

NATIONAL REPORT – IRELAND

CONTENTS

1	GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN IRELAND	1
1.1	History and contextual background	1
1.2	Definitions	2
1.3	Number and profile of volunteers	2
1.4	Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers	5
1.5	Main voluntary activities	7
2	INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK	8
2.1	Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering	8
2.2	Policies	10
2.3	Programmes	11
3	REGULATORY FRAMEWORK	12
3.1	General legal framework	12
3.2	Legal framework for individual volunteers	12
3.3	Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers	14
3.4	Legal framework for profit-making organisations	14
3.5	Insurance and protection of volunteers	15
4	ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING	15
4.1	Funding arrangements for volunteering	15
4.2	Economic value of volunteering	16
5	SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING	17
5.1	Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries	18
5.2	Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer	19
6	VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	19
6.1	Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system	19
6.2	Education and training opportunities for volunteers	20
7	EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING	21
8	CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING	21
8.1	Challenges for volunteering	21
8.2	Opportunities for volunteering	22
	SOURCES	23

1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING IN IRELAND

1.1 History and contextual background

There has been a long tradition of voluntary activity and charitable service in Ireland that has been shaped by religious, political and economic developments (Volunteering Ireland, 2009) forming a substantial element of national economic and social life (AVSO 2004). For example, there has been a tradition of *'caritas'* in Ireland dating back to the medieval times. This concept is broader than the notion of charity and incorporates doing good work for the benefit of other individuals. Volunteering is implicit in the concept of *'caritas'* and has been a large part of the Christian tradition in Ireland where Christian monasteries were known for their provision of shelter and medical aid for the homeless and the sick. By the 19th century, many voluntary hospitals had been established that were dependent on voluntary effort (by both Catholic, Protestant and non religious groups). Many of these institutions and organisations still exist today such as the St. Vincent de Paul. The historical dominance of the Catholic Church supplying essential social welfare services in Ireland continued up to the 1960s. Volunteerism in 19th century Ireland was also apparent in the Gaelic cultural revival before independence from Great Britain. These Gaelic revivalist organisations made a distinct contribution to refining an Irish identity through organisations like Conradh na Gaeilge (formally known as the Gaelic League) and Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which still thrives today. Not only did they contribute to developing a sense of shared identity they also 'created a sense of social solidarity and community, or a sense of social capital'. While the Catholic Church played a sizable role in voluntary activity a second very important influence on the development of Ireland's present-day voluntary sector is its tradition of self help. This tradition emanated from Protestant and secular voluntary action in the 18th and 19th centuries and was epitomised by the dairy farming co-operative movement in the 1930s and Muintir na Tíre - a local community self help initiative (which was organised on the basis of Catholic parish units). Whilst conservative and supported by the Catholic Church, its principles of empowerment and direct democracy fuelled further self help volunteerism later in the century.

Given the influence of the Catholic Church which advocated that social welfare was a matter for the family and the parish, the state was reluctant to engage with the delivery of social services until the mid 1960s. There was a noticeable shift in this policy by the 1970s and voluntary sector provision of social services and education began to receive increased state support. However, rather than being replaced by state services, the voluntary sector has complimented or provided an alternative and the role of volunteers has remained pivotal in the delivery of these services.

Recent decades have seen a fall-off in the importance of religious organisations (although their presence is still indisputable) and the rise of community and independent non-profit organisations that are organised around issues like social and economic marginalisation. The focus of more recent non-profit organisations, furthermore, is more critical of state inaction and structural causes (Donoghue, 1998).

The United Nation's International Year of Volunteers in 2001 also gave a new impetus to volunteering in Ireland, significantly increasing demand on Volunteering Ireland's services. Volunteer Centres and other organisations were also affected by the increased attention to volunteering as a result of the International Year of Volunteers.

1.2 Definitions

Volunteering was defined in official documentation for the first time in the Government's White Paper 'Supporting Voluntary Activity' published in 2000. The definition was given as: *'the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment (except for the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses)'* and was taken from Volunteering Ireland (then operating as the Volunteer Resource Centre). This definition has subsequently been widely used in seminal documents and publications including 'Tipping the Balance' which was the report of the National Committee on Volunteering published in 2002,

1.3 Number and profile of volunteers

Total number of volunteers

In 2006, the National Census included a question on volunteering for the first time. The aim was to provide a benchmark from which to monitor changes over time. The question asked if, in the four weeks preceding census date, an individual had helped or done voluntary unpaid work with any of the following categories: 'social or charitable organisation'; 'religious group or church'; 'sporting organisation'; 'political or cultural organisation'; 'any other voluntary activity' or 'no voluntary activity'.

According to the Census 2006 Principal Results, 16.4% of the population aged 15 and over were involved in at least one of the five voluntary activity categories listed above i.e. one in six persons aged 15 and over participated.

Although there is no previous Census data to compare this figure with, the National and Economic Social Forum (NESF) commissioned research on levels of social capital in 2002 which including volunteering (The Policy Implications of Social Capital, 2003). According to the NESF, in 2002, 17.1% of the Irish population *aged 18* and over engaged in 'unpaid, regular voluntary activity or service outside the home or workplace'. It has been widely accepted that the 2006 Census suggests a very slight decline in volunteering, however it must be considered that when comparing the sets of data it is not possible to compare like with like.

The Taskforce on Active Citizenship carried out a survey in 2006 with 1,045 persons aged 16 and over. This survey found that 23.1% of the population aged 16 and over were involved in voluntary activity. Given the small size of the Taskforce's sample, it seems appropriate to focus instead on the comparisons and contrasts between the 2002 NESF study and the 2006 Census.

Trend

As indicated above, it is important to note that though the figures are not comparable, trends in other sets of research have been identified and are drawn on throughout the report.

Donoghue et al (2001) draw on the three data sets carried out by Ruddle and O'Connor (1993, Ruddle and Mulvihill 1995, 1999) and reports how volunteering levels declined between 1992 and 1998. In 1992, 39% of the population were engaged in voluntary activity. By 1998 this proportion had declined to 33%.

Tipping the Balance (2002) provides trends of numbers volunteering between 1992, 1994 and 1997-8. Access to data sets for early years is not available. Headline trends show slight fluctuations in the number of females volunteering - 41% in 1992, 38.9% in 1994 and 40%

in 1997-8. Interestingly, the number of males participating in volunteering decreased from 37.0% in 1992 to 30.9% in 1994 and dropped further to 28.0% in 1997-8.

Profile trends of volunteering by age indicate that young people and those aged 60+ are under-represented in the volunteer pool. Though volunteers in their 40s have shown the highest rate of participation in volunteering, they also demonstrated the greatest decline during the 1990s.

A major trend in volunteering has been linked with the rapidly changing demography of Ireland with increasing numbers of people from immigrant communities coming forward as volunteers. The 2006 Population Census identified an excess of 420,000 or 12% of persons over 15 years of age in the Republic of Ireland to be non-Irish Nationals. Nevertheless, according to the census just 8% of people, who were involved in a voluntary activity in Ireland, are non-Irish nationals.

Research conducted by Padraic Fleming and Chiara Magini of Volunteering Ireland on behalf of Integrating Ireland, 'The Impact of Immigrant Civic Participation' was published in 2008. Among their recommendations, the report calls for the development of inclusive volunteering policies and programmes together with a multi-lateral approach to integration and a system whereby the state recognises and accredits the contribution of immigrant civic participation in the community is developed to support immigrant volunteering in the future.

A further trend to highlight follows the impact of the recent global recession. According to Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) the recession has led to a dramatic rise in the number of people registering for volunteering. VCI report there has been a significant increase in the number of people registering across the whole of 2009 which, compared to 2008, amounts to almost 80% increase. Many months experienced an increase of more than 100% compared to last year (some months as high as 120%). VCI report more than 12,500 people will have registered to volunteer via their local Volunteer Centre in 2009.

Gender

Census 2006 highlights that there is not much difference in the percentage of people who are involved in volunteering by gender. According to Census 2006, there are 275,013 male volunteers in Ireland. This represents 16% of the male population. In addition, there are 278,242 female volunteers in Ireland, representing 16% of the female population.

Females made up 61% of volunteers involved with a religious group or church and 59% of voluntary social and charitable workers, while males accounted for 69% of those involved in voluntary sporting activities and 58% of political volunteers.

Age groups

From a total of 553,255 persons involved in one or more voluntary activity in Ireland, Census 2006 shows there are 38,019 15-19 year olds participating in volunteering. This group represents 13% of the total number of volunteers. People between the age of 20-24 represents 10%, 25-34 age group represents 12%, the 35-44 age group represent 20%, 45-54 year olds represent 23%, 55-64 year olds represent 21% and those 64 years and over represent 15%.

The 45-49 age group are the highest participating age group in voluntary activities (23%) while almost one in four of all volunteers were in their forties. Persons aged between 20-24 years are least likely to volunteer (10%).

The 2006 Census confirms the findings of the 2002 NESF report with respect to the greater likelihood of volunteering in mid-life (40-64 years of age). Significantly, the 2006 Census records a much higher percentage of persons aged 65 and over engaged in volunteering (15%) than the NESF 2002 study (6%).

The experience of Volunteer Centres provides further evidence in relation to statistics on age groups. For example, it is reported that the majority of those that register to volunteer with Volunteer Centres (which represents over 60%) have never volunteered before. It is also interesting to note that younger people are registering to volunteer with close to 70% aged 35 or younger (50% of who are aged 25 years or younger). Considered alongside Census figures, statistics from Volunteer Centres reveal that young people are interested in volunteering. This represents new interest in volunteering given that a high proportion of those who register have not volunteered in the past.

Geographical spread of volunteering

Wall (2005) draws on research carried out by the National College of Ireland Survey (Ruddle and Mulvihill 1999) who reported Leinster (south-east province) had the highest number of volunteers in the country in 1997-98, though there is a perception there is a lack of volunteers in County Carlow also located in Leinster.

More recently, in November 2007, Disability, Carers and Voluntary Activities of the 2006 Census results shed further light on the levels of volunteering in Ireland. The Census highlights that Leinster has the highest percentage of volunteers, with 54% of the total of volunteers in Ireland, followed by Munster (28%), Connacht (15%) and Ulster (6%).

Education levels

Census 2006 shows that agricultural workers and unskilled workers make up the lowest % of the total of volunteers at 1% and 2% respectively. Employers/ managers and non-manual represent the highest % of the total of volunteers at 19% and 18% respectively.

According to Volunteering Ireland (2002), those that have reached the Third Level Qualification are more than twice as likely to volunteer as those with Primary Certificates (48.6% compared with 23.2%). In addition, statistics show worryingly, that the proportion of those with the lowest level of education who decide to volunteer has dropped significantly in the last decade – by at least 6.7%. Volunteering Ireland also note that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to volunteer than those more fortunate, however these differences have decreased in recent years (44.3% of professionals and managers volunteer, compared to 25.9% of unskilled or unemployed persons).

Volunteer involvement by sectors

According to the Census 2006, the activity with the highest recorded number of volunteers was in the area of social or charitable work (193,000 persons or 34.8% of active volunteers, 5.7% of the total population aged 15 and over). This was followed by sporting organisations (180,465 persons or 32.6% of active volunteers, 5.4% of the total population). 143,133 persons (25.9% of active volunteers, 4.2% of the total population) were involved with religious or church organisations, while 46,944 (8.5% of active volunteers, 1.4% of the total population) engaged with political or cultural organisations.

Profile of volunteers by employment status

According to Census 2006, higher and lower professionals had the highest participation rates in voluntary activities (24.7% and 25.6%, respectively) while semi-skilled and unskilled workers (12.9% and 9.4%, respectively) participated least.

The 1997-98 survey data (Ruddle and Mulvihill, 1999) that was used to inform Tipping the Balance (2002) presents the employment status of volunteers during the 1990s. Here, the 1997-98 survey data shows that people most likely to engage in volunteering activity were those with part-time employment status (52.2%) followed by students (45.7%), those working at home (37.7%), people who work full time (34.3%), retired people (28.6%) and lastly, those who are unemployed (17.8%).

In addition, the 1997-98 survey also considered the relationship between household income and volunteering. The evidence shows that households with a gross annual income of more than £15,652 were more likely to volunteer than those with a lower income. Those living in a household with a gross annual income of £26,000 were most likely to engage in voluntary activity.

Time dedicated to volunteering

Data on the total number of hours/days invested by volunteers in a year or month is limited. According to Donoghue et al (2006) in their report 'The Hidden Landscape', the average contribution was 21 hours per month, though 50% of organisations reported 10 hours per month or less. In 1995 Ruddle and Donoghue reported people volunteer for an average of 5-12 hours per month, although the range is wide where some individuals give less than one hour, whilst others give over 50 hours.

According to Ruddle and Mulvihill (1999), the total amount of time given to voluntary work per year is equivalent to approximately 96,450 full-time workers. The NESF research (2002) estimated the equivalent number of full time employees to be anything between 14,898 and 18,905. The distinction between the two data sets is likely to be as a result of how the data has been collected.

1.4 Number and types of organisations engaging volunteers

While there has been no comprehensive database of non-profit organisations located in Ireland, the most useful resource is the Mapping Survey conducted by the Centre for Nonprofit Management, Trinity College Dublin conducted in 2005. The 2005 study estimated that there are 24,000 community and voluntary organisation in Ireland. This includes schools and other non-governmental organisations¹. While many of these organisations involve volunteers widely in their work, in many, the voluntary input is limited to the Board and fundraising functions.

Definition of voluntary organisations in Ireland

In Ireland there are many terms used to describe the organisations that work outside the public or private sector, for example, non-profit organisations, voluntary organisations, community organisations, non-governmental and charitable. The most commonly used by both practitioners and the government is 'community organisations', 'voluntary organisations' or 'community and voluntary organisations'.

Much of the research conducted on the sector in Ireland has used the definition that has been devised by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project (CNP). This is an operational-structural definition which focuses on the basic structure and operations of an organisation rather than their purpose or sources of income. This definition identifies five main criteria that are believed to be fundamental for defining non-profit organisations. Non-profit organisation, therefore, are considered to be:

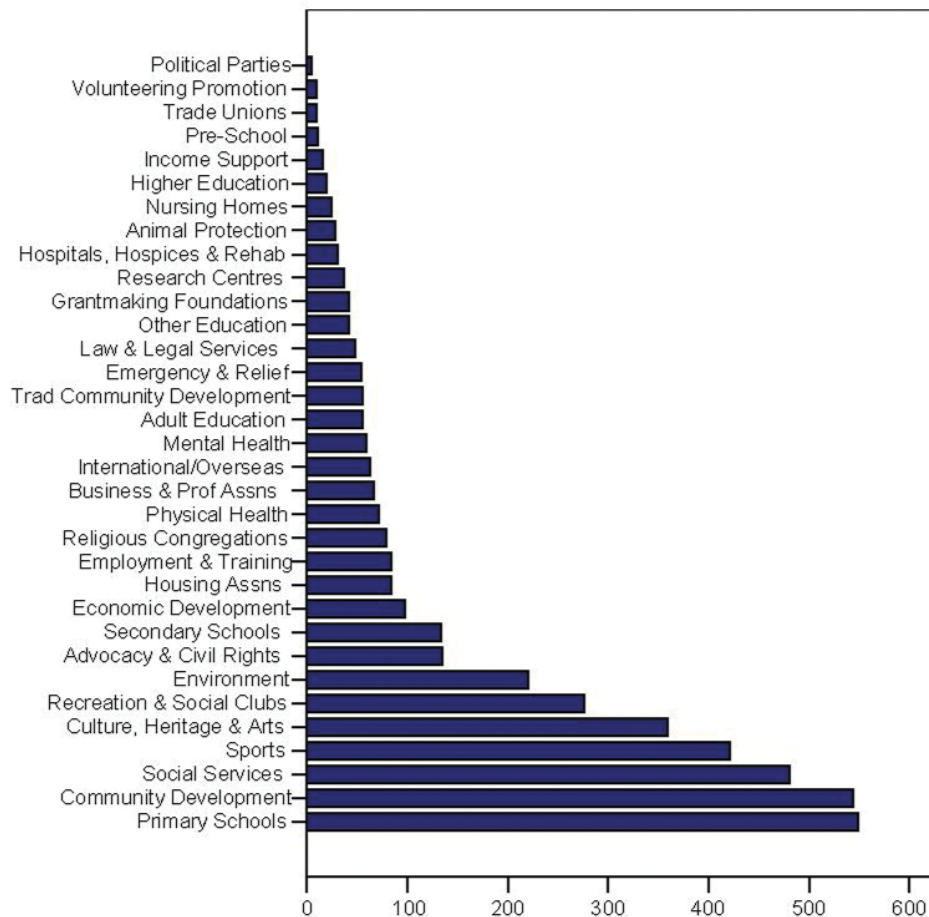
- Organised; organisations must have some kind of formal and institutional reality;
- Private; organisations must be institutionally separate from the government;
- Non-profit distributing; organisations must not return any profits generated to their owners or directors;
- Self-governing; organisations must be in a position to control their own activities and have their own internal procedures for governance;

¹ Though it should be noted that this is not the number of organisations that engage volunteers.

- Voluntary; organisations must involve some meaningful degree of voluntary participation.

Number of voluntary organisations and distribution per sector

Based on the findings of the Hidden Landscape Survey (2006), Irish nonprofit organisations predominate in a number of categories. As set out in the figure below, community development, primary schools, social services and sports are the largest categories, followed by cultural groups, and to a lesser degree recreation and social clubs.



(Source: Hidden Landscape, 2006)

Trend

In their final report called the ‘Hidden Landscape’, published in June 2006, key findings include:

- The majority of organisations were relatively young and established since the mid 1980s.
- One quarter (25%) of organisations was located in Dublin with a significant proportion located in other cities such as Cork, Limerick and Galway.
- The largest numbers of organisations were active in the fields of development and housing (21%), education and research (19%) and sports and recreation (16%).
- A large number of organisations (41%) were recognised as charities for tax purposes (held a CHY number) and 33 per cent were companies limited by guarantee.

- Large numbers of individuals and organisations were said to benefit from the activities of the participating organisations which would suggest individual involvement with many nonprofit organisations and a high degree of networking and support amongst nonprofit organisations themselves.
- The revenue of half of these organisations did not exceed €40,000. In fact, 10 per cent of organisations claimed 87 per cent of the total wealth reported, suggesting that much of the sector's income is concentrated in a small group of very large organisations.
- Over four in ten organisations (45%) reported full time paid staff and 42% reported part time paid staff.
- Figures suggest that women outnumber men 2:1 in full time paid employment and 4:1 in part time paid employment
- Volunteers were reported to be involved in the work of 47% of organisations in the study.

Types of organisations engaging volunteers

The Hidden Landscape (2006) survey addressed the question of organisation type in a number of ways. First of all, a majority (59.9%) were stand-alone organisations, 23.2 per cent were branches, 5% were umbrella organisations and 2% were head offices, while a further 9% classified themselves as 'other'. In their research they also asked organisations the terms best used to describe their organisation.

Types	N	%
Community organisation	1,638	39.4
Voluntary organisation	1,289	31.0
Nonprofit organisation	773	18.6
Charity	261	6.3
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	200	4.8
Total	4,161	100.0

(Source: Hidden Landscape, 2006)

1.5 Main voluntary activities

According to the Hidden Landscape (2006) research, Responding organisations engage in a wide number of activities but several of these dominate. These include culture and arts, recreation and social activities, environmental, sports, economic, social and community development and other education.

Activities	All Activities	
	N	%
Culture and arts	1,477	35.0
Recreation and social clubs	1,435	34.1
Environmental	1,255	29.8
Sports	1,223	29.0
Economic, social and community development	1,112	26.4
Other education	1,072	25.4
Adult education	979	23.2
Social services	942	22.4
Primary education	934	22.2
Promotion of volunteering	907	21.5
Employment and training	782	18.6
Civil rights and advocacy	768	18.2
Physical health	759	18.0
Research	600	14.2
Secondary education	591	14.0
Mental health	572	13.6
Housing	377	8.9
Higher education	366	8.7
International/overseas development	351	8.3
Religious/faith-based	304	7.2
Emergency and relief services	304	7.2
Business and professional	295	7.0
Grantmaking	265	6.3
Hospitals and rehabilitation	255	6.1
Income support and maintenance	237	5.6
Animal protection	229	5.4
Law and legal services	221	5.3
Political	213	5.1
Trade union	149	3.5
Nursing homes	131	3.1

(Source: Hidden Landscape, 2006)

2 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Main public bodies and other organisations involved in volunteering

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs established in 2002 is the government department with responsibility for volunteering in Ireland.

Main public body responsible for volunteering

The mission of The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is to promote and support the sustainable and inclusive development of communities, both urban and rural, including Gaeltach and island communities, thereby fostering better regional balance and alleviating disadvantage, and to advance the use of the Irish language. It is led by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív TD. The Department has lead responsibility for developing the relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector. The Department has a specific programme – ‘Supports for Volunteering’ – through which it funds volunteering organisations at national and local levels.

Other public bodies involved in volunteering

The Department of Taoiseach (Prime Minister) established a Taskforce on Active Citizenship in April 2006. One of the terms of reference for the Taskforce were to recommend measures that could be taken as part of public policy to facilitate and encourage the growth and development of voluntary organisations as part of a strong civic culture. Progress Report 2007-2008 and an Action Plan 2008-2009 was published in December 2008 (Part II reported positively on the contribution of volunteering organisations).

Organisations that promote volunteering, facilitate cooperation and exchange of information

Boardmatch Ireland supports the development of Boards and Management Committees of community and voluntary sector organisations.

Local Volunteer Centres provide a range of supports to individuals looking to volunteer and not-for-profit organisations seeking volunteers. Their work is principally concerned with providing four core activities:

- A volunteer-centred placement service
- Supports to volunteer-involving organisations (including consultation, training and advice)
- Marketing and promotion of Volunteering
- Best practice within Volunteer Centres

In 2009, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs released its policy to support Volunteer Centres in recognition of the value of Volunteer Centres to local communities and the community and voluntary sector as a whole.

Volunteer Centres Ireland (VCI) is a national organisation that works to develop volunteering in Ireland locally and nationally. VCI is a membership organisation with membership restricted to volunteer centres. VCI facilitates the national network of volunteer centres, promotes the national network of placement services, develops best practice and assists local volunteer centres to develop best practice and the capacity of the volunteer-involving organisation they work with. Volunteer Centres Ireland is now made up of 20 member volunteer centres.

Volunteering Ireland (VI) is a national volunteer development agency and a representative voice for volunteering in Ireland - a peak body whose membership comprises volunteer-involving organisations: local, national and international. VI works to inspire, promote, support and celebrate volunteering in Ireland and activities include advocacy, organisational development, research, social inclusion and infrastructural development. VI is part of an international community of practice and represents Ireland in a number of international arenas including the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) and the Global Forum for Volunteer Work.

The Professional Association of Volunteer Managers Ireland (PAVMI) was established in 2000 as a peer support network of individuals, both voluntary and paid, who spend the majority of their time directing, managing or coordinating the work of volunteers. PAVMI aims to support, represent and champion people who direct, manage or coordinate volunteers regardless of field, discipline or sector. It has been set up by and for people who manage volunteers.

The organisations above are solely concerned with volunteering whilst those below have broader concerns:

Business in the Community aims to harness the power of Irish business to maximise its positive impact on all its stakeholders. It is a non-profit organisation specialising in advice and guidance to leading companies on corporate responsibility and corporate community involvement. BITCI is also the national partner in Ireland for CSR Europe, the co-ordinating body on corporate responsibility at a European level.

The Wheel is a support and representative body for community, voluntary and charitable organisations across Ireland. Established in 1999, The Wheel has evolved to become a resource centre and forum for the community and voluntary sector. It has a role to play in advocacy, leadership and support.

This list is not exhaustive as there are many more organisations that have a key function in the development of volunteering that include local area partnerships, independent volunteer centres outside the VCI network. In addition, the National Youth Council is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations supporting the interests of 50 voluntary youth organisations.

Affiliation with European umbrella organisations/networks

VCI and Volunteering Ireland are membership organisations of CEV.

2.2 Policies

Ireland has a model of social partnership conceived in 1987 in response to changing economic conditions. It refers to an approach to governance and policy making whereby government-selected social partners work together to decide on the future of public policy in their area of involvement. The social partners are divided into five broad groupings or 'pillars':

- Employers
- Trade unions
- Farmers
- Community and voluntary
- Environmental

The community and voluntary pillar was established in 2000 and focuses on the community and voluntary elements in the context of the social partnership

National strategy/framework for volunteering

Though there is no national strategy for volunteering in Ireland, the key policy documents are the:

- 2000: Government White Paper - Supporting Voluntary Activity
- 2002: Tipping the Balance
- 2005: Joint Oireachtas report on 'Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland'
- 2006: 'Towards 2016'
- 2007: Active Citizenship Report
- 2009: Policy to Support Volunteer Centres

Volunteering also features in Ireland's National Development Plan (2007-2013). The report states €197 million will be invested in supporting volunteering activity. The plan states it will build on the commitments made in 'Towards 2016' approach to developing policies on volunteers and volunteering as informed by the Taskforce on Active Citizenship. Towards

2016 is a high level strategic framework covering the period 2006-2015. It sets out key national and sectoral policy instruments to address social and economic challenges.

National targets and reporting arrangements for volunteering

The Final Report of the Taskforce of Active Citizenship (2007) made several recommendations and monitoring targets to increase volunteering activity. The target was to increase the pool of people active in their community by 60,000 each year for the next three years. This would increase the estimated proportion of the adult population active in their own community whether as volunteers or members of associations from 33% to 36% (Active Citizenship Report 2007).

As stated above, for the first time ever in an Irish Census, a question on voluntary activity appeared in the 2006 Census. Volunteer centres also monitor volunteering activity.

International policies

There are no specific international policies for volunteering in Ireland, however in 2006 under the Department of Foreign Affairs, over 2000 Irish volunteers went abroad with organisations involved in international volunteering such as VSO, Suas, Niall Mellon Trust and Irish Aid.

Volunteering Ireland is the Irish representative of both the International Association for Volunteer Effort and the European Volunteer Centre and was the United Nations Volunteers national focal point for International Volunteer Day (IVD), currently the focal organisation is Irish Aid.

2.3 Programmes

Key national programmes that stimulate volunteering at national level

Numerous programmes have been launched to stimulate volunteering in Ireland. These include:

- 2008: The Ireland Involved Awards, an annual national award for volunteering, in 2009 given by Ireland's President, Mary McAleese.
- 2007: Give it a Swirl Day - National Day of Volunteering, an annual event running since 2007 (25 September) - gives individuals an opportunity to try volunteering for a day.
- 2004: Opportunity Knocks - opening doors for volunteers with additional support needs.
- 2004: Time Limited Commitment – service for short term volunteering opportunities
- 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games – 30,000 volunteers were recruited
- 2001-2: Social Climbing – programme to encourage younger people to take up the challenge of volunteering
- 2001: Ireland inVOLved – awareness and recognition campaign with award ceremony for the International Year of the Volunteer.
- 2001: The Young Social Innovators Initiative – engage transition year students at Secondary School level in identifying social needs and in developing strategies to address them i.e. through volunteering
- An Gaisce – President's Awards (since 1985)

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at regional and local level

The national programmes listed above are also implemented at local level in Ireland through volunteer-involving organisations, local area partnerships and volunteer centres. Local volunteer centres also provide local initiatives to support volunteering.

Programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level

Tipping the Balance (2002) recognised the need to encourage greater participation of young Irish volunteers on transnational programmes.

The year 2001 was designated as the UN International Year of Volunteering. Donoghue et al (2001) reported a growing number of activities aimed at fostering volunteering and at disseminating the 'message' of volunteering. From a policy perspective, this led to the establishment of the National Committee on Volunteering, set up under the terms of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, and the 2000 White Paper, Supporting Voluntary Activity. Donoghue et al (2001) notes the profile of volunteers in Ireland has been enhanced by such developments.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 General legal framework

Specific legal framework which exists with respect to volunteering

There are no specific pieces of legislation that apply exclusively to volunteering or volunteers in Ireland, though there are policies that support the development of volunteerism. The Charities Act, enacted on 28 February 2009 however represents a significant milestone for community and voluntary activity in Ireland. Though the Act does not come into immediate effect, it is considered to represent a significant milestone for community and voluntary activity in Ireland.

In 2007 the government published the Charities Regulation Bill (2007) which set out a definition of "charitable purpose" for the first time in primary legislation. According to the Bill 'charitable status will be dependent on an organisation having charitable purposes only, and being for the public benefit, rather than having any particular legal form'.

Ireland has a Charter for Volunteering developed by Volunteering Ireland though this is not a legally binding.

Self-regulation in relation to volunteering

National and local volunteer development agencies provide best practice information, consultation and training regarding involving volunteers to volunteer-involving organisations, the community and voluntary sector more broadly and beyond. The community and voluntary sector is in the process of developing a code of practice. The sector believes this is a more favourable approach than imposing a regulatory framework.

3.2 Legal framework for individual volunteers

No legal framework for individual volunteers exists in Ireland. The legal status is assimilated into other categories of persons.

Provisions for specific categories

In a report compiled by AVSO in partnership with CEV and in consultation with Volunteering Ireland (2005), the general rule is that people who are unemployed and in receipt of unemployment allowances are permitted to volunteer within certain sectors, such as helping the elderly, sick or disabled. However, the individual must prove that they are still actively

seeking work, and must be available to start work as soon a job arises. In addition, the organization for whom the person volunteers, must obtain official approval from the local unemployment office before taking on the unemployed person. To obtain this approval, the organisation must complete an application form provided by a local office of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Under the amended Social Welfare Act of 1997, the payment of unemployment welfare allowances is suspended in cases where a person leaves the country to volunteer overseas. The individual may however apply to claim the allowance once again on his/her return to Ireland. In all cases, the volunteer must inform the relevant unemployment office of their intentions to volunteer. The 2000 White Paper on volunteering recognised the importance of voluntary activities in the creation of employment opportunities, and as a means to enable those that are socially excluded become involved in their communities. In principle therefore, individuals are able to volunteer for as long and as frequently as they wish without fear of losing entitlement to any social welfare payment they may receive. In practice however, there are cases of those that are unemployed and have volunteered on a long-term basis, losing entitlement to unemployment benefits (or receiving a cut in unemployment benefits).

In relation to individuals with disabilities, people may engage in certain forms of voluntary work without losing entitlement to any disability social welfare payment they may receive. The individual must obtain approval from the Department of Social and Family Affairs according to the following procedures:

- Those in receipt of a Disability Allowance may only volunteer in organisations that have proved to the Disability Section Department that the work done is of a voluntary nature and no payment is awarded;
- Individuals that receive an invalidity pension need to apply to the Invalidity Section Department. They should provide medical evidence that confirms the voluntary activity is rehabilitative and beneficial;
- Individuals receiving a Blind Person's pension do not lose their benefits as so far as the voluntary activity is non-remunerated.

With regards to immigrants, the 2005 AVSO/CEV report also states asylum seekers, refugees and international students from non-EEA countries are permitted to volunteer. They are also allowed to receive reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred in the course of volunteering.

People who have refugee status, humanitarian protections or exceptional, indefinite or discretionary leave to remain, and their family members, are allowed to do any type of paid work as well as volunteer. Asylum seekers, while not allowed to undertake paid work are permitted to volunteer as soon as they arrive in the country. This includes people who are in the process of appealing against a decision to refuse them asylum.

In cases where children engage in full-time volunteering, families no longer retain entitlement to family allowances or to tax deductions unless they can prove (via a letter or certificate from the organisation that involves the young person) that the volunteer is engaged in full-time education or training.

As indicated above, individuals claiming unemployment benefit and those in receipt of sickness benefit and disability allowances must inform the relevant department/case worker. Anecdotal evidence suggests there are some difficulties associated with this arrangement as it is carried out on a case by case basis.

People who are volunteering and claiming social welfare must be available and looking for work. As before, this is carried out on a case by case basis and there are anecdotal issues of inconsistencies.

Support schemes and incentives

There are currently no support schemes in relation to subsidies, taxation or procurement for persons volunteering.

There are no recorded, public cases of disadvantages, or effects whereby people are 'penalised' for taking part in volunteering, however interviewees report there is anecdotal evidence of persons volunteering losing their social welfare benefits.

There does not appear to be any incentives for people to become a person volunteering or any exemptions for volunteers.

Taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers

According to the research evidence, costs may or may not be borne by the volunteer-involving organisation, however this is very much dependent on the individual organisation.

According to the 2004 AVSO/CEV report, there are no specific legal provisions in relation to the reimbursement of volunteer's out-of-pocket expenses, and in practice there are many organisations that do not (and cannot) reimburse their volunteers. However, out-of-pocket expenses and pocket money received in cases of full-time volunteers are not subject to taxation, provided the volunteers' total income falls below that specified as allowable by the Revenue Commissioners.

Taxation rules on rewards or remuneration for individual volunteers

There are no tax exemptions for volunteers in Ireland.

3.3 Legal framework for organisations engaging volunteers

There is no obligation for organisations to notify the details of each volunteer to the public authorities, this is an obligation for the individual.

In Ireland, nonprofit organisations can receive charitable recognition (or a charity number) from the Revenue Commissioners once several criteria have been satisfied. According to Donoghue et al (1999), charitable recognition enables tax exemption.

The Charities Act (2009), together with the Charities Acts 1961 and 1973, and the Street and House to House Collections Act 1962, provides for a composite regulatory framework for charities through a combination of new legislative provisions and retention of existing charities legislation, with updating where necessary.

Some tax exceptions apply, for example where volunteering organisation do not pay tax on donations but pay VAT.

Registered charities do not pay tax on donations or on monies raised through fundraising.

3.4 Legal framework for profit-making organisations

There is no legal framework for private organisations participating in volunteering activity.

Though there are no legal provisions concerning the involvement of private organisations in volunteering, the private sector is encouraged to participate in volunteering as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. Organisations in Ireland such as Business in the Community Ireland support the private sector to engage with volunteering but there are no benefits attached to their participation.

There are no specific support schemes in place for private companies to accept volunteers or allow employees to participate in volunteering activity. However Business in the Community exists and advises companies on how to establish Employer Supported Volunteering initiatives in their local area.

3.5 Insurance and protection of volunteers

Health and safety legislation requires that organisations must have adequate insurance for employees and volunteers.

There are no specific legal provisions in relation to the insurance of volunteers. Volunteering Ireland however recommends that those organisations that do involve volunteers' draft written volunteer policies that state clearly, among other things, that volunteers are insured against risks of illness, accident and third party liability. As there is no legal obligation, in cases where the organisation does not offer this option, the volunteer should provide it for his or her personal and others' safety and security. Full-time volunteers should ensure that the volunteer programme offers adequate protection in this regard, for example the European Voluntary Service Programme provides each individual volunteer with an insurance plan.

4 ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

4.1 Funding arrangements for volunteering

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, provides core funding to Volunteering Ireland, Volunteering Centres Ireland, local Volunteer Centres and Boardmatch. In addition, other supports for volunteering initiatives within other organisations (e.g. Business in the Community, Ireland; Focus).

National budget allocated to volunteering

There are various references to the allocation of funding to support volunteering.

The 2000 White Paper committed the provision of financial support for the Community and Voluntary sector with an annual allocation of €1.27 million.

In the context of implementing 'Towards 2016' and focus on delivering the outcomes envisaged in the life-cycle framework in the areas of income, service provision and innovation/participation/activation, the Government acknowledges that the community and voluntary sector has a central role to play in delivering the outcomes envisaged. Significant funding is currently provided to support both the activities of the sector and to develop the capacity and infrastructure within the sector. This includes a wide range of programmes and measures with an annual cost of over €300 million through the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, as well as programmes in a range of other Departments. The Government is committed to appropriately resourcing the sector into the future as part of this agreement.

The Government remains committed to reviewing the funding mechanisms for the community and voluntary sector to identify areas of overlap or gaps. The Government also remains committed to the White Paper principle of providing multi-annual statutory funding. The Sector's important role in service provision will continue to be funded appropriately where it is delivering services on behalf of the State. This will be reflected through an increase in funding as part of the ongoing expansion in overall expenditure on service delivery in the course of the agreement, subject to the budgetary parameters outlined in Chapter II of 'Towards 2016'. In addition to this increase as part of ongoing service

expansion, it is noted that the Government will provide the following specific additional supports to the sector:

- There will also be increased investment in the Community Services Programme of €30 million by 2009;
- Increased funding of €5 million per annum to support volunteering
- Increased funding of €10 million per annum to support the community and voluntary sector, including the costs arising from contributing to evidence based policy making, over and above normal activities and programmes.

The National Development Plan (2007-2013) reported €197 million will be invested in supporting volunteering activity over the period of the plan.

This year (2009), €2.8 million of the national budget has been allocated to support the volunteering infrastructure, which represents a significant increase since the 2000 White Paper commitment.

Sources of funding for voluntary organisations

Funding sources consist of a mixture of:

- Direct statutory funding, both central and local;
- Indirect statutory funding through semi-state agencies;
- Funding through private trusts and foundations;
- Corporate sponsorship;
- Fundraising from the general public (fundraising);

The Hidden Landscape published in June 2006 presents the sources of incomes organisations secure. Among state-funded organisations, health groups claimed 30% of this funding followed by social services (17%), education and research (16%) and development and housing (13%). International development organisations reported receiving over one-quarter of total private donations. Social services claimed a fifth (22%) of this income followed by philanthropic organisations (10%). Philanthropic organisations also claimed the highest proportion of corporate funds - almost half (46%). Revenue from membership was concentrated in trade unions and professional associations, followed by development and housing and sports and recreation groups. Lastly, income from fees emerged as of most importance to education and research organisations which received over one-third of the reported income from this source. Fees were also reported as being important to health organisations and development and housing organisations.

Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)

Issues around public procurement and social services of general interest are stepped in history when the state outsourced services to non-profit organisations up until the 1970's. In contemporary times, many non-profit organisations are in receipt of significant forms of state funding to provide specific services. Questions have been raised about the extent to which non-profit organisations are considered non-governmental when most if not all of their funding comes direct from the state to provide a service.

4.2 Economic value of volunteering

The Hidden Landscape (2006) revealed the total income reported by 3,473 community and voluntary organisations was €2.564bn, though half of these organisations had incomes of €40,000, and 30 per cent reported incomes of €10,000 or less. As stated in the report, this suggests that much of the income may be concentrated in a small subset of very large

organisations. Indeed, 10% of the responding organisations were in receipt of 87% of this total income.

Health reported the largest proportion of total income followed by social services. Although sports and recreational organisations were one of the largest sub-sectors in the study (at 16.3% of organisations), their combined income only accounted for 2.5% of total reported income. Likewise, environmental organisations comprised six per cent of respondents but received less than one per cent of overall income.

Income generated through volunteering

Over 80% of responding organisations who participated in the Hidden Landscape Survey provided details of their total income. These organisations received a total of €2,563,787,467 or €2.564billion in 2003.

The research shows that half of all responding organisations had an income of €40,000 or less.

Economic value of volunteering

The voluntary and community sector in Ireland is large and makes a significant contribution to the Irish economy every year. According to Donoghue et al, (1999), volunteers were worth €598 million to the economy in 1995. This figure was calculated by applying the average industrial wage to the hours put in by volunteers within an organisational setting. More recently, the NESF study estimated value of volunteering in 2002 to be between €204,393,974 and €485,035,268

Value of volunteering work as a share of GDP

According to Donoghue et al (2001), when expressed in terms of overall contribution to the Irish economy, the sector was worth 8.6% of GDP and 9.5% of GNP and £3.3bn (4.2bn Euro), based on its expenditure that year. In other words, the sector made a substantial economic contribution that year and is not an insignificant player in economic terms. Within the sector, the expenditure of sports organisations amounted to 2.5% of the total sector expenditure. As the sector includes large organisations like the voluntary secondary schools and the voluntary hospitals, both of which are in receipt of significant state funding, it is probably more useful to examine the smaller community and voluntary sector (which excludes large state-funded organisations like secondary schools and voluntary hospitals).

Issues of service substitution and job substitution

There is little reference in the literature to suggest there is a risk that the inputs of volunteering are in part replacing employment. In light of the current economic situation in Ireland, concerns have been raised that volunteers may be used in part to replace services/jobs provided and paid for by the state.

5 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSION OF VOLUNTEERING

According to research carried out by Donoghue et al (2006), over 11.7 million individuals and 89,000 organisations were said to benefit from the activities of non-profit and voluntary organisations. The Joint Report of the Oireachtas (2005) reported that the social impact of volunteering manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, the positive effect of volunteering on those who are helped and the community at large. Secondly, the positive effects of voluntary activity on the volunteer itself.

Interviewees discussed the cultural, social and environmental dimensions of volunteering, though it is true to say greater emphasis was placed on social and cultural considerations.

Interviewees spoke at length about the role of volunteering in the community and society at large - both in terms of the significance of volunteering in Ireland's cultural heritage but also in terms of the role of volunteering in a contemporary modern European state.

As briefly described above, in the absence of a welfare state in Ireland up until the 1970's, the voluntary and community sector played a significant role in delivering social services. Whilst there have been significant developments in the state control and delivery of public services since the 1970's, the voluntary and community sector have continued to play a pivotal role.

There are philosophical discussions to be had about the perceived cultural and social benefits of volunteering. The research evidence suggests Ireland has reached a time where there should be a reappraisal of the function of the state and the voluntary and community sector within it. There is a strong view volunteering is not about delivering social services, rather it is about adding value both to society and for the individuals involved. During a time of economic uncertainty in Ireland, it is timely to theoretically debate the role of the state in terms of what is appropriate for the state and what is appropriate for the voluntary and community sector in the delivery of social services. Interviewees noted that the impact of the current economic recession is likely to fuel discussions about the extent to which the voluntary and community support the delivery of social services.

It is argued that while it is convenient in the short term to allow volunteering activities/organisations to complement and or support social services; in the context of a modern European state there are questions about the acceptability and appropriateness of this situation. Furthermore, this situation is likely to be perceived negatively by the sector and the Irish population and therefore runs the risk of longer term repercussions for individuals accessing volunteering. To prevent the situation from arising, interviewees argue the role of government is to ensure there are adequate structures to prevent this from happening. It is argued, the role of national governments is to create the conditions for a just and equitable society where individuals' social welfare needs are not only taken care of but that there are also conditions to support and encourage healthy thriving citizens through healthy involvement in society i.e. through volunteering. Without the enabling conditions for a just society, there runs the risk active citizenship can take more deviant forms of social behaviour/engagement that are harmful to the state.

5.1 Key benefits for volunteers, the community and direct beneficiaries

Tipping the Balance report presents an interesting discussion in relation to the key benefits and motivations for volunteering. The report draws on psychological, sociological and anthropological discourses and highlights the importance of volunteering to citizens and civic society. Generally speaking, research in Ireland has found that voluntary activity is undertaken for a variety of altruistic, personal, and ideological reasons (Ruddle and Mulvihill 1999).

According to the Hidden Landscape (2006) research, over 11.7 million individuals and 89,000 organisations were said to benefit from the activities of non-profit and voluntary organisations, which, given the population of Ireland, would suggest that individuals are benefiting from the activities of several organisations. Furthermore, there is reported to be a degree of networking amongst non-profit and voluntary organisations, themselves. Beneficiaries included children, adults, children, youths, families, women, older people and voluntary and community organisations.

From an individual perspective, Tipping the Balance (2002) reports that The most important benefits of volunteering were cited as 'seeing results, doing good, meeting' people and 'enjoyment.' Meeting people increased in importance during the 1990s by 11%.

The report also provides some further insight in relation to examining the cited benefits of volunteering by gender and age. For example, the report states that for women, doing good was the most important benefit followed closely by seeing results. For men, seeing a result was most important followed by meeting people. Doing good emerged as most important for women under 30, while seeing results was the most important benefit for women aged between 30 and 40. Furthermore, seeing results was most important for men aged between 30 and 50, while meeting people was most important for men aged over 60. The enjoyment factor was highest amongst men aged less than 40.

5.2 Factors that motivate individuals to volunteer

Tipping the Balance state that the reasons for volunteering were multi-faceted, including altruistic motives, personal development, making friends, the satisfaction of helping people for example. The principal influences on the likelihood of young people volunteering include the social environment, information on opportunities to volunteer, and education. Volunteer Centres also gather information regarding motivations to volunteer:

- 38% to 'give something back'; 'do something in my community'; 'make a difference'
- 20% to 'gain or improve skills'; 'to develop work experience'
- 13% 'free time'

6 VOLUNTEERING IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 Recognition of volunteers' skills and competences within the national educational and training system

It is good practice in Ireland to ensure all volunteers' skills and competences are accredited and recognised within the context of a national education and training system. While mechanisms are in place to enable accreditation and recognition, not all volunteering organisations follow this approach.

While there is no overarching LLLS strategy in Ireland there are existing strategies across the education sectors contributing to the Towards 2016 Ten Year Framework. Towards 2016 is a high level strategic framework that sets out key national and sectoral policy instruments to address social and economic challenges. Within this context, Towards 2016 reinforces the Government's policy commitment to volunteering.

There is some evidence of individual institutions encouraging the role of volunteering, for example the Dublin Institute of Technology manage a range of short and long term volunteering projects.

Tipping the Balance (2002) placed significant emphasis on need to develop a flexible and responsive system that will allow for the development of accreditation for the training of volunteers. The report also emphasised the need to develop systems to recognise the work done by volunteers through informal and informal recognition at organisational, community and state levels. In its recommendations, the report stated:

"We recommend that a key programme area within the National Centre for Volunteering will put in place the structures and resources necessary to enable volunteer-involving organisations to nominate individuals or teams to be formally recognised by the State for their voluntary work."

There are been significant developments in Irelands education and training system and the development of a national qualifications framework (NQF) which was launched in 2003. Irelands approach to credit aims to facilitate and enhance processes for the recognition of prior learning, new modes of learning and learning achieved in different levels of education and in many non-formal and informal contexts (i.e. volunteering). Tipping the Balance (2002) also recommended that a volunteer training programme be set up at local and national level with links to education and training institutions. Further clarification is required as to progress made in this area.

The 2001 initiative called 'The Young Social Innovators Initiative' as described above engages transition year students at Secondary School level in identifying social needs and in developing strategies to address them, through volunteering for example.

6.2 Education and training opportunities for volunteers

One of the key roles for Volunteering Ireland is to provide training opportunities for managers (paid and unpaid) of volunteers on the effective involvement of volunteers. Within the context of this initiative, it should be noted that training opportunities do not extend to volunteers themselves. Here, Volunteering Ireland encourage volunteer-involving organisation to provide training opportunities where required for specific tasks and encourages the organisation to introduce the volunteer to the goals and vision of the service, to the work/volunteering environment, to the role requirements and to the health and safety requirements.

There are a number of training courses available to volunteers through the following organisations:

Go for Life (GFL) – Age & Opportunity; Health Service Executive (HSE); Irish Heart Foundation (IHF); Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs); National Governing Bodies (NGBs); Vocational Education Committees (VECs); Volunteer Development Agency (VDA); Northern Ireland; Volunteering Ireland (VI). Some examples of training courses offered by these organisations include the following:

Volunteering; Attracting and selecting volunteers (VDA) is an accredited course exploring the principles and procedures for the effective recruitment and selection of volunteers; Effective recruitment and selection of volunteers (VI) is a one day course exploring the core principles of best practice for effective recruitment and selection of volunteers; Certificate in community volunteering (VDA) is an accredited ASDAN course focusing on the general skills and knowledge that volunteers need to work effectively. It is locally delivered and is a great opportunity to network with other volunteers; The relationship between volunteers and paid staff (VI) is a one day course aimed at those responsible for recruiting and managing volunteers and paid staff; Volunteer support and supervision (VI) is a one day course aimed at those managing volunteers; Developing your volunteer policy (VI) is a one day course exploring and developing volunteer policies; Risk management in volunteer programmes (VI) is a one day course exploring the core principles of good practice in reducing risk in the area of volunteer involvement; Communicating effectively with your volunteers (VI) is a practical one day workshop designed to look at strategies for effective communication with volunteers

Volunteer Centres Ireland has developed a multi-modular training programme in Volunteer Management Training and has trained staff across the network of Volunteer Centres to be trainers of the programme. Volunteer Centres provide the training to volunteer-involving organisations that they work with. The modules include:

- Planning for volunteer involvement, managing expectations and designing roles;
- Volunteer recruitment and selection; induction and training;

- Volunteer support and supervision, motivation and recognition;
- Designing and implementing a volunteer policy

Volunteering Ireland is currently working with FAS, the national training agency to extend its volunteer management training programme and to build capacity within volunteer involving organisations.

7 EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

The Final Report of the Taskforce of Active Citizenship reflects on the European Union's commitment to Active Citizenship and the need for Ireland to understand the European dimension of Active Citizenship.

The research evidence suggests the national strategies for volunteering are not particularly influenced by EU policies/programmes.

There is limited information within the literature and the interview data concerning the impact of EU employment and social policy on volunteering in Ireland. As referred to above, there is a view that there has been limited engagement with European policies. Interviewees noted that Marion Harkin MEP has been involved in volunteering in Europe which is believed to provide strong connections between Europe and national level.

With regards to the impact of broader EU policies (youth, active citizenship, education and training, internal market, competition, taxation) limited information is available in the literature.

8 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

8.1 Challenges for volunteering

Tipping the Balance (2002) recognised that volunteering faces numerous challenges and opportunities. The report stated that these arise in the context of demographic changes, new employment participation patterns, and new developments at regional and local level. Ireland is a society of increasing heterogeneity and changing values. Linked to the growth of individualism and consumerism and the perceived decline of communities, the report emphasised the need to rethink what is required for genuine democratic and civic participation. Tipping the Balance strongly stated that the most immediate problem is the absence of a stated policy and strategy for developing and supporting volunteering.

In 2006, Osbourne spoke of the challenges of volunteering across the island of Ireland. She emphasised the challenge of increasing diversity and the need to do more to broaden the base of volunteers by reaching out to those currently under represented in the volunteering population. Osbourne stressed the importance of creating opportunities that enable the widest cross section of the population to volunteer and those that are not volunteering. This was further echoed during the interviews who strongly stressed the need for an enabling infrastructure that encourages individuals to be active citizens through opportunities for volunteering for example, to avoid deviant forms of social behaviour.

Other key challenges include the image of volunteering, the quality of the volunteering experience and inherent lack of funding for volunteering research.

8.2 Opportunities for volunteering

Whilst investment has since been made to develop the infrastructure through national agencies, local volunteer centres, and other local initiatives, the AVSO/CEV (2004) argues that despite this strength and vibrancy, Ireland continues to lag behind in volunteer policy and infrastructure development. A key opportunity for Ireland is to develop the infrastructure in a way that creates an enabling framework for volunteering, underpinned by comprehensive research that facilitates evidence-based interventions and service development. The level of resources within volunteering organisations and their capacity to meet the needs of the recent demand for volunteering is of growing concern – both from an infrastructural perspective and from both a social and economic political perspective.

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Interviews

Department for Rural Community and Gailtocht Affairs

Volunteer Centres Ireland

Volunteering Ireland