

## EYV 2011: Focus EU Figures on Volunteering in the EU <sup>1</sup>

The importance of volunteering for the EU's economy, society and individuals has long been acknowledged by EU policy makers. However, the European volunteering landscape is extremely varied because of different historical, political and cultural attitudes towards volunteering in every EU country. The figures below give a more precise idea about the situation of volunteering in the EU.

### General information about EU volunteering

Total number of EU volunteers: 92 to 94 million adults are involved in volunteering in the EU (23% of all Europeans over 15 years of age).

### Level of volunteering in the different EU Member States <sup>2</sup>

The statistics in the table below show the proportion of the population involved in volunteering in various EU countries. The figures suggest that there are big differences between them. However, these are exaggerated by differences in the way volunteering is defined and measured in each country. Misleading results such as these highlight the need for policy-makers to work on improving the availability of consistent, internationally comparable statistics in volunteering.

Very high (40%): AT, NL, SI, GB	High (30-39%): DK, FI, DE, LU	Medium high (20-29%): EE, FR, LT
Relatively low (10-19%): BE, CY, CZ, IE, MT, PL, PT, SK, RO, SE, ES	Low (less than 10%): BG, GR, IT, LV	

Whatever the questionable state of international comparisons, it is nonetheless clear that there has been a general trend increase in the number of active volunteers and voluntary organisations in the EU over the past ten years.

### Age <sup>3</sup>

This table shows the age groups involved in volunteering in different countries across the EU.

Dominant number of young people (15-30 yrs): BG, CZ, LT, LV, PO, RO, SK, SI, ES	Dominant number of adults (30-50 yrs): BE, CY, DK, EE, FI, HU, PT, SW
Increasing number of older people volunteering: AT, BE, FI, FR, RO, SE, ES, SI	Similar levels of volunteering across all age groups: AT, FR, DE, IE, IT, NL, GB

### Gender balance of volunteers in the EU <sup>4</sup>

This table shows the gender balance of volunteers in different countries across the EU. Overall, there is a slight dominance of males in volunteering in the EU, a fact that may be explained by the dominance of sport in volunteering.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission-DG EAC, 2010. *Volunteering in the European Union (VEU). Final report.* London, GHK

<sup>2</sup> VEU Final report, p.65

<sup>3</sup> VEU Final report, p.71

<sup>4</sup> VEU Final report, p.69



Greater number of female volunteers: BG, CZ, MT, SK, GB	Greater number of male volunteers: AT, BE, DK, FR, DE, HU, IT, LU, PT, SI, SE
Equal participation between men and women: CY, EE, FI, IE, LT, NL, PO, RO	No or contradictory information: GR, LV, ES

### Most active volunteers<sup>5</sup>

In the majority of EU countries employed individuals are the most active volunteers. There is also a link between the level of education and the propensity to volunteer: higher-educated people are more likely to volunteer.

Employed individuals most active: (AT), CY, DK, ET, FI, FR, DE, IE, IT, RO, SK, SE, UK	Students/pupils the most active group: AT, CZ, PO, SI, ES
Unemployed or other non-working population more active than employed: BE, HU, NL	No information: BG, GR, LV, LU, MT, PT

### Main sectors in which EU volunteers volunteer, according to the 2010 Eurobarometer survey<sup>6</sup>

1. Sport club / outdoor activities club (34%)
2. Education, arts, music or cultural associations (22%)
3. Religious or church association (16%)
4. Charity organisations / social aid organisations (17%)
5. Trade unions (13%)

### Economic dimension of volunteering<sup>7</sup>

Volunteering is estimated to contribute from 0.5% to more than 3% of GDP in some EU member states.

Less than 0.1% GDP: SK, PO, GR	Below 1% GDP: BG, CZ, IT, HU, LT, MT, PT, RO, SI	1-2% GDP: BE, FR, DE, IE, LU, ES
More than 2% GDP: GB, FI, DK	3-5% GDP: AT, NL, SE	

**To find out more about the European Year of Volunteering why not download our information sheet “What is EYV 2011” from the web site of your local Volunteer Centre or from Volunteer Centres Ireland: [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)**

<sup>5</sup> VEU Final report, p.76

<sup>6</sup> Eurobarometer 73, November 2010, pp171 - 176

<sup>7</sup> VEU Final report, p.11