

The European Year of Volunteering 2011



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**Volunteering – When Help Is Fun  
and Fun Helps**

## **Volunteering – When Help Is Fun and Fun Helps**

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# Introduction

Volunteering is a phenomenon present in our society from time immemorial. Its meaning and form has changed over time, but it was always an important part of the development of a society, and of life. **What is the current state of volunteering in Slovakia?** Through this publication we seek to answer that very question. We will answer this question in the publication you currently have in your hands.

The information published in this brochure is based on the findings of the research that was implemented under the name „Volunteering in Slovakia – Research Reflections“. This research was done as a part of the National Campaign for the European Year of Volunteering in 2011. The research was divided into two parts and could only be carried out thanks to the support of the European Union. The first part of our research introduces the findings gained through a representative research approach in which 973 respondents were interviewed. These respondents were citizens of

Slovakia older than 15 and were interviewed during May and June, 2011. The second part of our research creates a broader overall picture of volunteering in Slovakia as well as the current conditions for Volunteer development within the local context.

We believe that our findings can form a solid starting point for the creation of a policy on volunteering. The interrelation of research, policy, and practice forms a basis for the development of volunteering in the future. This information can provide organizations working with volunteers with an opportunity to understand the phenomenon of volunteering better and to manage volunteer programs more effectively. Further, it will help using our communication about volunteering with donors, media and municipalities. Last but not least we can learn how to attract more people for voluntary activities. We believe that this publication will contribute to the increased awareness on volunteering and will inspire people to help others.





PHOTO: C.A.R.D.O.

Training in  
volunteer  
management  
for hospices



# 1. Volunteering - What Is It and What It Is Not?

**Volunteering is an unpaid activity or unpaid work carried out of a free will, for the benefit of other people, society, or the environment. This activity or work exists outside of the household of the volunteer and is not done for the people belonging to the family of the volunteer.**

Voluntary activity must comply with three criteria. Volunteering must be:

- ♥ Unpaid – volunteer does not gain any financial benefits for it;
- ♥♥ Carried out on a basis of a free will and free decision;
- ♥♥♥ Carried out for the benefit of others (people, NGOs, nature, animals).

Volunteering includes formal (organized and/or managed) and informal (unorganized and/or spontaneous) voluntary activities. Formal volunteering is related to voluntary activities carried out within or through various organizations. Informal volunteering is perceived as direct help provided to individuals outside of the volunteers own family and for people not living in the same household as the volunteer.





Volunteers  
planting trees  
in Liptovský  
Mikuláš

PHOTO: CIVIC ASSOCIATION TATRY

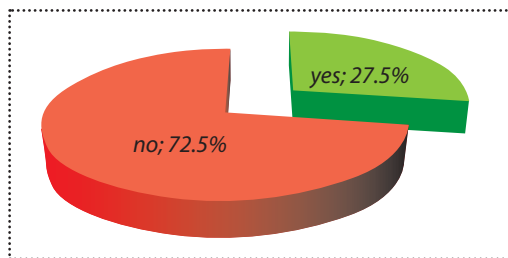


# 2. Number of Volunteers in Slovakia

## Formal Volunteering

Within the last 12 months 27.5 % of Slovak citizens were involved in volunteering carried out within or through various organizations.

### G1 Formal Volunteering within Last 12 Months



N (number of respondents) = 973

According to the last report on volunteering in the European Union, this level of engagement puts Slovakia among countries **with a medium-high level of participation of people volunteering** (20 – 29 % of adult population), though this only reflects formal volunteering. This level is higher than the average level of involvement of the EU population older than 15, which according to the report mentioned above on Volunteering in the EU is 22 – 23 % of EU citizens.

From the total number of respondents (973), there were 4.4 % of them involved in formal volunteering before the time we were focusing on, and 63.9 % of them have never engaged in such activity. **Considering a longer period of time, around one third of the Slovak population over 15 participates in formal volunteering and around two thirds of them are inactive in this type of activity.**

**The majority of formal volunteers engage in volunteering for the long term** (88.4 % of formal volunteers carry out voluntary activities for more than one year). 11.6 % of formal volunteers are







Volunteer measures Body Mass Index, Medical Camp in Nairobi, Kenya

PHOTO: ZUZANA KLOCHANOVÁ

active for a period shorter than a year. The biggest group of the formal volunteers who actively volunteer for more than a year reports that they are formally volunteering for more than five years. Therefore it can be concluded that many formal, long term volunteers consider their volunteerism to be a part of their lifestyle.

From the point of view of frequency, the majority of formal volunteers (71.3 %) volunteer **regularly**, meaning they are involved in volunteering at least once a month.

**As much as 64 % of formal volunteers are participating in voluntary activities regularly and for a long time.** Short-term / occasional volunteering is related only to a low percentage of formal volunteering (4.5 %).

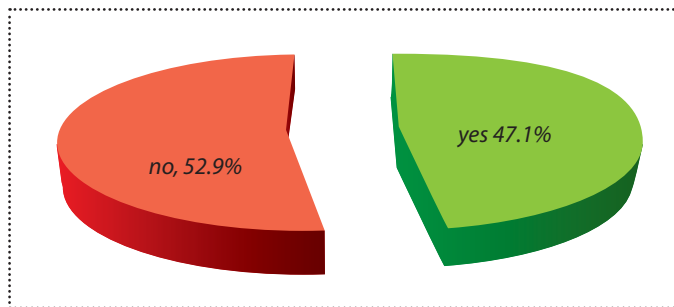
According to the respondents who formally volunteer on a regular basis (71.3 % of formal volunteers), the average time (mean) spent formally volunteering in the four weeks prior to the survey was 18 hours. However, the range among individual volunteers concerning the time they have spent in voluntary activities is quite high. 73.7 % of them (out of those 71.3 % of formal volunteers) volunteered for less than 18 hours and 26.3 % for more than 18 hours. Comparing this data with other researches carried out abroad, the number of hours the respondents volunteered within the last month is quite high. However, if we compare the median value, which is 8-10 hours, it is very comparable with the research done abroad.

## Informal Volunteering

Within the last 12 months, **47.1 % of respondents** were involved in **informal volunteering**, i.e. in the direct help provided to individuals outside of the volunteers own family and for people not living in the same household as the volunteer.

### G2

#### Neformálne dobrovoľníctvo v posledných 12 mesiacoch



*N (number of respondents) = 973*

Out of the total number of respondents (973), 5.8 % participated in informal volunteering longer than 12 months ago (during the period we were not focusing on in our research) and 37.4 % of them never participated. **Considering a longer period of time, approximately half of the Slovak population over 15 is engaged in informal volunteering.**





PHOTO: PETER KYSLAN

Volunteers  
with children  
climbing to  
Zvir mountain  
near Litma-  
nova village,  
Slovakia



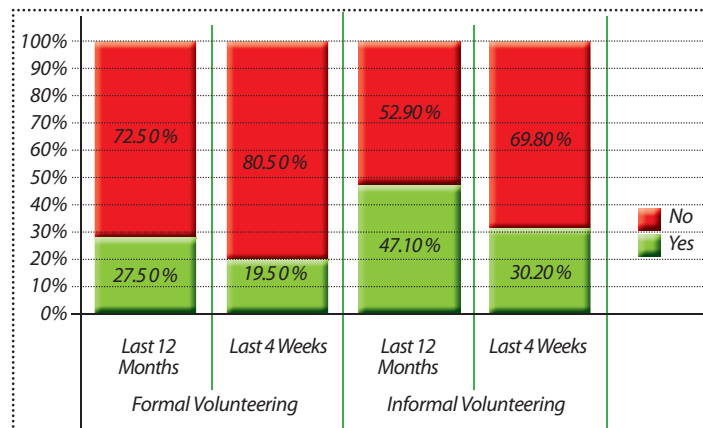
Similarly to formal volunteering the majority of informal volunteers are active **for a long term and regularly**. 79.4 % of informal volunteers (47.1 %) are engaged in informal volunteering for longer than a year. Out of that 79.4%, the largest group is composed of those helping for 2, 3, or 5 years. Regular involvement in voluntary activity (at least once a month) was stated by 73.5 % of all informal volunteers with conversely approximately one fourth helping irregularly.

The average time (mean) spent informally volunteering in the four weeks prior to the survey was 13.95 hours. 71.1 % of the informal volunteers worked 14 hours or less within the last four weeks. Conversely, approximately one third of the respondents worked for more than 14 hours. The median amount of hours worked in the last four weeks is the same as the formal volunteering – 10 hours.

## Formal Versus Informal Volunteering

By comparing the level of citizen involvement into formal and informal voluntary activities, Slovakia can be characterised by **the higher level of engagement into informal volunteering**.

### G3 Comparison of Involvement into Formal and Informal Volunteering



N (number of respondents) = 973

The participation of Slovak citizens in informal voluntary activities is – in comparison with the formal one – higher than in the majority of European countries. However, differences in individual countries vary significantly. In many countries, the connection and relationship between formal and informal volunteering is very close. This is obvious also in our case – as can be seen in T1.



## T1

### Connection between the Engagements in Formal and Informal Volunteering (in numbers)

		Informal Volunteering		Total
		Yes	No	
Formal Volunteering	Yes	207	61	268
	No	251	454	705
Total		458	515	973

N = 973

**A high number of volunteers active within formal volunteering is also participating in informal volunteering and vice versa.** As much as 519 respondents (53.3%) were engaged in at least one form of volunteering. At the same time 207 respondents (21.3% of all respondents and 39.9 % of the total number of volunteers) are active in formal and informal voluntary activities at the same time. These findings confirm that the activity within one form of volunteering does not prevent the activity of the other, rather that the opposite is true.

The higher level of help provided within informal volunteering can also be caused by the historical background of the develop-

ment of volunteering in Slovakia and by the limited conditions for the development of formal volunteering. On the other hand, the close relationship between formal and informal voluntary activities proves that the interest of people for volunteering does not only exist in the connection with the environment they are living in.

A senior with her friend/volunteer at the masquerade ball, the Social Service Centre Armful of Save in Bratislava



PHOTO: ALENA PETŘÍLKOVÁ



# 3. Who is Volunteering in Slovakia?

## Gender

As shown in the chart G4 below, the level of participation of men and women in volunteering is very similar in Slovakia.

However, women are significantly more engaged into intensive informal voluntary activities which are implemented by them almost on a daily basis.

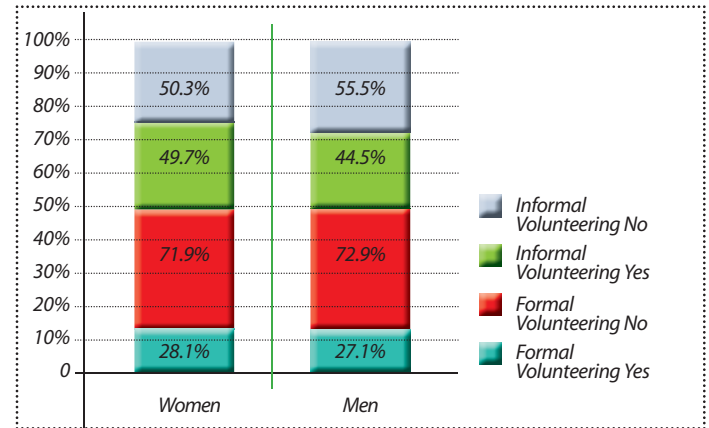
## Age

All age categories are involved in formal volunteering in a similar way, even though the lowest level of participation is shown by the youngest age category (15 – 19 years old). Based on the length and frequency of formal volunteering, some differences exist among various age categories. Those between the ages of 50 – 59 and 60 – 69 are active in volunteering in organizations for the longest period of time. From a frequency perspective, significant differences can be found in the age group of 20 – 29 with as much as 83.3 % of them volunteering regularly. On the other hand, in the group of volunteers over 70, there are only 16.6 % of those who are participating in formal volunteering regularly.

**In the area of informal volunteering, one can find significant differences.** The participation of those between the age of 15 – 19

## G4

Involvement in Volunteering within the Last 12 Months According to Gender (%)



N = 970, Missing = 3



is much lower (there were only 27.8% of respondents in this age category involved in informal volunteering). The higher level of engagement in informal volunteering is shown by the age group of 20 – 29 years old. As much as 53.8 % of them were informally volunteering within the last 12 months. According to the data collected from other age groups it can be seen that the engagement is increasing with age. The highest participation was found in the group of people older than 70 and the population of those 30 – 39 years old is active for a longer time (as much as 96% of them are long term informal volunteers).

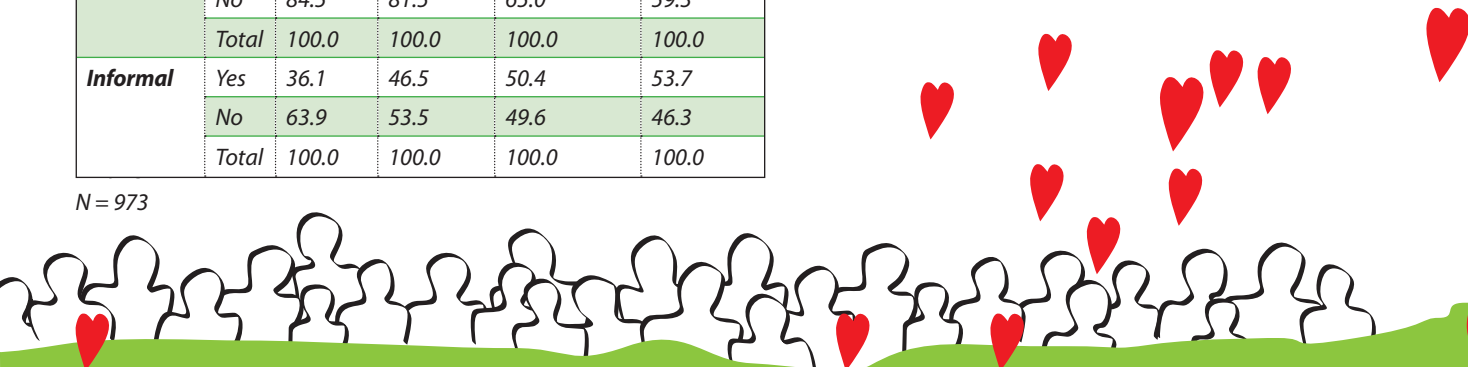
## T2 Involvement in Volunteering within the Last 12 Months considering the Level of Education of Volunteers (%)

<b>Volunteering</b>		<b>Education</b>			
		<i>Primary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>Secondary (Completing A-Level)</i>	<i>University Degree</i>
<b>Formal</b>	<i>Yes</i>	15.5	18.5	35.0	40.7
	<i>No</i>	84.5	81.5	65.0	59.3
	<i>Total</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Informal</b>	<i>Yes</i>	36.1	46.5	50.4	53.7
	<i>No</i>	63.9	53.5	49.6	46.3
	<i>Total</i>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

N = 973

## Level of Education

This rule applies for both - formal and informal volunteering:  
**The higher the education, the higher the participation.**



## Actual Residency

**When comparing respondents who live in either a village or a larger town it was found that respondents living in villages were engaged more in informal volunteering than those living in towns.**

These findings confirm that informal volunteering is an expression of community life that is more typical for rural areas. The lifestyle within villages is characterised by mutual help to one's neighbours that was marked as the most common type of informal volunteering.

## Regional Distribution

**Participation in formal volunteering does not differ by region. However, there is some disparity within the informal method of volunteering.** This is caused especially by the lower level of engagement of people from the Zilina region in informal voluntary activities and, on the contrary, the higher participation of people in the Presov and Kosice regions. These findings can be linked with the previously shown relation between informal volunteering and the actual residency of volunteers.

## Economic Position

**Involvement in volunteering is connected with the economic situation of the population.** The highest level of engagement in formal volunteering is shown by students of colleges and universities as well as economically active respondents. Around one fourth of respondents who have already retired are participating in formal voluntary activities. Despite the fact that unemployed people could

benefit the most from volunteering, as it would provide them with working experience and the development of knowledge and skills required by the labour market, the research has shown unemployed people as having the lowest level of participation in volunteering. In the case of informal voluntary activities, we have also noticed a higher level of participation from university students – during the last 12 months it was as much as 76.3% of our respondents. Conversely, the lowest level of engagement in informal volunteering is shown by secondary school students. These findings can be linked to the connections between informal volunteering and age. The higher level of participation in informal volunteering was found in the group of retired respondents – this case further confirms the connection with volunteering and age. More than the half of the retired respondents were active within informal voluntary activities during the last 12 months. In cases of unemployed respondents, their participation in informal volunteering is higher than in the formal one, which is a positive finding; however their participation is also here still lower than the average involvement in informal volunteering. We have also found **differences within the frequency of informal voluntary help and the economic position of the respondents.** These distinctions show that even when the level of participation of university students within informal volunteering was higher during the last 12 months, it is characterised rather by irregular help with a lower workload. On the other hand, even though we see lower participation of unemployed people in informal help within the last 12 months, their participation is characterised by regularity and a larger number of hours spent in such activities.





Volunteers  
cleaning  
the cages in  
animal shelter  
in Senica



PHOTO: DUŠAN HOLIČ

## The Level of Income

**The level of involvement in volunteering is connected with the level of income of respondents; however this does not mean that the higher the income levels, the larger amount of activity.** In cases of both formal and informal volunteering, there are significant differences within the group of respondents with the lowest income (less than 300 Euro). This group has the lowest level of engagement in formal volunteering and the second lowest level of engagement in informal volunteering. The largest level of participation was shown by respondents with an income between 601 - 900 Euro, which corresponds with the average income in Slovakia. While the involvement in volunteering from those with the lowest income up to the average income group has –an increasing tendency, the respondents with a higher income are showing a decreasing level of participation.

## Marital Status

**Involvement in formal volunteering is not related to marital status.** However, we have noticed differences in the case of informal volunteering. **Widows and widowers show significantly higher levels of participation in informal volunteering.** During the last 12 months, as much as 63.2 % of respondents from this group were involved in informal help to others. In the case of informal participation, we are also observing differences in the relation to the length of engagement as we can find more short-term volunteers among single respondents and vice versa. The group of married volunteers is active in volunteering on a long-term basis.

## Religion

**People with and without religion are participating in volunteering on the same level.** The differences were observed only in the length of engagement which was higher in the group of respondents with a religion. This means that **believers have a higher tendency to engage on a long term basis in formal volunteering than people without a religion.** The involvement in informal volunteering is also related with religion. During the last 12 months the participation of believers in this type of activity was much higher than the involvement of non-believers.

## Volunteering and Membership in Organizations

**Out of the total number of respondents, 27.1 % are members of an organisation, and out of these people, 58.5 % volunteered for the organization that they are members of during the last 12 months.**

Also within the last 12 months, 65.5 % of members were active in formal volunteering. It was found that members of an organisation are active on a long term basis and more regularly than those that are not members of any organisation. The close relationship between membership and participation in volunteering was also shown in the case of informal help. More than 66 % of organisation members are active within informal volunteering.



The research findings related to the social profile of volunteers in 1995, 1998, and 2003 are very similar to those shown in our re-

search. This confirms that the socio-economic status of volunteers in Slovakia has largely remained the same.

PHOTO: HOPE FOR CHILDREN

Volunteers in the civic association Hope for Children implementing the project Let's Learn How to Manage Money for children and youth in bad economic situation



# 4. What Are Volunteers Doing and Where Are They Active?

**Formal volunteering** two thirds of the volunteers is for related to only one organisation, one third of the volunteers are active within two or more organisations. We were searching for the data about the type of organisation and the sphere of activity only with the main organisation of a volunteer (the one considered to be the most important for volunteers). The types of organisations can be seen in the chart T3.

**T3**  
**Type of Organization that Formal Volunteers were Active In**

Type of organization	%
NGO	56.3
Organisation founded by regional or local administration, municipality, or an office of self-governing region	25.0
State organization, state-owned enterprise, state administration organisation	8.3
Private business	3.0
Other	0.7
I don't know	6.7
Total	100.0

N=268

**The largest number of volunteers was active within NGOs** (civic associations, non-profit organisations providing generally beneficial services, foundations, non-investment funds, political parties, churches and religious associations). Volunteers are most active in the NGO sector throughout the world as a whole as these organisations are based on a voluntary principle. One fourth of our volunteers helped the organisations within their municipality, 8.3 % helped a state organisation. 3 % were active within private businesses. Researches on volunteering carried out in Slovakia during previous years has shown that the largest space for engagement of volunteers is provided by NGOs, followed by villages, towns, and organisations for state administration. Talking about the typology of volunteers and the organisations that they support, we can say that this is a stable indicator.

An overview of the sphere of activity that the volunteers were working on through their respective organisations can be seen in the table T4. The number of answers is higher than the total number of formal volunteers, as they marked several activities (sometimes 2 or 3) for the main organisation they were active in.



#### T4

### Sphere of Activity of Organizations that Volunteers were Working For

<b>Sphere of activity</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Social care</i>	23.1
<i>Environment</i>	14.6
<i>Art and culture</i>	12.3
<i>Sport</i>	10.8
<i>Religious and church-related activities</i>	10.4
<i>Children and youth organisations</i>	10.1
<i>Support of charity, philanthropy, and volunteering</i>	9.3
<i>Education and research</i>	7
<i>Prevention and help in case of humanitarian and natural disasters</i>	6
<i>Health</i>	4.9
<i>Professional organisations, chambers, associations, trade unions</i>	4.5
<i>Community and housing development</i>	4.5
<i>Politics</i>	4.1
<i>Advocacy</i>	2.6
<i>Other</i>	1.9
<i>Recreation and hobbies</i>	1.5
<i>International organizations</i>	0.4

N=268

Volunteers in Zvolen organizing concert of music bands and art workshop for their peers



PHOTO: HEALTHY CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA



**The largest group of volunteers is active within social services, providing help for various target groups.** Almost one fourth of all formal volunteers carry out activities in this field. The second most frequent activity is the area of environmental protection followed by the one in art and culture. More than 10 % of volunteers are helping in the area of sport, religious activities, and within children and youth organizations.

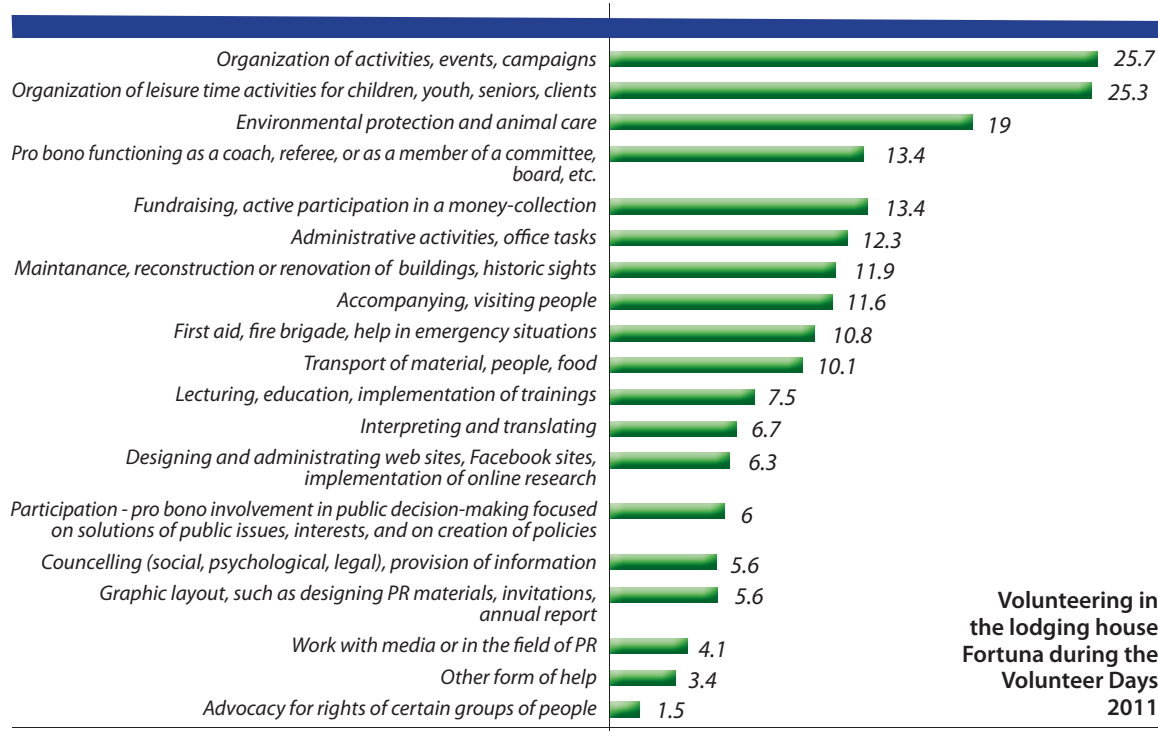
Our findings are quite different from those implemented within previous years in the field of volunteering in Slovakia. Compared to previous research the higher representation of volunteers in the area of social care reflect the development of the sphere itself, as well as the development of volunteering in this area. It is evident that many organizations active in this sphere are working on a voluntary basis (for example mother centres) and that there were many volunteer programs that were developed (especially in various social care facilities such as senior homes, orphanages, day care centres, etc.) as a part of quality improvements to social services. According to our research the development of volunteering in the area of environmental protection documents an increasing interest for people in this sphere which can be caused by active campaigns and advocacy activities in Slovakia. The involvement of volunteers in the sphere of sport is almost the same as in the past. Since 2003, the field of religious and church activities experienced a decrease in activity. The field of art and culture, on the contrary, had an increase of interest from volunteers.

The overview of activities volunteers were doing within or through an organization is listed in the chart G5.



Volunteer  
in a Children's  
Home

**G5**  
**Types of Activities within Formal Volunteering (in %, out of the total number of formal volunteers)**



N=268

**Volunteering in  
the lodging house  
Fortuna during the  
Volunteer Days  
2011**



PHOTO: FUN CLUB FORTUNA



Respondents could select more than one activity – that is why the total is more than 100 %. More than one half of volunteers carried out more than one activity from the list. **The volunteers were most frequently involved in activities such as the organization of an event or campaign, but also organisation and coordination of leisure time activities of children, youth, seniors and/ or clients of social care facilities.** One fourth of volunteers were engaged in each of these activities. The next most frequent activity of a volunteer were volunteer activities in the field of preservation, protection, and renovation of the environment, care for animals and protection of wild animals. This type of activity was carried out by more than 19 % of formal volunteers.

From the point of view of types of voluntary activities, the support of an organization in fulfilling its mission is the prevailing one. The provision of direct personal help to individuals and groups within organisations, households reached the second place. Less represented were advocacy activities (protection, care, and advocacy for interests of groups of people, environment, animals, and cultural heritage) and activities within participation, such as unpaid engagement in a public decision-making process leading to solutions of public issues, interests, and in the creation of policies.

**Volunteers/Young Philanthropists during the world meeting of young people active within volunteer programs of community foundations**



PHOTO: HEALTHY CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA





Overview of activities carried out by informal volunteers can be found in the chart G6.

## G6 Activities of Informal Volunteering



N=458

Volunteers helping  
with clothing  
recycling at UNICEF



PHOTO: SLOVAK  
COMMITTEE FOR UNICEF

Similarly to formal, informal volunteers were involved in various activities. The most frequently implemented activity within informal volunteering was help with various works in a household, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, painting, small repairs, gardening, and other forms of basic work. The care of property or of an animal or keeping contact with someone who needs help (visits, phone calls, e-mails) is also a frequent form of this type of volunteering. Babysitting as an informal help was identified by 22.5 % and the provision of personal care to the sick, old or someone in need (such as accompanying, provision of emotional support, hygienic care, help with dressing, etc.) was reported by 20.7 % of respondents active within informal volunteering.

The typology of these activities shows that informal volunteering is basically focused on mutual help among neighbours (more than 50 %), which proves that it forms an important part of life in a community. Activities related to the provision of various types of services (within informal voluntary activities they were represented by 37.5 %) are also frequent. Advocacy and activities related with work on behalf of the environment, community, and animals, are not as common within informal volunteering.

Volunteers of the  
MaGNeT Program  
learning how to  
write a project  
proposal





PHOTO: HEALTHY CITY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA



# 5. Where Can People Get Information about Volunteering Opportunities and the Need for Volunteer Support?

People gain information on the opportunities to help through various channels. We have divided the sources of information into two groups – direct and indirect sources. In the table T5, you can find the overview of all sources of information within formal volunteering.

**T5**  
**Sources of Information for Formal Volunteering**

Source of information	%	Typology	N	%
Friends, acquaintances, relatives	53.4	Direct	343	87.3
Active volunteers	23.5			
People who work for an organization	22.8			
Office	12.3			
Volunteer centre	6			
Discussion, public meeting	6			
teacher	2.2			
employer	1.9			

Web page of an organisation	4.9	Indirect	42	10.7
Poster, leaflet, promotion material	4.5			
Web page on volunteering	3.7			
Newspaper, magazine	1.1			
TV	1.1			
Radio	0.4			
Other source	3	Other	8	2
<b>Total</b>			<b>393</b>	<b>100.0</b>

N=268

The outcomes of the research confirmed that people willing to volunteer **prefer direct sources of information** while looking for volunteering opportunities. Volunteers gain information on organized volunteering almost seven times more often through direct information sources in comparison to indirect sources. The most



frequently used source of information on volunteering opportunities comes from people who the volunteers are in regular personal contact with and who they trust (friends, acquaintances, and relatives). The second and the third most frequently used sources are represented by other active volunteers and people working for an organisation that needs help. Indirect sources of information on volunteering were used – in both, formal and informal volunteering – by less than 5 % of respondents. All media (newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio) can be considered the least used information source as less than 1 % of respondents gained information on volunteering through these channels.

More than 40 % of the respondents gained information on a volunteering opportunity through two or more sources. Based on our research results we can state that **the most used and most effective sources of information on volunteering come from direct sources.**

Volunteers of the  
Light of Hope  
Association at the  
Oncology Unit of the  
Children's Hospital  
in Banská Bystrica



PHOTO: MARTIN BALÁZ

# 6. What Motivates People to Volunteer?

Why do some people help others as volunteers? What motivates people to look for opportunities to help others? What leads people to help others despite the fact that it costs them energy, time and effort to overcome certain obstacles? Is it possible to understand the decision of people to engage in volunteering as an expression of their altruism? Or is it a reflection of their moral values? In our research, we were also looking for the answers to these questions.

To examine the motivation of volunteers, one can use various approaches. In our case, we have used the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI). VFI follows 10 motivational indicators that play a key role for people in their decision-making whether or not to engage in voluntary activities.

For Slovak volunteers, the most important motive for volunteering is their **values**. People are motivated especially by a strong belief that it is important to help others. **Social interaction** was another significant motive. This means that the desire to meet new people through volunteering and to make friends is also a very strong factor for becoming involved in volunteering.

## T6 Motivation for Formal Volunteering

<i>Factors of Motivation</i>	<i>Average</i>
<i>Values</i>	3.99
<i>Social Interaction</i>	3.87
<i>Understanding</i>	3.75
<i>Reciprocity</i>	3.73
<i>Self-esteem</i>	3.70
<i>Career Development</i>	3.63
<i>Recognition</i>	3.61
<i>Social</i>	3.40
<i>Reactivity</i>	3.30
<i>Protective</i>	2.79

*N = 268, the average is an expression on the scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being undecided, 4 being agree, and 5 strongly agree.*



Other factors which motivate people to volunteer are:

- ♥ **Understanding** – the desire of volunteers to learn from a volunteering experience and to learn more about themselves; to understand themselves, the people or the organisation they help;
- ♥ **Reciprocity** – the volunteers are motivated to help through the prospect that their volunteering work will bring about good things for them later on
- ♥ **Self-esteem** – volunteers are motivated by achieving higher self-esteem or a feeling of self-worth;
- ♥ **Career Development** – the motivation lies in the desire to acquire new knowledge, experience, or contacts related to their work;
- ♥ **Recognition** – the volunteers are motivated by the joy related to the recognition that they earned while volunteering.

Conversely, the least important factors were **protection and reactivity, meaning that** volunteering is not a way to escape from negative emotions volunteers feel for themselves. For example, volunteers do not feel the need to use volunteering in order to deal with something they went through. The factor **society** also reached a lower score (3.40). This suggests that in Slovakia, the influence of people important to volunteers (such as family members or friends) do not play a decisive role as a motive for engagement in volunteering. This is probably caused by the fact that these so-called *important people* do not tend to volunteer themselves. The lower score can suggest that volunteers have very few friends or family members that have already volunteered.

**Motivation for volunteering is not connected with the social profile of volunteers nor is it influenced by the type of activities, frequency and/or length of engagement in volunteering.**

Volunteer/mentor with her client in the Lean on Me Program carried out by Centre of Volunteering in Banská Bystrica



PHOTO: CENTRE OF VOLUNTEERING IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA



# 7. What Prevents People from Volunteering?

In addition to the motivation of volunteers, we were also interested in what keeps people from engagement in formal volunteering. The overview of individual barriers can be found in table T7.

**The largest barriers in formal volunteering engagement in Slovakia is the fact that nobody asked respondents for help, as well as the lack of information on volunteering opportunities.** The fact that people did not get involved in volunteering because they were not asked for help can be connected with the findings in the area of how people gain information on volunteering. It was noted that direct sources of information were prevailing in that section and that those sources asked for people's engagement in volunteering. The high percentage of respondents who selected these as barriers suggests that there is still a low awareness and an inadequate promotion of volunteering within the Slovak public sector. **The lack of time** was the third most frequently selected barrier. These three barriers were chosen by more than a third of all respondents. On the other hand, the most irrelevant barriers seemed to be transport issues, dissatisfaction with previous voluntary experience and financial expenses related to volunteering.

**T7 Barriers that Prevent People from Engaging in Formal Volunteering (in %)**

<b>Barriers in Volunteering</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Nobody asked me for help</i>	40.4
<i>Lack of information on volunteer opportunities</i>	36.0
<i>Lack of time</i>	35.7
<i>Health problems / issues</i>	21.9
<i>Inability to make a long-term commitment</i>	21.0
<i>Feeling that help is not needed</i>	19.1
<i>Lack of interest</i>	17.8
<i>Difficult situation in work</i>	16.8
<i>Difficult situation in the family</i>	16.5
<i>Preference of financial support</i>	12.9
<i>Transport issues</i>	10.8
<i>Dissatisfaction with previous volunteering</i>	8.9
<i>Financial expenses related with volunteering</i>	6.2

N=973





Within all the barriers we have noticed significant differences among respondents active and inactive in formal volunteering. These differences point out the fact that the **above-mentioned**

**barriers are especially important for people who did not participate in formal volunteering within the last 12 months. They are not important for active volunteers.**



Older scout saves one of the participants from a summer camp during a flood

PHOTO: MARTIN ŠVEDA



# 8. What are the Benefits of Volunteering for the Volunteers?

What benefits does formal volunteering bring to Slovak volunteers? We were gaining the answer to this question by presenting a list of statements to the respondents who were then supposed to express their agreement or disagreement with each of them.

Respondents most frequently agreed with the statement that they volunteer because they like what they are doing – as much as 92.9 % of volunteers agreed. Satisfaction with the results of their work, development of their life experience, achieving personal development, gaining new skills and abilities, making new friendships, seeking self-fulfilment, feeling they are needed, feelings of personal success, self-esteem and unselfishness were some of the other important benefits of volunteering. Volunteers also see the benefits of helping others in the improvement of services or in finding solutions to problems. Volunteering for many of them is a way to relax.

Despite the fact that volunteering enables personal development and brings new skills and experience to those involved, respondents do not see it as a tool that can improve their prospects within their professional life. These findings apparently confirm the fact, that even though it is almost a rule in foreign countries that during the interviews employers are taking into consideration the volunteering experience of job applicants, in Slovakia it is almost non-existent. We tried to also find out whether experience gained through volunteering helped the respondents in their professional life or development, for example whether this experience helped them to get a job, to start a business, to get a promotion, etc. As much as 64.9 % of volunteers active in organisations answered this question in a negative way. The statement that „volunteering helps to gain certain level of qualification“ received a very similar result – as much as 32.1 % of volunteers did not agree with it. **In Slovakia, experience obtained through volunteering is still not perceived as something transferable into professional life.**



However, volunteers did feel that they gained various knowledge, skills and abilities through their involvement in voluntary activities. The overview can be found in the table T8.

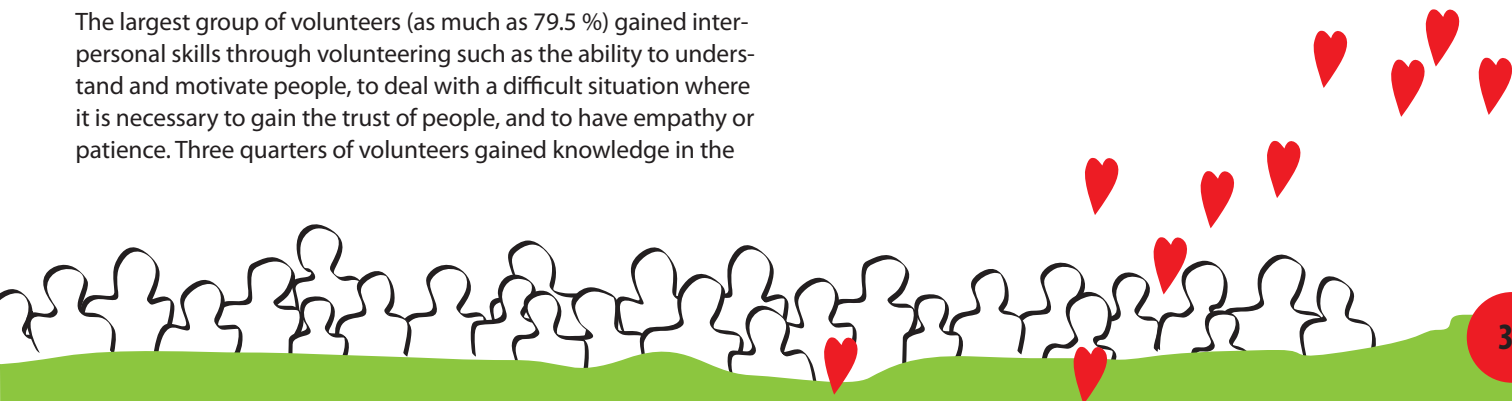
### T8 Knowledge, Abilities and Skills Acquired Through Volunteering (in %)

<b>Knowledge, Abilities and Skills</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Interpersonal skills</i>	79.5
<i>Knowledge related to the area the organisation was working in</i>	75.0
<i>Communication skills</i>	72.8
<i>Organisational or managerial skills</i>	66.4
<i>Technical skills or skills necessary for work in an office</i>	42.5
<i>Fundraising skills</i>	25.0

N = 268

The largest group of volunteers (as much as 79.5 %) gained interpersonal skills through volunteering such as the ability to understand and motivate people, to deal with a difficult situation where it is necessary to gain the trust of people, and to have empathy or patience. Three quarters of volunteers gained knowledge in the

sphere of activity of the organisation they were active in, through their voluntary activities, but also felt that they gained communication skills such as the ability to talk in public, to negotiate with people, and/or to prepare and facilitate a meeting. A majority of them also achieved organisational or managerial skills. 42.5 % of volunteers acquired – thanks to volunteering – technical skills or skills necessary for the work in an office and only 25 % gained the fundraising skills. The Benefits of volunteering are related with the types of activities people engage in. The most frequent tasks were the organisation of events, activities, and campaigns, but also leisure time activities for various target groups. These findings also prove that in Slovakia it is not common to engage volunteers (not even those who act as board members) in fundraising. They also suggest that people are inclined to choose something more active for their voluntary activity, rather than work in an office.



# 9. Do volunteers enjoy their Volunteer experience?

**A Large majority of volunteers in Slovakia have a positive experience with volunteering through organisations.** They are able to handle all activities (91 % of volunteers), they do what they like (89.7 %), they feel welcome (87.7 %), they positively perceive the real expectations of the organisation (78.8 %) and feel appreciated (81.7 %). As much as 70.2 % of volunteers believe that through their activity they influence the development of the organisation they are active in. It is interesting that while many volunteers have a very positive experience; only half of them (51.1 %) perceive they have a right to be part of the decision-making process in the organisation they are volunteering for. Approximately one third of volunteers think it is necessary that the volunteering be better organised and 18.6 % of them agree with the statement that there is too much bureaucracy in the organisation they help. It is evident that if organisations want to motivate their volunteers and while improving the quality of their services, they should focus on the involvement of volunteers into the evaluation of the organisations as well as in to the decision-making processes.

In the area of volunteer management we also attained positive results. The research showed that 84.7 % of volunteers in Slovakia have a volunteer coordinator at their disposal. As much as 76.5 % of them

went through an entrance interview prepared by the organisation they are active in and more than half of them (52.2 %) **underwent a targeted training** needed for their voluntary activity. 81 % of them were informed about the actual voluntary activity before they started, while 65.7 % of them were provided with **adequate support** through counselling, supervision or meetings. Only 27.6 % of volunteers in Slovakia **sign a formal contract with the organisation** they are providing help to. This can relate to the fact that in Slovakia, at the time of the implementation of the research, there was no legal framework for volunteering, but also to the fact that certain voluntary activities do not require the existence of an agreement. The absence of a written manual, guidance and/or the volunteers code of ethics was confirmed by 59 % of respondents active in volunteering.

**Appreciation and recognition** for voluntary activity is an important part of volunteer management – especially from the point of view of motivation and sustainability. The results for the main types of recognition can be found in table T9. Most volunteers get a verbal acknowledgement from organisations (83.2 %). It is apparent



from the outcomes that in Slovakia, volunteers are not often encouraged in another way as there is a large discrepancy between verbal acknowledgement and other forms of appreciation.

## T9

### Forms of Encouragement, Appreciation and Recognition (in %)

<b>Forms of Encouragement, Appreciation and Recognition</b>	<b>Yes %</b>
<i>Verbal acknowledgement</i>	83.2
<i>Congratulation for birthday/ name-day</i>	30.2
<i>Free use of space and/or equipment of an organisation</i>	29.5
<i>Written thank you notes from an organisation</i>	28
<i>Gifts</i>	28
<i>Education, training, participation at a conference free of charge</i>	26.9
<i>Referral for CV, for work, school, etc.</i>	18.3
<i>Certificate, confirmation, testimonial from an organisation</i>	14.9
<i>Appreciation in media – an article or an interview</i>	14.9
<i>Prize for voluntary activity within an organisation</i>	13.1
<i>Free services</i>	11.2
<i>Discounts</i>	5.6
<i>Prize for voluntary activity provided by another organisation (such as regional voluntary centre, etc.)</i>	4.1
<i>Other form of appreciation, recognition, reward</i>	3

N = 268



PHOTO: MURO

A volunteer and a client in the social care centre Slatinka during Volunteer Days 2011

# 10. What Are the Conditions in Slovakia for the Development of Volunteering?

The development of formal volunteering in Slovakia is influenced by several factors and facts. The infrastructure of volunteering, i.e. the set of measures and conditions necessary for the full development of volunteering, **include especially:**

- ♥ The legal framework for volunteering;
- ♥ The financial support of volunteer centres and volunteer organisations;
- ♥ The activities targeted on promotion and recognition/appreciation of volunteering;
- ♥ The research on volunteering;
- ♥ The network of regional volunteer centres.

We can state that in Slovakia some of these elements are developed only partially and the others are still missing.

## Legal Framework for Volunteering

**Until 2011, Slovak legislation did not regulate volunteering in a complex way.** It partially regulated two specific forms of vo-

lunteering – *voluntary activity carried out by unemployed people as a form of activation work within the Law No. 330/2008 on Employment Services and youth volunteering regulated by the Law No. 282/2008 on the support of work with youth.*

The discussion about the complex legal framework for volunteering was already started in Slovakia in 2002, when a team of lawyers from the First Slovak Non-Profit Service Centre (1. SNSC) prepared the so-called **Code of Non-Profit Law**. Volunteering was supposed to be part of it. However, the Code evoked a strong criticism of NGOs and its preparation was stopped. The discussion started again in 2007. During 2008 and 2009, there were several projects implemented in Slovakia within which discussions on the form of a legal framework for volunteering were organized. In 2009, C.A.R.D.O. in cooperation with the 1.SNSC prepared a draft bill on volunteering. Thanks to the initiatives of the civic association C.A.R.D.O., the government elected in 2010 decided to also focus on the topic of volunteering and the enactment of this law





Volunteers treat frostbitten feet of homeless people in the shelter of St. Vincent de Paul in Bratislava

PHOTO: LUKÁŠ MACEK



became the part of its programmatic declaration. The Ministry of Interior was responsible for preparation and enactment of the Law on Volunteering. It set up a committee consisting of experts from the NGO sector and entrusted it with the preparation of the law. The draft bill also went through a public discussion that resulted in various comments and recommendations. All the relevant comments were accepted – thanks to the Plenipotentiary for the Civil Society – during the interdepartmental commenting procedure. Currently, the law is read in the Slovak Parliament. Its goal is to support volunteering, not to hinder it or introduce bureaucracy into areas that do not need any legal regulations. The law should be valid as of December 1, 2011.

## Financial Support of Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Organisations

Similarly as Slovakia is still missing the legal framework, there **still is not any targeted system for direct support**. Volunteer centres and organisations working with volunteers have to look for opportunities to get a grant and to respond to various calls for applications that are relevant for their area of activity. The funding of volunteer centres and organisations and their programs can be defined as **diversified sources**. While looking for financial sources, for managed and unmanaged volunteering programs it is still necessary to persuade donors for the need of good-quality management of volunteers and also the fact that volunteering – even though volunteers work for free – is related with certain costs

and it is worthy of some investment. Investing in volunteering and the necessity of a paid coordinator of volunteers or a program manager are still overlooked needs.

## Activities Directed on Promotion and Recognition / Appreciation of Volunteering

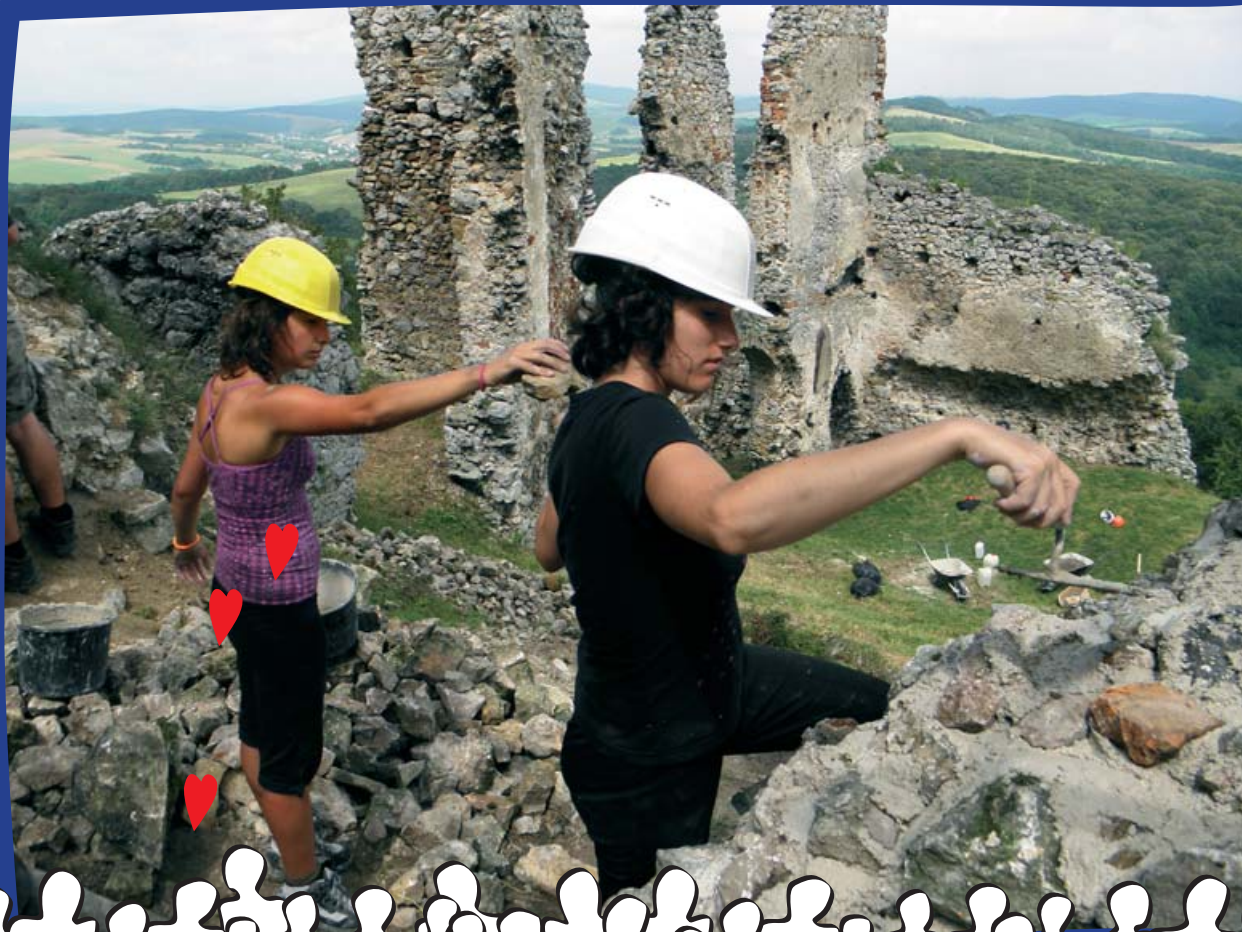
In Slovakia, there were several projects implemented recently on a national, regional and local level with the goal to improve the status of volunteering and to inform the public about volunteering in general. As the most important activities in this area, we can mention:

♥ **The national virtual volunteer centre**, the project established in 2007 was initiated by the civic association C.A.R.D.O. with the support of the Slovak Ministry of Education. It's basically a website – [www.dobrovolnictvo.sk](http://www.dobrovolnictvo.sk) – that provides services and information for volunteers, organisations working in the field of volunteering and organisations working with volunteers on a local, national, and international level. It is an important source of contacts, volunteering opportunities, information on volunteering as well as a search tool for organizations looking for partners and for cooperation opportunities in the field of volunteering.

♥ **Volunteer Days** that are annually organized by the civic association C.A.R.D.O. in cooperation with the regional volunteer centres since 2009. During these days, people throughout







Volunteers helping with the renovation of Brekov castle in Zemplin region

PHOTO: STANISLAV MACINSKY



Slovakia can participate in various volunteering activities and can experience its benefits.



Projects of the Pontis Foundation which contributes to the better status of volunteering in public and which systematically support corporate volunteering and community investments in Slovakia. These especially include projects implemented within the **Our Town** program. During a one or two-day implementation of the Our Town program, hundreds of volunteers from tens of companies participate in volunteering activities of various kinds (such as renovation of playgrounds, landscape gardening, blood donations, discussion in senior homes and others).



**Heart on a Sleeve** – this award ceremony was established in 1999, when the Volunteer Centre SAIA-SCTS started to organize it under the auspices of the President of the Slovak Republic. When the Volunteer Centre SAIA-SCTS stopped operating in 2002, only the volunteer centre in Prešov continued in this tradition of recognition of volunteers in the region. Since 2007, this tradition has spread to the Banská Bystrica region by the Centre of Volunteering in Banská Bystrica and later to other volunteer centres in Slovakia.



There are several partial activities providing an opportunity for public recognition for volunteering and the work of volunteers. At the same time, there are many activities implemented on a local level focused on the development of formal and informal volunteering.

## Research on Volunteering

Since 1989, there were several surveys and researches implemented in the field of volunteering, focused on various aspects of this phenomenon. Their overview can be found in the publication *Analyzá dobrovoľníctva na Slovensku (The Analysis of Volunteering in Slovakia – available only in Slovak language)*. As these researches were implemented by different organisations and institutions that used different methodologies, it is not possible to compare their results. There are several experts, especially within the academic sector, that are focusing on this topic in their research. However, nobody implements a research of volunteering on a systematic basis in Slovakia.

## Volunteer Centres in Slovakia

The first volunteer centre in Slovakia was established in 1998. It was founded as a National Volunteer Centre by SAIA-SCTS (Slovak Academic and Information Agency – Service Centre for the Third Sector). This institution created a network of volunteer centres within its branches throughout Slovakia. Despite the public recognition that the activities of this network gained, the National Volunteer Centre SAIA-SCTS ceased to exist in September 2002 after the unsuccessful search for financial support necessary for its further functioning

In 2011, there were volunteer centres functioning in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Košice, Nitra, Prešov, and Trnava. Their mission is to



support the development of volunteering and thus support civil society and improve the quality of life in general.

#### **Volunteer Centres in Slovakia fulfil several functions:**

- ♥ **Promotion, awareness** – they promote the idea of volunteering and spread information about this phenomenon. The volunteer centres are not only organizing seminars, presentations, workshops or discussions on volunteering, but often are asked by other organisations to implement such activities.
- ♥ **Education** – in the area of education, the volunteer centres are concentrating especially on the area of volunteer management; they provide accredited courses for coordinators of volunteer programs, as well as other trainings and seminars. Some of the volunteer centres also started with the provision of supervision as a method of education through which they improve the quality of existing volunteer programs.
- ♥ **Maintenance of the database of organisations and volunteers** and their matching. These databases are regularly updated and serve especially as a tool for networking, dissemination of information about volunteering in general and volunteering vacancies in organisations.
- ♥ **Networking of regional organisations**– volunteer centres are focusing especially on the support of intra-sectoral (within the NGO sector) and inter-sectoral cooperation within the volunteering area.
- ♥ **Match-making for volunteer opportunities** – volunteer centres are providing information on volunteering vacancies in specific organisations for people interested in volunteer-

Volunteering  
Day 2009 in the  
Centre of Leisure  
Time Activities in  
Bratislava



PHOTO: C.A.R.D.O.



ring and implement recruitment in order to find volunteers for NGOs and their activities.

**Consulting** can have various forms:

- 1) Volunteer centres provide services to organisations that they cooperate with for a longer time, for example they are preparing project proposals together (or in cooperation) and they are also helping these organisations to improve their volunteer management
- 2) Volunteer centres are often providing consultations for organisations interested in the European Volunteer Service funded within the EU program Youth in Action
- 3) Volunteer centres are providing counselling to various organisations on how to set up an effective volunteer program.

**Promotion of the value of volunteering for society** is happening through events – award ceremonies for volunteers in individual regions.

**Research** – volunteer centres are implementing activities focused on monitoring the development of volunteering, but are also conducting research focused on the broader development of the academic debate.

The civic association C.A.R.D.O. located in Bratislava fulfils the roles of a national volunteer centre, especially through:

Administration and updating of the service and information website on volunteering – [www.dobrovolnictvo.sk](http://www.dobrovolnictvo.sk);

Development of activities focused on the creation of a legal framework for volunteering in Slovakia;

Networking of volunteer centres and organisations in Slovakia; The implementation of the national annual event – Day(s) of Volunteering – that is (since 2009) focused on the support and promotion of the idea of volunteering. This event is coordinated in cooperation with other volunteer centres in Slovakia;

The membership in the European Volunteer Centres (CEV – Centrum Europeen du Volontariat) with its headquarters in Brussels. Together with CEV and other foreign partners, C.A.R.D.O. develops international projects focused on the development of volunteering in Slovakia.

The concept of volunteer centres is new in Slovakia. Their need has not been identified by the key stakeholders yet. The need for the establishment of new centres, or the support of already existing volunteer centres is not mentioned in strategic documents published by the government or the regional administration of municipalities. That is why they often feel *the loneliness of the long distance runners*. Their financial and institutional sustainability is questionable. However, the volunteer centres in Slovakia are planning to join their power to formalize an already existing platform and to strengthen their efforts in the area of appealing and lobbying the political environment for the benefit of the concept of volunteer centres.



## Why is it necessary to support volunteer centres?

Because:

- ♥ they increase the availability of volunteering opportunities as they administer databases of organisations and vacancies which help people interested in volunteering to get an orientation into the existing volunteering opportunities;
- ♥ in communities, they network with organisations active in various fields and through that support partnership building;
- ♥ they contribute to the solutions of issues within communities – cooperation of organisations and the involvement of local citizens contributes to more effective usage of human, financial, material, and natural sources; at the same time, the participation of citizens on a solution of community issues strengthens this approach and also contributes to stronger solidarity and to the decrease of social exclusion;
- ♥ they make the value of volunteering more visible for society and individuals and contribute to changes in thinking. They reveal stereotypes and myths related to volunteers and volunteering.

Young  
volunteers for  
House of God's  
Mercy in Banská  
Bystrica during  
Volunteering  
Days 2011

PHOTO: HOUSE OF GOD'S MERCY



# Summary

- ♥ Within the last 12 months, 27.5 % of Slovak citizens older than 15 were involved in volunteering.
- ♥ Within the last 12 months, 47.1 % of the population in Slovakia over 15 participated in informal volunteering.
- ♥ Formal and informal volunteering in Slovakia can be characterised as a long-term and regular activity.
- ♥ Higher levels of engagement in informal and formal volunteering are typical for Slovakia and there is a close relationship between these two forms of volunteering. High numbers of volunteers active within formal volunteering are also active within informal volunteering and vice versa.
- ♥ The social profile of Slovak volunteers can be characterised by:
  - ♥ almost the same level of involvement of men and women within both formal and informal volunteering;
  - ♥ a similar representation of individual age groups, even though the lowest level of participation in both types of volunteering is shown by the group of 15 – 19 years old;
  - ♥ the relationship between the volunteering and the level of education – the higher the level of education is, the higher the participation in volunteering;
- ♥ the higher level of informal volunteering within rural areas and with the citizens of the Prešov and Košice regions;
- ♥ the relationship between volunteering and economic position, with the highest level of participation shown by students of universities, employed and retired people. Conversely, the less involved are the unemployed and students of secondary schools;
- ♥ the relationship between volunteering and the level of income, participation is not automatically increasing with the level of income; the least active are people with the lowest income and the largest activity is shown by people with the average income in Slovakia (600 – 900 Euro);
- ♥ a higher level of involvement of widows and widowers into informal volunteering;
- ♥ a connection between religion and increased informal volunteering with the religious;
- ♥ a relationship with membership, where the members of organisations have the tendency to be more active in both types of volunteering.



♥ The largest space for participation of volunteers is provided by NGOs, followed by villages, towns, and organisations of the state administration.

♥ The highest number of volunteers is active within social services for various target groups, in the area of environmental protection and in arts and culture.

♥ The most frequently implemented activities within volunteering are organising and/or helping with the implementation of various activities, events or campaigns, and also the organisation and coordination of leisure-time activities. Helping with the basic functioning of an organisation and fulfilling its mission is the most prevailing activity for volunteers, followed by the provision of direct personal help to individuals and groups.

♥ Informal volunteering is shown especially through mutual help and support among neighbours. Activities related to the provision of various services are also quite common.

♥ Direct sources of information on formal volunteering are more used in comparison with indirect sources.

♥ Slovak volunteers are motivated to volunteer primarily by a strong belief that it is important to help others and by the desire to meet new people and make new friends through volunteering. Other important motivational factors are learning through a volunteering experience and gaining a better awareness of self, people or organisation, reciprocity,



Volunteer Days 2011 – volunteers renovate the space of the NGO Garden in Banská Bystrica

PHOTO: DUŠAN HEIN

improved self-esteem or self-evaluation, the desire to gain new knowledge, experience or contacts related to the profession of a volunteer and the joy from the appreciation gained through volunteering.

♥ The biggest barriers in formal volunteering are: no demand for help, lack of information about the opportunity to volunteer and the lack of time. All recognised barriers are important especially for people who did not participate in formal volunteering; they are not important for active volunteers.

♥ Volunteers most often agreed with the statement they participate in volunteering because they like what they do. Other important benefits of volunteering are: satisfaction with the results of volunteering, development of life experience, personal development, gaining new abilities and skills, new friendships, self-fulfilment, the feeling that one is needed, but also feelings of personal success, self-confidence and unselfishness.

♥ Experience gained through volunteering is still not perceived as something transferable into the sphere of professional life..

♥ Primarily, volunteers that are volunteering for organisations have a positive experience.

♥ Volunteering infrastructure is weakly developed in Slovakia. Some of its segments are developed partially, some are still missing.

Volunteers for the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra removing the scenery in the Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra

PHOTO: HENRICH MIŠKOVÍČ





# Resources

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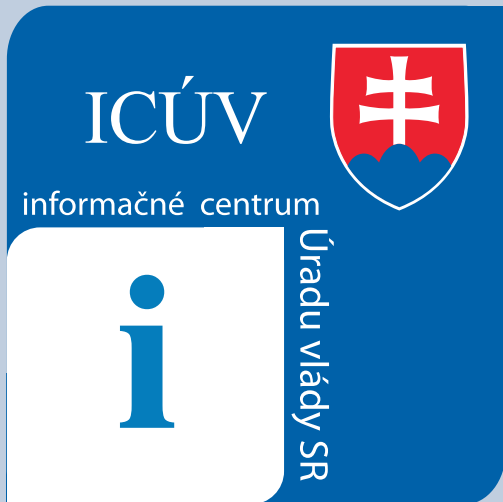




Volunteers  
cleaning  
the Calvary  
Hill in  
Banská  
Štiavnica

PHOTO: LUKÁŠ ROHÁRIK





- personal contact – Štefánikova 2, Bratislava
- information service related to EU available at **euroinfo.gov.sk**
- on-line counselling in practical issues related to the life in EU available at **euroinfo.gov.sk** or **0800 103 104** (free of charge)
- anti-corruption line – **0850 111 001** (charged at the same rate as local call)
- exhibitions in the entrance area of Government Office of the Slovak Republic
- excursions in the seat of Government Office of the Slovak Republic – only per order

