrån* matches volunteers with organisations that need help, not individuals, which is the main activity of the volunteer centres. Several volunteer centres also look for volunteers through the matching service of *Volontärbyrån*. The matching service is conducted through the website of *Volontärbyrån* (www.volontarbyran.org), giving the future volunteer the possibility to choose what tasks he or she wants to perform, in what area of work this should be, how often he or she wants to volunteer, in what municipality and at what time of day, and the search machine finds a suitable task among the 777 organisations and 2559 missions registered on the website. The simple application of interest does not in itself lead to a commitment, the conditions for the assignment are then agreed upon through further contact between the organization and the volunteer.³³

Through this service, *Volontärbyrån* filled a gap, as there was no matching service for volunteers that wanted to find volunteer opportunities in the social sector as well as in arts, sports and environment that suited their interests. The service is free of charge for volunteers; it is not-for-profit and funded through partnership with municipalities and companies. The interest from volunteers and non-profit organisations is growing rapidly and more funding is needed for development and capacity building. *Volontärbyrån* has developed into an essential part of the Swedish volunteering infrastructure and inquiries are made as to the possibilities for the government to support *Volontärbyrån*, as a service to the citizens and help for organisations to find volunteers.³⁴

³³ The search engine can be found at <http://www.volontarbyran.org/search.php>.

³⁴ This information has been kindly provided by Amelie Silfverstolpe, project manager at *Volontärbyrån*.

5 GENERAL DATA

5.1 Introduction

The Population survey from 2005 has shown that an exceptionally large number of Swedes engage in voluntary work, namely around 50 % of the population. Only in the USA, Norway and Holland are people as active as in Sweden.³⁵

In general, the field in which the Swedes perform most voluntary work is the sports field. However, this sector can also be used as an example of how difficult it might be in to “measure” voluntary work in Sweden. Many sports leaders work *ideellt*, which is to say on a voluntary basis, but this work might not always fit into the definition of volunteering. Often there are parents volunteering as leaders for their children’s teams and they might even receive a compensation for the action they perform in this regard. Strictly speaking, if the compensation is more than just reimbursement of expenses, it falls outside the definition of volunteering. However, most of the work is still performed without financial gain. If benefits are given it is mostly in the form of clothes, equipment and education.³⁶

5.2 Sectors

According to the Population survey, 20 % of all adults perform voluntary work in the sports field, which are more than one million people. Less people volunteer in social organisations, labour unions, voluntary defence organisations³⁷ and cultural organisations. Less than 1 % engages in work for women, peace or the environment. More popular are organisations concerning every day life such as parents-, housing-, and outdoor activities associations.³⁸

Volontärbyrån has so far concentrated its matching service on social voluntary work, but it also mediates task in the fields of sports and culture. The most popular fields for

³⁵ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p.30.

³⁶ According to the National Sports Union (*Riksidrottsförbundet*) this was the case for 89 % of the sports associations in Sweden in the year 2005. Riksidrottsförbundet 2005, p.12.

³⁷ Sweden has 23 voluntary defence organisations that contribute to the civil and military defence of the county. In 2005 the organisations had approximately 640 000 members. See the Swedish Armed Forces (*Försvarmakten*): <http://www.mil.se/article.php?id=413>. Last visited 6.6.2007.

³⁸ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p. 32.

volunteering are children/youth, women, immigrants/refugees, international work in Sweden, homeless people, animals and victims of crime.³⁹

Table 1 shows the activities that are matched by 69 regional volunteer centres (November 2005). It is clear that all the volunteer centres connect the potential volunteers with people in need of help with social activities. There are also social activities within all the volunteer centres. 60 volunteer centres have social activities outside of the centre, but only 20 do organize additional self-help groups. 7 volunteer centres also provide other activities activities.⁴⁰

Table 1. Activities performed in the volunteer centres.

Activities	Number of centres performing the activities
A+B	69
A+B+C	60
A+B+C+D	20
A+B+C+D+E	7

Source: *Frivilligcentraler i Sverige- en kartläggning*. Report by the National Board for Health and Welfare 2007.

N: 69

- A = the volunteer centre acts as an intermediary between people who wants to give respectively receive voluntary social work (e.g. single actions such as accompanying to the doctor, grocery store, post)
- B = Social activities within the volunteer centre (e.g. running a café, helping with homework, study circles, lectures)
- C = The organisation of social activities outside of the volunteer centre (e.g. excursions, Nordic walking, study visits)
- D = Self-help groups monitored by the volunteer centre (e.g. overweight groups, social phobia group)
- E = Other activities

5.3 Profiles

On the general level (Population survey 2005) the archetype for the Swedish volunteer is an already active man or woman (gender participation being more or less equal) in the middle of his or her career, who is well educated and comes from a rather affluent socio-economic background. He or she is a parent and born in Sweden in a family with a high degree of associational work, has strong informal networks, and does informal efforts for neighbours and friends on top of the civic engagement.

³⁹ Statistics about Volontärbyrån, available at http://www.volontarbyran.org/vol_visste_du_att.php. Last visited 31.5.2007.

⁴⁰ Socialstyrelsen, 2007, p. 22-23.

Having said this, however, volunteers are to be found all over the country regardless of age, gender, education, class, employment status or origin.⁴¹

Table 2 shows which social groups in Sweden are volunteering in the regional volunteer centres. Multiple answers were possible, which means that the numbers and shares do not add up to 100% to all people volunteering in volunteer centres. As it can be seen 68 volunteer centres who have participated in the study are occupied by wide range of people, but social voluntary actions seem to be most common among pensioners, and the least common among students.

Table 2. Volunteering social groups in Sweden.

Group	Number	Share (%)
Pensioner	65	96
People with illness or activity compensation	33	49
Unemployed	21	31
Workers	17	25
Students	15	22
Others	5	7

Source: *Frivilligcentraler i Sverige- en kartläggning*. Report by the National Board for Health and Welfare 2007.
N: 68

Almost all of the volunteer centres have pensioners and around half have people with illness and activity compensation as volunteers. Others represent for instance contract pensioners.⁴²

5.3.1 Men and women

According to an earlier study conducted by the National Board for Health and Welfare in Sweden in 2004⁴³, correlation between education and civil society engagement is inevitable. The more educated a man or a woman is, the more likely she or he is to be involved in the organisations and network of civil society. Employment and voluntary work correlate positively as well, i.e. employed people are more likely to volunteer.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p. 35.

⁴² Socialstyrelsen, 2007, pp.28-29.

⁴³ Socialstyrelsen, 2004. The data used for this report stemmed from three earlier nation-wide surveys in 1993 (Jeppsson Grassman 1993), 1994 (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 1995) and 1998-1999 (Jeppsson Grassman & Svedberg 1999).

⁴⁴ Ibid, s.79.

No notable differences in motives for voluntary work between men and women could be found, but differences in the choice of area to work in were discovered. Older women are more likely to volunteer within church activities⁴⁵ while younger men tend to volunteer in sports⁴⁶. Men dominate boards even in the organisations where women are in majority; a sign that gender equality is not yet a reality in this sector. The study rather reveals a “double underrepresentation”, meaning that while women are firstly in the majority in the organisations and do secondly on average possess more personal resources⁴⁷ than men⁴⁸ it is still mainly the men that are sitting on the board of directors.

An interesting fact is that in the context of Volontärbyrån, only 17 % of the volunteers are men⁴⁹. This is probably due to the fact that women in Sweden tend to be more active in religious, public and other social organizations (the majority of the assignments at Volontärbyrån being in the social field), whereas men volunteer in the fields of housing, motorsports, outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing and sports⁵⁰.

Table 3. shows the results from the Population survey 2005, volunteering activities in different fields distinguished by gender. The sports field is the absolute largest field for volunteering for both men and women. Many Swedes are involved in “living associations”. In these associations the volunteer tasks range from taking care of practical arrangements for people living in a certain area to being the spokesperson in the contact with the landlord. Cultural activities and the trade unions are quite popular volunteering areas for both sexes. Men tend to volunteer more in fields of outdoor activities while women are more active in the religious field.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 52.

⁴⁷ By personal resources education, socio-economic position and social capital are meant.

⁴⁸ Ibid, s.80.

⁴⁹ Statistics on Volontärbyrån, see http://www.volontarbyran.org/vol_visste_du_att.php. Last visited 31.5.2007.

⁵⁰ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p.19.

Table 3. Percentage of population between 16-84 years⁵¹ that have volunteered within different organizational settings in 2005.

VOLUNTEERING (FIELDS)	In total %	Men %	Women %
1) Humanitarian aid	2	2	3
2) Parents	5	4	5
3) Disabled	1	1	2
4) Immigrants	1	1	1
5) Women	0	0	1
6) Pensioner	2	2	2
7) Church of Sweden community	3	2	5
8) Other Church/ Christian community	3	2	4
9) Other religious community	0	0	0
10) Temperance/ Anti-drugs	1	1	0
11) Local activity for social issue	1	1	1
12) International issues	0	0	0
13) Order society	1	2	1
14) Voluntary efforts in public sector	3	2	4
15) Humanitarian/ Social Issues	1	0	1
16) Sports	20	23	18
17) Outdoor activities	4	6	2
18) Environment	0	0	0
19) Culture/Music/Dance/Theatre	5	5	5
20) Other hobbies	3	3	2
21) Peace	0	0	0
22) Motor sport	2	4	1
23) Living	8	9	7
24) Shareholder	0	1	0
25) Voluntary defense	2	2	1
26) Consumers cooperative	0	0	0
27) Other cooperative	3	3	2
28) Local actions	1	1	0
29) Trade union	4	4	4
30) Political party	2	2	2
31) Student	2	2	1
32) Other	2	1	3

Source: *Befolkningsstudien 2005*.

5.3.2 Old and young

A third study by the National Board for Health and Welfare shows that older people are overrepresented in relation to their age (age group 60 years and older)⁵², and this overrepresentation is the largest when it comes to the measurement of volunteering⁵³.

⁵¹ The figures are based on phone interviews with a sample of 2000 random persons born between 1920 and 1988. The answering frequency was 70 %.

⁵² The study was conducted as a sample study with questionnaires. The questionnaires were answered by 406 organisations in the Swedish municipalities of Bollnäs and Värmdö.

⁵³ Socialstyrelsen., 2006, p. 7.

A small group of organisations targets elderly primarily, and the most significant part of them is pensioners' organisations, which mainly organizes social activities for their own members. The areas where the older people in Sweden volunteer are, apart from the pensioners' societies, humanitarian, religious and cultural. Older persons also tend to volunteer more hours than other age groups⁵⁴. It seems as though the older persons normally take care of the practical work, which are time-consuming but do not give the influence that entrusted posts would give. These tasks are cleaning, snow-shoveling, maintaining property, and baking⁵⁵.

The changes over time that were observed in this study showed that the older active and volunteering persons have increased in number, which may be partially explained with the ageing society, but partially also with the fact that older persons nowadays are more active and healthier than before. Another influence on this number might be the perception in society that old age is something we have to take care of and form ourselves⁵⁶. However, the volunteers that seek opportunities through Volontärbyrån do not follow the age pattern of the regional volunteer centres. Here the volunteers are younger, 64% are between 15 and 35 years of age, the youngest being 13 and the oldest 79⁵⁷. This may be due to the fact that older people still tend to volunteer for the organisation of which they are members (as a legacy from the popular mass movements) while the younger volunteers are more attracted by the new service that Volontärbyrån offers, especially the website matching that an older volunteer might find difficult to access.

The traditional way to engage in a non-profit organisation is to serve on its board of directors. Usually young people do not want to sit on the board; they want to work directly with the cause, to be near the people that the organisation helps. They are not looking for commitment for life. They want to know exactly what they can contribute, what is expected from them in terms of time and tasks. This is one of the reasons why Volontärbyrån has been very successful in recruiting young people since the tasks Volontärbyrån offers are clearly defined. Volontärbyrån also reaches people that have not been volunteering before, 72 % volunteer for the first time through Volontärbyrån.

⁵⁴ Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 59.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp.60-61.

⁵⁷ Statistics on Volontärbyrån, see http://www.volontarbyran.org/vol_visste_du_att.php. Last visited 31.5.2007.

During the first 4,5 years of practice the agency has matched over 10 000 tasks with almost 700 different volunteer organisations in Sweden⁵⁸.

5.3 Target groups that volunteers work for

Regarding social activities, volunteer centres in Sweden target mostly older persons as the group of individuals that are in need of help. The volunteers can help in daily chores such as doing the shopping for groceries or accompanying to the doctor. The second target group is people with physical disabilities and the third is people with mental health problems. Around 10 % of the people receiving social help from volunteers through the volunteer centres are substance abusers and within the category “others” children, youth, asylum seekers and relatives.

16 volunteer centres in Sweden particularly target only elderly people in voluntary social activities, and 18 have elderly and persons with physical and psychical impairments as target groups while 11 centres concentrate only on elderly and people with physical impairments. The rest has a combination of target groups.⁵⁹

Target groups for other activities are mainly elderly people and relatives. Most of the volunteer centres have more than one target group but many of them target only the elderly (7). 11 centres target elderly and relatives. Physical and psychical impairments as a target group was represented by 60 respectively 40 % of the volunteer centres and one tenth offers help to children and youth. A few more centres offer help to substance abusers. The other targets groups are asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and physically abused women.⁶⁰

5.4 Training

Volontärbyrån also provides training for volunteer coordinators since many organisations lack knowledge in how to “organise volunteers”. Recently Volontärbyrån has published a training handbook.

⁵⁸ This information has been kindly provided by Amelie Silfverstolpe, project manager at Volontärbyrån.

⁵⁹ Socialstyrelsen 2007, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁰ Socialstyrelsen 2007, p.22.

Some municipalities also do training programs for the non profit organisations they support, teaching skills you need for being an employer, taking part in purchasing, reporting financial results, knowledge of local community decision-making etc. These trainings are popular among organisations in Stockholm. They are not directed towards volunteering as such but much needed by the non-profit organisations in order to run their organisations.

Every organisation has its own internal system for coordinating volunteers, some more structured than others. One of the more structured organisations is *Stadsmissionen*, which has a long introduction for new volunteers. In order to make sure that the volunteers are seriously committed to the task and the aims they will represent while volunteering for the organisation, they meet on 8 different occasions during a year before they start, to make sure that the volunteers know what it means to be working with homeless people, which is the main purpose of *Stadsmissionen*.⁶¹

5.5 Motivation

Desire to help others and to promote the aims and objectives of the organisation in question are two of the primary motives for volunteering in Sweden.⁶² The social welfare sector is seen as the responsibility of the state and therefore not the main field for volunteering, although exceptions to this rule can be found in the area of domestic abuse and homelessness.⁶³ When volunteering for uncomplicated tasks such as passing out water during a marathon, a thorough rough investigation of a volunteer's motivation might not be needed. Statistics from Volontärbyrån show that what plays a role in the decision to volunteer is the task itself, not primarily which organization the volunteering is conducted for. In the Volontärbyrån matching service only 26 % of the applicants were looking for a volunteering opportunity in a specific organisation.⁶⁴

The researcher Eva Jeppsson Grassman suggests that the classical altruistic motive of volunteering is changing. People tend to look to what they can achieve through volunteering themselves. To some extent the reason for volunteering might be egoistic, but the volunteers still have the desire to make a change and influence their

⁶¹ This information has been kindly provided by Amelie Silfverberg, project manager at Volontärbyrån.

⁶² Van Hal 2004, p.201.

⁶³ Ibid, p.202.

⁶⁴ Statistics on Volontärbyrån, see http://www.volontarbyran.org/vol_visste_du_att.php. Last visited 31.5.2007.

surroundings.⁶⁵ Jeppsson Grassman lists other reasons for volunteering such as personal in terms of a life crisis or a will to engage in oneself in a meaningful activity; or societal, such as the recognition that specific social need is not fulfilled by society.⁶⁶ Another important reason for volunteering may be that one experience in the field leads to the next. It is however good to bear in mind that motivations are not always separable or static- the reason that a person starts might not be the reason for him or her to continue volunteering.⁶⁷

A sociological study exploring the commitment to volunteer or work in non profit organisations in Sweden conducted by Chartrand in 2004 further shows that volunteers and paid employees in organisations tend to be equally motivated regarding commitment to their work.⁶⁸

5.6 Economic value

There is a controversial debate on how to measure the economic value of a “non-economic” activity.⁶⁹ In the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies (CCSS) survey on private philanthropy across the world (1995-2002), Sweden ranks second of 36 countries when it comes to volunteering, but also volunteering and giving (cash and other property gifts). The economic value of volunteering totals 4.03 % of GDP, and of volunteering and giving 4.43 % of GDP⁷⁰. There are different methods for measuring the economic value. The CCSS estimates it by measuring the hours volunteered by a wage rate- usually the average wage of a social worker. The same study shows that the economic value of Swedish volunteering amounts to 10, 206. 1 million US\$, with regard their finding that 28 % of the adult population volunteer in Sweden (2 009 000 persons), compared with the average of 15 % for developed countries and 10 % for all 36 countries in the survey.⁷¹ Still, the domestic estimations on how many Swedes are volunteering are as we have seen higher. The CCSS

⁶⁵ Jeppsson Grassman 1997, p.109.

⁶⁶ Jeppsson Grassman 1997, p. 100.

⁶⁷ Jeppsson Grassman 1997, p. 92.

⁶⁸ Chartrand, 2004, p.164.

⁶⁹ For more information on the economic value of volunteering, please consult the Institute for Volunteering Research website at www.ivr.org.uk or <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/Resources/information/50frequentlyaskedquestions/50isthereanywayofmeasuringtheeconomicvalueoftheworkourvolunteersaredoing.htm>. Last visited 31.5.2007.

⁷⁰ Data on volunteering/giving to religious worship organisations was not available.

⁷¹ See tables available at <http://www.jhu.edu/%7Ecnpr/research/compdata.html>. *Volunteering and giving as a share of GDP by country*, and table 2: *Volunteering, 36 countries*. Last visited 11.05.2007.

explains this difference by several factors: the CCSS survey was conducted several years before the Population survey in Sweden, the definition of volunteering is narrower than the domestic definition because it is limited to volunteering for an organization, whether that organization is informal or not. This usually does involve religious organisations, but in the case of Sweden it does not. Cooperatives are also not counted. A further factor is that the CCSS did not have volunteering population data for Sweden, instead they made conservative estimates from an organisation survey, and organisation surveys typically yield lower volunteering rates than household surveys.⁷² However, another domestic study has estimated the value of the Swedish volunteering to 150 billion Swedish crowns a year, which also amounts to around 4 % of GDP and coincides with the Johns Hopkins estimations. Additional to this, the non-profit sector occupies 150 000 fulltime or part-time paid employees, which is 2,5 % of the labour force in Sweden.⁷³

Table 4 below shows how many hours men and women volunteer on average in Sweden. The time spent volunteering has increased since the 1990's.⁷⁴ In total the average was on 14 hours a month in 2005, with men volunteering about one hour more than women.

Table 4. The average number of hours per month that men and women perform voluntary work in Sweden.

1992	1992	1992	1998	1998	1998	2005	2005	2005
Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
13	14	12	12	15	10	14	14	13

Source of data: *Befolkningsstudien 2005*.

An estimation of the volunteer work in sports clubs, which is the major field for volunteering in Sweden by the National Sports Union suggests that in 2005, Swedish sports leaders volunteered on average 180 hours per year, which means 4,3 hours a week (42 weeks counted as “active”). This is 3068 hours of voluntary work per year in the average sports association, one and a half full-time post. Thus the economic value of volunteering in the sports sector is significant.⁷⁵

⁷² This information has been kindly provided by Megan Haddock, UN Handbook Project Coordinator, CCSS, Johns Hopkins University.

⁷³ Statistics from the book by Filip Wikström and Tommy Larsson: “*Den ideella sektorn. Organisationerna i det civila samhället*”. Sober Förlag 2002.

⁷⁴ *Befolkningsstudien 2005*, p. 14.

⁷⁵ National Sports Union (*Riksidrottsförbundet*) 2005, p. 12.

6 LEGAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNMENT POLICY

6.1 The legal position of volunteer-involving organisations

There is no specific law governing non-profit organisations. The civil and legal position of non-profit organisations and volunteers depend heavily on established practice. Whenever a conflict arises it is resolved according to case law.⁷⁶ There is an ongoing discussion on the topic but so far no solution has been found.

A non-profit organisation (in the Swedish context more specifically *ideell förening*) is a legal person as soon as it adopts a constitution and elects a board of directors. It must pay tax on any income as other legal persons according to the Law on Income Tax (1999:1229)⁷⁷. There are however exemptions if the organisation is considered of public utility (*allmännyttig*). Upon fulfilling certain conditions it may benefit from tax exemption at least on capital gains.⁷⁸

6.2 The legal position of the volunteer

There is no law that directly establishes rights and duties for a volunteer in Sweden. For an unemployed person, volunteering may lead to a loss of the right to unemployment benefits. The Law on Unemployment Insurance (1997:238),⁷⁹ in its §9 contains a number of conditions that all have to be met in order to receive benefits. What is relevant to a volunteer is §§ 9.1 and 9.2, an unemployed has to be able to perform work on behalf of an employer 3 hours a day or on average 17 hours a week, and be prepared to start a suitable work during the time for which he or she has not reported obstacles acceptable by the unemployment benefit society. This would cause inconvenience for an unemployed person who wants to volunteer fulltime. Unemployed people are expected to be available to the labour market in order to receive unemployment benefits. In practice, this is not a significant problem in Sweden at the moment, since long-term/ fulltime volunteering is not very common.

⁷⁶ Van Hal, Tirza, 2004. p. 201 and p.203.

⁷⁷ *Inkomstskattelagen* 1999:1229 chapter 6 § 3.

⁷⁸ *Inkomstskattelagen* 1999:1229 chapter 7 § 7.

⁷⁹ *Lagen om Arbetslöshetsförsäkring ALF* (1997:238), § 9.

Another provision, which might cause inconvenience for a person on long-term sick leave who is volunteering, is the Social Insurance Office policy to withdraw the social insurance with the motivation that volunteering equals work. This concerns mainly assignments of trust such as being secretary, treasurer or on the board in organisations for disabled people. However, according to the guidelines for sickness and activities benefits,⁸⁰ a person with completely or almost completely reduced work capacity (who therefore is entitled to benefits) still is allowed to use the remaining work capacity to perform work which is voluntary or political without questioning the rights to benefits. Certain conditions will however be taken into consideration for such a judgment, such as the working time that should not be longer than one eighth of normal working hours. What makes a person lose his or her rights to the benefits is the performance of such efforts that are equivalent to those, which a person who is working gainfully normally performs.⁸¹

6.3 Government policy and support for volunteering

Regarding a governmental policy on volunteering,⁸² all ministries in the government are involved in matters relating to popular social movements. Volunteering in Sweden can be supported by the government in a number of ways including organization of high-profile, national level events or campaigns; support for volunteer centre infrastructure and volunteer organisations; sponsoring of studies and research on volunteering; as well as ensuring of accessibility to volunteer opportunities to all societal groups.⁸³

On the issue of reimbursement of expenses for volunteers, organisations are free to apply their own policies, since the general legal framework does not make any reference in this regard.

However, the Government has funds for different types of volunteer organisations that the organisations can apply for if they meet certain criteria specified by the

⁸⁰ Vägledning 2004:9, version 5.

⁸¹ Answer to written question "Handikappades möjligheter att vara aktiva i handikapporganisationer", 2006/07:1190, 24.5.2007, Social Insurance Minister Cristina Husmark Pehrsson, available at http://www.riksdagen.se/webbnav/index.aspx?nid=71&dtyp=frs&rm=2006/07&dok_id=GU121190&nr=1190. See also the comment of Forum for Voluntary Social Work at http://www.socialforum.se/se/Nyheter/forsakringskassan_-_besked/. Both sites last visited 31.5.2007.

⁸² A volunteering policy is a deliberate strategy adopted by a government (or other "external" body) to influence and stimulate volunteering and volunteerism. Van Hal 2004, p. 22.

⁸³ Van Hal 2004, p. 202.

government. Another way of receiving financial support is by working toward governmental goals in particular policy areas. It is also common, but not mandatory, that a local government grants support for non-profit organisations. Of the regional volunteer centres, the municipalities finance almost 70 % of the centres, and the rest are financed by the municipality and non-profit organisations together. 7 volunteer centres have other means of funding, such as employment centres, the social insurance office or the county council.⁸⁴

The National Board for Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) is a public authority under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (*Socialdepartementet*) with a broad scope of activities in areas concerning social services, healthcare, health protection etc. It gathers and analyzes knowledge in the areas, puts forward norms based on legislation and supervises them, and is responsible for official statistics. The vision of the National Board of Sweden is a society that sees the whole human being.⁸⁵ It follows and supports research about voluntary work, and conducts research on own initiative. The financial support to voluntary organisations amounts to 300 million Swedish crowns (about 33,3 million EUR), a sum that is accounted for annually with the government.

To profile and develop the work relating to volunteers and volunteer centres, the Secretariat for Voluntary Social Work and Organisational Grants (*Sekretariatet för frivilligt socialt arbete och organisationsbidrag*) was created within the National Board for Health and Welfare in January 2007. The secretariat administers the grants and is in charge of highlighting the impact of voluntary work on different target groups.⁸⁶

The grants that the Swedish state provided for in the year 2003 totalled to around 6,5 billion Swedish crowns (around 700 million EUR) to 96 different subsidies. These funds are not only taken from the state budget, but also from the surplus of Swedish Lottery (*Svenska Spel*, 852 million Swedish crowns) and the General Heritage Fund (*Allmänna Arvsfonden*, 265 million Swedish crowns). Most grants are allocated to the

⁸⁴ Socialstyrelsen 2007, p.25.

⁸⁵ About the National Board of Health and Welfare, see http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Om_Sos/. Last updated 3.4.2007, last visited 20.4.2007.

⁸⁶ Sekretariatet för frivilligt socialt arbete och organisationsbidrag, see http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Om_Sos/organisation/Socialtjanst/Enheter/SoFri/index.htm. Last visited 20.4.2007.

general education of the people, to sports and aid through individual organisations (70% of the grants). There are a variety of methods and forms in which the grants are distributed, either through public authorities, the government office or through the organisations. The grants may be core-funding (not specified for a certain target), activity grants (specified for a certain activity), commission reimbursement (reimbursement for activity that has been agreed upon between the government and the organization), project grants (for a limited time) or construction grants to build new premises. While organizational grants are the most common in terms of absolute numbers of subsidies, activity grants make up the bulk of the budget. Legislation is not common and regulations in this area only exist in certain cases. The state control is however quite uniform, regardless of which form the grant takes. All the grants have comprehensive goals and the results and effects should be evaluated in most of the cases.⁸⁷

The non-profit sector in Sweden is sometimes considered neglected by government, and there are calls for clearer rules and funding.⁸⁸ As the situation stands today, many non profit organisations experience insecurity about the future since their existence mainly depend on ad hoc grants for projects, and the rules permit inequality between different voluntary sectors such as between the sports and the social sectors.⁸⁹ Along the same line it has been proposed that the government should see to the possibilities of national financing for Volontärbyrån,⁹⁰ and that a tax reduction system should be adopted for donations to non-profit organisations according to examples from Denmark, Norway and the UK.⁹¹

7 NEW TRENDS

Some new trends can be recognized in the Swedish field of volunteering. One trend is marketization. Some voluntary organisations have started campaigns to make their names better known, such as Save the Children Sweden, who in their yearly report in

⁸⁷ This information was kindly provided by Stina Törnell Sandberg at the Secretariat for Voluntary Social Work and Organisational Grants.

⁸⁸ Motion till riksdagen, 2006/07:Kr305, by Inger Davidson (kd).

⁸⁹ Motion till riksdagen, 2006/07:Kr227, by Elisabeth Svantesson and Mats Gerdau (m).

⁹⁰ Motion till riksdagen, 2006/07:Kr269, by Mikaela Valtersson (mp). At the moment, Volontärbyrån is financed partly through local governments and partly by companies, for whom Volontärbyrån provides its service.

⁹¹ Motion till riksdagen, 2006/07:Sk237, by Mikael Oscarsson and Alf Svensson (kd).

2000 mention efforts to strengthen their brand name,⁹² and indicating that they have become a market actor.⁹³ Another trend is a service-oriented approach of the volunteer organisations, because of the move in the giving of public grants to a more project-based than general approach. This can be observed in organisations such as the Association for the Sight-Impaired (*Synskadades Förbund*), which has taken over training and education formerly provided by the state.⁹⁴

Volontärbyrån has recently become active in the field of CSR/ Employee volunteering. This is a very new concept in Sweden, and Volontärbyrån tries to inspire companies in Sweden to let their employees volunteer a couple of hours per month every year on paid time. Currently Volontärbyrån is working with insurance companies and banks such as “Skandia”, “Banco” and “If” to help them find volunteer opportunities for their employees. Volontärbyrån is also partly financed through this service.

Long- term volunteering or voluntary service other than European Voluntary Service (EVS) are not very common in Sweden, most assignments are only a couple of hours per week or per month. There are, however, a few programs for long-term volunteers, such as the one-year program run by the state church.

A further trend is that actors in the public sector such as nursing homes for the elderly start organizing volunteers for themselves, inspired by other countries that do not have as many non-profit organisations as Sweden. In this case Volontärbyrån recommends that these actors engage in partnership with non-profit organisations instead, to clear the relation between the volunteers and the staff and to enhance the possibility for the volunteer to raise his/her voice if he/she notices something wrong while volunteering that needs reporting.⁹⁵

⁹² Save the Children Sweden, Annual Report 2000, p. 8.

⁹³ Chartrand, 2004, p. 56.

⁹⁴ Chartrand, 2004, p. 57.

⁹⁵ This information has been kindly provided by Amelie Silfverberg, project manager at Volontärbyrån.

8 PROSPECTS AND CONCLUSION

Some of the patterns that the Population Study (*Befolkningsstudien*) of 2005 concluded were that the access to social arenas⁹⁶ plays a significant role for the civic engagement and volunteering. Traditions and income are other important elements in the sense that a person tends to volunteer if his or her parents have been active, and a person with a stable income is more likely to volunteer. In contradiction to Chartrand this study saw a decline in membership, which means that a person does not to the same extent as before have to be member of the organisation he or she is volunteering for. The engagement of over 50 % is stable and neither declining nor increasing. However, there are signs of polarization in terms of *cumulative social citizenship*, meaning that the ones who volunteer tend to both volunteer and be gainfully employed (being socially included). In Sweden, voluntary engagement is not a route to employment.⁹⁷ Volunteering is often seen as a first step back to social inclusion and employment for individuals that for some reason, be it long-term illness, unemployment or migration, find themselves on the margins of society. However, in Sweden, the lack of a clear legal framework and blurred conceptions about definitions and interpretation of certain regulations make volunteering for socially excluded persons difficult, which is confirmed by the research which has shown that it is rather the already active well integrated and well-off citizens that engage in volunteering.

This might however change. The new government was inaugurated in the autumn 2006 and the government declaration from the 6th of October stresses the aspiration for Sweden to be an inclusive society, socially coherent and without rifts between regions or social classes.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the declaration also stressed the fact that:

*"A strong civic society forms the basis for a strong democracy. An increased cooperation between the public, the private and the voluntary sector is needed for our society to develop."*⁹⁹

⁹⁶ This means that the more involved a person is to certain social circumstances such as being a parent, employed, active in organisations etc the more the person tend to volunteer.

⁹⁷ Befolkningsstudien 2005, p. 53.

⁹⁸ Regeringsförklaringen 6 October 2006, available at <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/07/02/32/bcc6951a.pdf>. Last visited 1.6.2007.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 13.

The new government has in this way acknowledged the contribution of the voluntary sector and will continue to work along these lines.

Also the concept of volunteering is shifting. Traditionally the Swedes are used to being active within public good organisations and sports societies. While volunteering and charity work have always been widespread in Sweden through the popular mass movements, not all of the activities traditionally performed fall under the strict definition of volunteering conducted in an organizational setting. The emergence of regional volunteer centres since the beginning of the 1990's has centralized and structured volunteering in Sweden, and the start-up of the national volunteer agency Volontärbyrån is introducing a slightly modified approach to volunteering, that appeals to other target groups such as younger people. There is reason to believe that Sweden will continue being a nation where active citizenship completes the state responsibility for welfare and a thriving civil society.

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Tusen tack!

USEFUL CONTACTS:

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www.socialforum.se

Volontärbyrån (The volunteer agency)

www.volontarbyran.org

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http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Om_Sos/organisation/Socialtjanst/Enheter/SoFri/index.htm

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