

Greece
[ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ]
[REPUBLIC OF GREECE]

RESEARCH PARTNER CENTRE

ΕΛΙΞ - ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΕΘΕΛΟΝΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ
ELIX - CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS GREECE

Sabrina Iacobucci
Ksenija Fonović
Spes - Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio

Elena Papalabrou
Marina Sarli
Elix - Conservation Volunteers Greece

[CONTACT]

ΕΛΙΞ - ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΕΘΕΛΟΝΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ
ELIX - CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS GREECE

Veranzerou 15
10677 Athens - Greece
tel. +30.210.3825506
fax +30.210.3814682
elix@elix.org.gr
www.elix.org.gr

[info sheet on page 39]

COUNTRY FACT SHEET			
■ Population	2008: 11,216,708 inhabitants	■ Growth rate	2008: 0.146%
		Birth rate per 100 population	2008: 0.954
■ Area	Total: 131,990 sq km = <i>land</i> : 130,800 sq km + <i>water</i> : 1,190 sq. km	Death rate per 100 population	2008: 0.104
		■ Employment rate	
■ Population density	84 inhabitants per sq. km	15-64 years old	
		(total - male - female)	2008: 45.88% - >60% - <40%
■ System of government	Parliamentary Republic	50-64 years old	
		(total) (Eurostat)	2008: 18.3%
■ European elections	24 European parliamentarians.	■ Unemployment rate	
		15-64 years old	2008: 8.3%
■ Social security and welfare system			
A quite bureaucratic system provides social welfare in Greece. The system includes several different social security bureaux, one for each of the different categories of employees and is financed primarily by contributions made by employers and through the payroll deductions of employees. Government subsidies also support the coverage of certain types of workers.			
■ Public health system			
Membership in health coverage programs is primarily determined by occupational group and industry. The provision of public health services is integrated within social security and governed by the same rules.			
■ Level of education			
20-24 years old who have completed secondary schooling		2008: 23.4%	
25-64 years old who have completed secondary schooling		2002: 18.6%	
■ Immigration rate		2008: 0.233%	

INDEX - Greece

GLOSSARY	p. 13	VOLUNTEERS INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS	21
1 Definitions	13	1 Organisational forms	21
1.1 Volunteer	13	1.1 Types	21
1.2 Volunteering activity	13	1.2 National bodies	21
1.3 Voluntary organisation	13	2 Rules and functioning	22
1.4 Volunteer support centre	14	3 Relationship with public sector	23
		3.1 Overview	23
		3.2 From our point of view (interviews and questionnaires)	23
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	15		
1 Roots: before 1900	15		
2 The brief century: 1900 - 2000	15	DATA OVERVIEW	25
3 Where we stand: 2001 - 2008	16	1 Research and statistics highlights	25
4 Volunteering now (interviews)	16	2 Of volunteers and organisations (interviews)	25
		2.1 Motivation and barriers	25
LEGAL FRAMEWORK	18	2.2 Needs and challenges	27
1 Overview of laws and regulations	18		
1.1 The Constitution	18	REPRESENTATION AND COORDINATION BODIES	29
1.2 European Convention of the Human Rights (1950)	18		
1.3 Current situation	19	SUPPORT BODIES	30
2 Participation in public policy making	19		
3 Fiscal policies	19	1 Support measures (questionnaires)	30
4 Rolls and registers	19		
5 List of laws and regulations	19		

Glossary

FOCUS ON SUPPORT BODIES (questionnaires)	31	2 Civil society initiatives	43
Hellenic Centre for the Promotion of Volunteering Anthopos.gr	32	3 On infrastructure for volunteering (interviews and questionnaires)	43
City of Athens	35	4 Strategic goals	44
Voluntary Services Department of the Youth & Sports Organisation of the Municipality of Athens	37	5 European perspective (interviews)	44
ELIX - Conservation Volunteers Greece	39	LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED	46
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	43	BIBLIOGRAPHY	47
1 Public incentives	43	INTERNET RESOURCES	48

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 DEFINITIONS

1.1 VOLUNTEER

A volunteer is a person that adopts an action or a role, in a context of free will, without an economic motivation, for a socially useful purpose.

1.2 VOLUNTERING ACTIVITY

A voluntary activity is considered as a multi-level phenomenon, far away from the traditional forms of philanthropy. It constitutes a new form of solidarity, more energetic and with a visible result, compared to the traditional philanthropy. It is mainly seen as a spontaneous contribution in any social, cultural or environmental issue aimed at helping or solving some problem not properly dealt by political activities or by public service provision.

1.3 VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

A voluntary organisation is an NGO aiming to serve a mission statement and to involve and inform the local community and active citizens in order to implement activities in the frame of its vision. The criteria we have set to recognise such an organisation are the following:

- Non-governmental character.
- Non political character.
- Not for profit character.
- Existence of (democratic) decision making organs.
- Unpaid character of the members of the board of directors.
- Visibility and control in the functions of the organisation.
- dissemination and promotion of voluntary participation regardless of the number of professional paid members working.

1.4 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRE

Most people ignore the idea of a “volunteer support centre” in Greece. At the institutional level and in the public sector there has

been no interest so far in volunteering infrastructure development. Cooperation between the public sector, the political forces and volunteers involving organisations is scarce and so far has not produced a shared idea of support measures for volunteering.

Historical overview

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 ROOTS: BEFORE 1900

The historical framework in which volunteer service grew in Greece is not so obvious. Since ancient times the volunteer spirit has always been present. The institution of *amfiktionies*, created in ancient Athens, started as a series of conferences between Greek city-states, aiming to end religious disagreements among them. However, as time came by, the *amfiktionies* lost their religious character and developed into becoming a federal group that had a say on important social and political decisions of the time. The members of *amfiktionies* assisted to local events and took important initiatives that contributed to a large extent to the society. They helped to implement projects aiming at an improvement of life conditions of city-states, at the creation of a peaceful stability between cities, at spreading the cultural exchange and, by definition, at spreading the Hellenic culture.

All these actions were of course made voluntarily and there was no remuneration for the members of *amfiktionies*. For this reason, the *amfiktionies* can be characterised as an early form of voluntary movement, as they include in their structure the aims and function of what we today call voluntary service.

However, in Greek history we can often see demonstrations of participation to society. These cannot be characterised as forms of organisation, or organised groups. These demonstrations regarded occasional disasters, national or natural.

2 THE BRIEF CENTURY: 1900 - 2000

During the 20th century Greece encountered difficulties in the emerging of volunteer movements, and of the third sector in general. The serious problems that the country had to deal with, regarding its national or governmental substance, are the main reasons behind the delayed formation of a voluntary movement. It is obvious that volunteer initiatives were less likely to be taken in a country in a war situation ruled by a dictatorship, disorder, immigration, and privation in general. The main issue of the population was survival. Until 1974 only individual initiatives were taken on a voluntary basis, when there was an absolute need (e.g. natural disasters). Of course, the branches of international volunteer organisations (such as the Red Cross and UNICEF) were the exception: they did not, however, have the chance to develop in Greece as they had in other countries and their role during that period was not crucial.

Since 1974, in Greece many changes have occurred: democracy has been restored, a more peaceful foreign policy has been established, relations with Turkey have been smoothed and security and prosperity are emerging in Greek

society. The average living conditions are improving and the ideological requests are differentiated. Automatically, the most important condition for a voluntary movement to emerge is set: the economic situation of the participants allows them to participate actively in a disinterested way. On the other hand, those that do not offer their time and do volunteer work have the opportunity to support economically the rise and development of organisations through their donations.

Another factor that contributed to the development of the third sector in Greece, particularly the volunteer service, is the rapid expansion of media and communication tools. This helped a lot the organisations because they had the opportunity to make their work known to a larger scale of people and increase the number of their participants.

In addition, something that we shouldn't forget is the recognition by the Greek government of the voluntary movement. Indeed, the government found a valuable ally in the management of emergency situations, such as natural disasters, or on special occasions (Olympic Games). Also, the adaptation of the government to the international developments required the recognition of the importance of the active participation of citizens through the idea of volunteering.

The crucial role, however, to the development of the voluntary movement in Greece was played by its main actor, the socially active population.

3 WHERE WE STAND: 2001 - 2008

We can say that the voluntary movement was basically created and established in Greece in the past 30 years. The organisations that emerged are estimated, by an unofficial census directed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to be about 30,000 in the country as a whole (2002).

Since the Olympic Games, voluntary service has gained a whole new image in the average Greek mind. People have become extremely familiar with the idea of participating in an actively unselfish manner for a superior cause.

4 VOLUNTEERING NOW (INTERVIEWS)

According to several representatives of the voluntary organisations interviewed, volunteering in Greece is badly affected by the high level of perceived corruption in the country that makes people sceptical and unwilling to get involved. People generally feel that many organisations are not really committed to their mission statement, but are rather in it for their own sake. *"In my opinion, in my country very few volunteer organisations do a real job and offer to volunteers the right environment, concrete tasks and projects to work on. Very often people are asked to volunteer for volunteering sake and not because is really needed at some point. This is quite de-motivating for me. On the other hand, the majority of people are not keen on the idea of volunteering and getting involved in an NGO as the corruption of our country has made them reserved and sceptical. Lastly, surely there is a minority of volunteer organisations, doing a lot of work and that keeps trying to 'save' the reputation of volunteering - but this is still a very small minority in our country."*

The comparatively recent access to democracy in Greece means also that volunteering is not as developed and a big obstacle to this development remains the lack of a legal framework for volunteering. On the positive side, there seems to be a number of organisations who are trusted by the majority of people and the willingness of many young people to get involved in European-wide projects such as Youth in Action and the EVS - European Voluntary Service, as well as many local initiatives spawning different fields of action.

"Volunteering has been organised and has moved from traditional philanthropy after Greece joined the EU (early 80's). Since then volunteerism has been strengthened and rooted in the society, but Greece is still far behind other European countries with a long tradition on that. The major gap is the lack of a legal framework that, while keeping the civil society independent, would safeguard the appropriate legitimacy, protection and support".

"Most people would consider volunteering as:

- taking part in environmental actions (planting trees, cleaning up beaches etc)

- being a member/ subscriber of an NGO or other institution, most possibly one involved with environment or children (UNICEF, Greenpeace, Médecins sans Frontières)

- helping out in various children charities (orphanages, centres for children with special needs).

A growing number of young people would consider volunteering as travelling to help out in projects in the developing world or taking part in social movements or other NGOs dealing with social/human rights issues."

"In Greece there are many initiatives focused on helping local society by a number of NGOs. Probably, a great number of these activities are focused on sustainable development and environment. These consist of information campaigns and activities but also of more practical projects (work camps etc.). Of course, all these actions try to create active citizens. A great number of NGOs support in a great way Youth in Action EC programme and many EVS volunteers come every year to Greece, supporting the needs of these NGOs. There are volunteering actions, such as children education, informal learning, intercultural learning, life long learning which are also supported by a variety of NGOs."

The role of volunteering in society should be, as one of the people interviewed stated *"Complementary to the state in some areas, but in others should take the lead."* Volunteering should help people feel empowered, feel they can contribute to the future and thus stimulate active participation and caring towards the society as a whole. Active and concerned citizens who volunteer and feel proud of their tasks will lend their hand and help wherever necessary and act as members of a cohesive community. One of the respondents said:

"I think people should put volunteering into their everyday life. It should be a way of thinking and behaving. Even if you have the

right attitude, it is really close to volunteering itself in my opinion. I would love to live in a society where volunteers feel proud of what they are doing, people not only accept but see eye to eye with volunteers as well and everyone acts as an active citizen and as a member of one community."

"I see it as an exchange between society and volunteers. Volunteers should help the society to be empowered and enabled to take steps to improve its own life and through this interaction the society will widen the volunteers' horizons, helping them understand themselves and helping them see in which ways they can better contribute to the future."

"Volunteering in Greece is not taken into account as a conscious attitude towards the community. It is ignored on purpose and treated negatively because reminds most people of the common responsibilities they have been avoiding. Greek mentality is principally based on nepotism, old boy network style relationships and social immaturity. It is only remembered in cases where some work has to be done but people involved are incapable of or uninterested in doing it. The role of volunteering in a society that respects itself and demands quality of life should be strongly enhanced. But it should also be complementary, not principal. In such a society volunteering would only support institutional participation and political responsibility. Additionally, volunteering could give the opportunity to everyone to build a personality based on actual experiences of quality."

"As we all know, every society has its own problems and concerns. The role of the volunteer should differentiate according to each occasion. This is the reason why I believe that NGOs should focus mainly on creating active and concerned citizens. When someone is concerned about their local society, they will be willing to help whenever necessary in various activities. So, the main focus should be on emphasising active participation, which will later lead to people who care about their society and that therefore will volunteer."

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 OVERVIEW OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

1.1 THE CONSTITUTION

The Greek Constitution contains some articles that draw particular attention to voluntary organisations. Here are some examples of Greek Constitutional Law for Not for Profit Organisations.

The article 12 suggests that Greeks have the right to fund unions and not for profit societies abiding to the law and the practice of this right can never depend on previous permission (paragraph 1).

The Article 5, paragraph 1, states that everyone has the right to develop one's personality and take part in the social, economical and political life of the country, as long as they don't offend other people's rights nor violate neither Constitution nor moral principles.

The Article 24, paragraph 1, quotation 1, states that the protection of the natural and cultural environment constitutes a governmental obligation and also everyone's right.

The Article 23, paragraph 1, suggests that the State takes all the necessary measures for safeguarding labor freedom and the unhindered practice of the related rights against every offence within the limits of the law.

1.2 EUROPEAN CONVENTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS (1950)

The Article 11, paragraph 1 promotes the freedom of founding associations.

The European Convention of Human Rights is compulsory for the countries that have signed it and is above the typical law applied nationally, according to the article 28, paragraph 1 of the constitutional law. In addition the case-law of the European Court of the Human Rights, which is the practical specialisation of the personal rights of the Convention, can have indirect practical effect within the internal law society of the States and as such is on a higher level also than the Constitutional Law in the cases that it runs up against the rules of the States. In general, at international and national level the voluntary non governmental organisations act as intermediaries in trials or official juridical committees (for example Amnesty International is a member of the national observatory committee on human rights).

1.3 CURRENT SITUATION

In Greece there is no proper legal definition of voluntary service and volunteering. In the recent past, there have been attempts to define it, as well as law proposals put forward by the National Assembly on the initiative, though, of the network "800 NGOs Campaign" aiming at strengthening the role of NGOs in Greece. None of them, however, made it to the Parliament to constitute a legal frame. Volunteering and voluntary organisations are defined in abstract, according to the legal category they belong to, and are registered officially with different ministries every time. The most common reference laws in this regard are:

- Law 2646/1998 for the development of the National System of Social Care of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity.
- Law 3013/2002 for the Upgrade of the Political Protection of the General Administration of the Political Protection of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The term "non-governmental organisation" appears for the first time in the article 12 of the above cited Law 2646/1998.

The articles 10 to 17 of the Law 2731/99 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the International Development Cooperation include the definition of the funding mechanism of NGOs that subscribe to the official register of YDAS-Hellenic Aid.

In Greece, apart from what indicated previously, there is no other official Government strategy, regulations or provision in support of volunteering and voluntary organisations. In May 2008 the revision of the Constitution took place and eventually the articles put forward to strengthen the role of NGOs did not pass.

2 PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

There is no formal framework for consultation of NGOs regarding public policy making and the institutions show no interest in promoting participation by the civil society.

The interviewed protagonists of the voluntary sector clearly

state that the essential contribution of the voluntary sector is not formally recognised nor taken into account in the definition of public policies:

"The participation of the voluntary sector in the definition of public policies should be obligatory. The voluntary sector has a real contact with the social reality of the country and especially with some disadvantaged realities that need urgent and effective policies."

"In Greece, this area is problematic as the NGOs do not officially and formally participate in the process of public policy making."

3 FISCAL POLICIES

Regrettably, there is not any specific fiscal policy for NGOs. If at the end of the year the not for profit organisations have a positive difference between income and expenditures, they are taxed for it.

4 ROLLS AND REGISTERS

Deplorably, there are not any specific rolls and registers of volunteer involving organisations.

5 LIST OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Greek Constitution:

- Article 12
- Article 5, paragraph 1
- Article 24, paragraph 1, quotation 1
- Article 23, paragraph 1
- Article 25 paragraph 1 quotation 2-4.

European Convention of Human Rights:

- Article 11, paragraph 1.

- Law 2646/1998 *Law for the Development of the National System of Social Care of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity:*
- Article 12.
- Law 3013/2002 *Law for the Upgrade of the Political Protection of the*
- General Administration of the Political Protection of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*
- Law 2731/99 *Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the International Development Cooperation:*
- Articles 10 to 17.

Volunteers involving organisations

1 ORGANISATIONAL FORMS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1.1 TYPES

Sylogoi - Somatia (Corporations, Collectivities)

This is the most common type of private initiative in the field of Social Welfare. It means “Legal persons of private law” and particularly union of persons with not for profit motivations. Legal personality is obtained upon subscription to a specific public register that is kept by the lower court, after an application by at least twenty members.

Astikes Mi Kerdoskopikes Etairies (Civil Not for Profit Companies)

The most common type of voluntary organisations in Greece.

Idrimata (Institutes)

These obtain legal recognition only by an official decision of the President of the Republic.

1.2 NATIONAL BODIES

In Greece the involvement of volunteers is mainly left to the initiatives of specific NGOs. At national level there are some attempts of public bodies, ministries and networks of NGOs to provide this service, alas, with very scarce results. Here we present the most important federations and umbrella organisations relevant to volunteering.

Pandoiko (Pan-Hellenic Network of Ecological Organisations)

Pandoiko, the Pan-Hellenic Network of Ecological Organisations, is an association whose members are mostly environmental organisations. The headquarters of the network are in Volos. Today the network has 75 member organisations, spread across the country, and many other cooperating organisations. The network represents most of the ecological organisations in Greece. The organisations that belong to the network are fighting everyday to protect and defend the environment at local level. Efforts are also made at international level. The network *Pandoiko* adheres to the European Environmental Agency and cooperates with other international and national organisations abroad.

Slowly and steadily, the network has established itself at national level as a reliable and representative body for environmental protection. The network *Pandoiko* is one of the most important and representative ecological organisations in Greece.

Kampania ton 800 MKO (Campaign for the Constitutional Upgrade of Civil Society and its Organisations)

The Campaign for the Constitutional Upgrade of Civil Society and its Organisations was established in 2006 as a unanimous expression of the Greek Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Its goal was to represent and promote the positions of civil society in regards to the revision of the Greek Constitution that took place in 2008. More than 800 organisations, with approximately 250,000 members, are involved in the campaign. The Campaign of the 800 NGOs represents the largest convention of civil society ever recorded in the Greek political history and currently functions as the largest unofficial political instrument of Greek civil society. Unfortunately, none of the proposals put forward were included in the revised Constitution.

Omospondia ton MKO (NGO Federation)

Omospondida ton MKO is the Hellenic Federation of Voluntary Non-Governmental Organisations. It is a second level membership based coordinative body of the Voluntary Non-Governmental Organisations, which takes actions in a wide and multi-collective spectrum of social offer and awareness raising. It was founded in 1996, responding to the need for coordinated action of Non-Governmental Organisations. The idea that led to making the Federation a reality was that, working in greater numbers with a common goal, demands can be promoted more efficiently and a better operating level for voluntary organisations can be ensured. All the actions aim at the alleviation and settlement of humanitarian problems which characterise the modern society. The active members of the organisations members of the Hellenic Federation of Voluntary Non-Governmental Organisations are estimated to be 12,000, while we must take into account a great number of volunteers and friends who support unselfishly its work.

Ergo politon (Citizens in Deed)

Citizens in Deed is a legal entity of private law with its headquarters situated in Athens under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. The mission of the organisation is the wide scale upholding, promotion, strengthening and development of the volunteering ideal as well as policy making, strategy formation and the continuous monitoring, the evaluation of the voluntary deed and the administration of resources invested to and/or derived from its activity. The main goals of the organisation are undertaking the responsibility for the substantial development and the effective action of the volunteering movement, the registration and organisation of the volunteering forces, the mobilisation and harmonisation of the country's voluntary potential, the cooperation with the existing voluntary organisations and the support of the formation of identical voluntary local and thematic work.

What is generally felt to be the real difference between official public bodies, on the one hand, and the networks of NGOs and individual NGOs, including the additional value these produce, on the other hand, is the strength of their activities and the stronger impact these have on local communities in raising awareness about active participation.

2 RULES AND FUNCTIONING

One of the main obligations of civil not for profit organisations, institutions as well as corporations and collectives, is the obligation to

- declare the constitutional members stating their name and role
- register the statutes
- hold a general assembly once a year
- present at the end of the year the economic balance sheet.

No specific difference exists as far as profit is concerned between civil not for profit and civil profit bodies. Civil not for profits should not have made any profit or not share the profit, but in any case the profit is taxed.

Not for profit organisations register at the lower court of the town where they are based.

3 RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLIC SECTOR

3.1 OVERVIEW

There is not any official frame of cooperation. Some ministries cooperate with NGOs on a consulting base for specific matters. Some other public sector bodies try to cooperate and some time to exploit the popularity and influence that individual NGOs have on local communities.

3.2 FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW (INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

According to the people interviewed it appears that in Greece the relationship between volunteer involving organisations and the public sector is not a particularly solid one. Bureaucracy and funding seem to be the main issues and the organisations lament scarce or no support from the institutions. Lack of a legal framework is also seen as a key problem. This is what some of the people interviewed have to say about the relationship with the public sector:

"Our organisation has almost no support from legal national bodies. In many cases the attitude of ministries, councils, and authorities sabotage the organisation's activities. To add insult to injury, there is no legal framework that could be used to protect the organisation from municipalities, ministries, and individuals who do not respect contracts, agreements and promises. The public sector is absent. This clearly reflects the mentality of the Greek society and how political authorities see the public."

"There have been funding and projects from the public sector supporting the volunteering organisations (by providing salary to the staff of the offices for example). These efforts are really in the right direction. However, there are many more things to be done."

"This collaboration has been either very positive or very negative. It would be great to cooperate with the public sector in order to implement the actions of your mission statement, without losing

endless hours following Greek bureaucracy's needs."

"The funding gets more and more difficult as there are not many funding possibilities in Greece."

One of the interviewees pointed out the negative impact that corruption has on the perception of aims of voluntary organisations by the general public:

"In Greece the problem is that for many people the name of NGOs is connected with corruption. People think that all these initiatives are done by people who want to earn money, thus volunteering with them is not a good idea."

Another expressed what is believed to be the ideal situation:

"Public and third sector should go hand in hand."

The shared opinion for the support to volunteering initiatives in Greece by the public sector is that they are few and far between at best, and ineffective at worst. Often the support is felt to be given only in order to obtain political consensus and is not planned on the long term.

"Other governmental initiatives include the funding of volunteer involving organisations (to implement specific projects, to hire specific staff that will promote volunteering or other projects). These initiatives have been dealt by the state in a very unreliable and irresponsible way - sometimes their funding was suddenly cut or has never reached the organisation - thus causing severe problems to the functioning of many NGOs."

The efforts made by the NGOs themselves for valuing and promoting volunteering are held up by lack of funding, while the creation of a governmental association for the promotion of volunteering has been controversial.

"Many NGOs are making great efforts on promoting volunteering through youth trainings, educational programs in schools, promotional leaflets, sites and other campaigns. All these initiatives are usually of good quality but reach only a limited audience due to a lack of funds for the implementation of big media and other promotional campaigns. Government initiatives are limited to the public recognition and promotion of volunteering for the Olympic Games (back in 2004) and to the creation of a governmental association

promoting volunteering which has been much criticised by NGOs for its controversial role.”

From the interviews with some of the most active people from the NGO sector, criticism emerges regarding how public officials dedicated to policies and programmes connected to volunteering interpret their role. It is felt that people working in state institutions meant to implement measures supporting volunteering are too often unaware of the needs and even of the existing facilities themselves.

“Even if in Greece there are structures who support youth initiatives, such as the NYC (National Youth Council) or the NA (National Agency), it is very obvious that they do not work properly, creating much confusion and resentment among the NGOs and the volunteers. The people working in these institutions (who most of the times are appointed by political authorities) are not well informed on youth structures, and that becomes worse when they also hide the few information they know in order to support people or NGOs they are closer with.”

The only significant exception to this general feeling is the one of the great appreciation and support given to volunteering during the Olympic Games in 2004. Great efforts on the promotion of volunteering are mostly made by the NGOs themselves but suffer from lack of funds and therefore are not able to reach a large audience.

“With the exception of the Olympic Games when volunteering gained higher recognition and support, many of the initiatives taken by the State are mainly opportunistic, fragmented and with a certain intention for political influence.”

It is felt that volunteering would be best supported through various strategies. Transparency is one of the greatest needs felt by the

organisations as being of the utmost importance. First of all, transparency is required as regards allocations of funding and the relative procedures. Of same high importance is considered a transparent and prompt availability of information to all organisations.

“First of all, I would really like to feel that information about projects and funding is distributed to all the NGOs, giving opportunities to all the organisations to apply for funding for their initiatives. What is also missing from the Greek structures is a unified database of projects and funding.”

Another need that emerges is for an independent body to monitor and promote the quality of funding allocated; associated with a monitoring function over the work done by the organisations.

The usefulness of promoting volunteering at all levels of the education system is also widely cited as important.

From the quotations, a clear set of necessities and proposals claiming for active support and collaboration with public institutions emerges.

“I think we need: quality monitoring of the work of volunteer organisations; money allocation to volunteer activities; recognition and promotion of competences acquired through volunteering; clear understanding of what is volunteering and when it is needed.”

“Social insurance for voluntary service, independent bodies to monitor, promote and provide with training, increase the quantity and the quality of funds allocated to NGOs.”

“Governmental funding to volunteering organisations being allocated through fair and transparent procedures and according to qualitative criteria; promotion of volunteering in the high school curriculum; promotion of volunteering in the universities.”

Data overview

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 RESEARCH AND STATISTICS HIGHLIGHTS

There are not any detailed data available at national level about volunteer involving organisations. This probably reflects the inadequate attention given to volunteering in the country and the fact that there aren't any properly established volunteer involving organisations in Greece. There are not any data either about the financial resources devoted to volunteering nor about the exact number of people involved.

The organisations attracting greater numbers of volunteers are those involved in social care and also the environmental, conservation and ecological organisations.

2 OF VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANISATIONS (INTERVIEWS)

2.1 MOTIVATION AND BARRIERS

The motivations for volunteering can be external or internal. Those who are externally motivated will continue in their mission as long as they feel this motivation as something similar to a “push” towards volunteering. These kinds of motivations include their belief in the organisation they work for, the need to solve something that is perceived as a problem, to help others, but also the opportunity to meet people or travel through programs like, for example, Youth in Action.

“I think people volunteer for a few reasons:

- *supporting an organisation whose work they believe in, knowing they have limited money to hire people to do a job*
- *realising they have the need to take part in the solution of a problem through their work as volunteers*
- *gaining competences and continuously developing themselves*
- *for the feeling of being part of a community with the same interests.”*

The internal motivations are often identified with a sense that what is being done is the cause of an internal positive feeling that derives from one's own actions. Examples of internal motivation are the satisfaction obtained by the engagement as volunteers, gaining competences and self-development. Externally motivated volunteers are more likely to give up for lack of recognition for their work, while internally motivated ones need less because the assignment accomplished is a reward in itself.

Analysing motivation and building on it emerges from the interviews as a rather present issue in the work of NGOs.

“Need for social change - need to help others - sense of solidarity - are the general motivations that create the initial need. During my master’s dissertation which was focused on volunteer job satisfaction, I studied motives which bring people to volunteer, factors that affect their continuation as volunteers and factors associated with withdrawal. Very briefly, continuation is linked to the content of the volunteer job description and the relationships that volunteers build with other volunteers and paid staff. Withdrawal is linked to lack of recognition and burn-out.”

“I believe that volunteering is very connected to the willingness of people to contribute to local society. So, if I were asked to present the most important motivations for someone to become a volunteer, I would definitely say the advertisements and presentation of the work that has already been achieved by some NGOs. However, apart from this there are also other very important factors that lead to volunteering, such as the Youth in Action projects or work camps, which allow people to travel (especially Youth in Action allows people to travel with almost no money). So, even people who are not really familiar or willing to contribute to a volunteering action, can be interested by taking the opportunity to travel to another country and also help local society. Last but not least, volunteering is a very important manner to socialise with a group of people sharing some common ideals.”

Focus is evidently on the perception of the young people, but the drive behind the voluntary action emerges from some interviews with great clarity.

“Expressing anger for what goes wrong in the world in a creative way.”

“Meeting people who think alike.”

“Expanding knowledge on issues of interest.”

“Developing skills, like team work and leadership.”

“Feeling that you can contribute to a better world.”

“Being closer to sources of reliable information regarding your issues of interest.”

“Learning how an NGO works.”

“Being part of a community of committed people.”

“Feeling better about yourself and gaining recognition by others.”

One of the main reasons many people do not engage in volunteering seems to be the lack of trust in voluntary organisations, a fear of corruption, a feeling of being exploited for one’s time and money. This is probably linked to the fact that the emergence of an organised volunteering movement in Greece was somewhat delayed by the political situation of the country up until the return to democracy in the 70s’.

Here follow some quotations regarding the reason for not volunteering.

“Lack of knowledge about the vast variety of possibilities to volunteer.”

“Lack of trust in NGOs or other organisations.”

“People are not convinced that what they will do as volunteers will really contribute to specific beneficiaries.”

“People find the content of the volunteering activities not enough interesting or challenging or, on the other side, they find it too complicated or time consuming.”

“Many people want to volunteer individually, without getting involved in group meetings, decision making processes or long discussions.”

From these, it may be perceived just how much the concept of volunteering is intertwined with the concept of civic engagement and also how high generally the expectations are when it comes to committing of free will and without financial gain.

Another main barrier to volunteering is time and of course money, since some people seem still to prefer to devote their time to profit making activities. Volunteering in Greece could in fact only start to fully develop after the economic situation of the country has improved and individuals could devote some of their time to activi-

ties not directly linked with basic survival needs.

“I believe that the greatest reason why people do not engage in volunteering is that most of us are really attached to profit. This way, we search for activities which return profit or much profit. And definitely volunteering is not one of these activities. Also, in Greece, volunteering has been connected, in citizens’ minds, with some activist movements and protests that are not accepted by the majority of people. Finally, taking into consideration the previous facts, many times in local societies becoming a volunteer is not a “cool” decision. Another reason why not so many people engage in volunteering activities is that there is not enough information about these activities.”

“The volunteer’s main quest depends on the need to feel socially involved. It could be another form of a practically applied social and political participation. The volunteer is driven by social interest. Of course, in many cases, this motivation is accompanied by a need to share experiences, to travel, to socialise, and in general to do things that wouldn’t be done otherwise. On the other hand, there is a bitter-sweet social truth. Not everyone in this world is clever and/or nice, or socially sensitive, or capable; and since people are different it is natural to assume that many people would be disappointed more easily or wouldn’t be interested in helping other people around them. In other cases, many people lack the easy access to voluntary opportunities. In addition, in several cases many potential volunteers are disappointed by the opportunistic nature of several NGOs and their workers.”

Lack of information is also quoted as one of the main obstacles to volunteering in Greece. It appears that in Greece the very notion of ‘volunteer support centre’ is practically unknown, therefore people do not have reliable sources of information on volunteering opportunities. This is not aided by the fact that in Greece the involvement of volunteers lies exclusively with the initiative of the individual NGOs.

“No time, no trust, no ease of access and information.”

“They don’t believe they would really offer something through volunteering.”

“They have no time.”

“They think that through volunteering people would exploit their time and work.”

“They just didn’t meet the right people to involve them in an organisation or project.”

2.2 NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

The most important needs of the organisations interviewed are funding, better coverage of the costs of volunteers, possibility to employ more staff, especially to help with fund-raising and institutional relationships.

“Funds to be able to support our voluntary activities and further cover the costs of volunteers.”

“Funding - especially for promoting our campaigns via media.”

“More staff - especially to help us with fundraising and with institutional relationships (with the government etc).”

“Evaluation tools.”

“I see that there is need for more staff to support the various actions of the organisations. Also, there is always need for funding for the NGOs, because there are many actions to be implemented.”

Another need regards recognition and promotion of volunteering among students, who often are limited in their commitments by the universities themselves. In the words of the experts interviewed:

“Recognition of volunteering and empowerment of young students to volunteer in a student NGO according to the aims of the Bologna process. Less and less students volunteer and if they volunteer they only do it for a limited amount of time, because of the limitations their universities impose upon them.”

“Young people to form youth activist groups.”

Difficulties in everyday work, as emerges from the interviews, correspond to major needs pointed out. *“The money issue”*, meaning insufficient funding, is a major problem. This goes hand in hand with

lack of staff and lack of people who volunteer, especially trained professionals to deal with more sensitive issues.

“From my point of view, the greatest problem in Thessaloniki is the lack of staff and consequently the lack of volunteers who are going to be supported and motivated by these members of the office.”

Keeping the motivation high in young people to further their

commitment on the long term is seen as a major challenge. Another need strongly felt is getting adequate media coverage and visibility.

In the long term perspective, what emerges is the necessity to set clear objectives and strategies to achieve them. In the opinion of interviewees, these should go hand in hand with monitoring and evaluation tools to assess the outcomes.

Representation and coordination bodies

In the questionnaires the most important collective actors for volunteering are presented in detail, with the exception of *Ergo Politon* (Citizens in Deed), quoted above, a legal entity of private law with its headquarters situated in Athens under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Its statutory aims are the promotion of volunteering and the development of the volunteerism ideal.

As far as networking is concerned, one of the organisations interviewed cooperates in different ways with other organisations working in the same field and with other European organisations, opening their training moments to participants from other NGOs and representatives from the European Youth Forum.

“It has good cooperation with different European organisations in the field of training. Together with other student organisations we are organising the leadership school every summer. At the same time, at least three of our trainings per year are open to participants from other NGOs. Also, our representatives in the Pool of Trainers of the European Youth Forum are networking with other member organisations of the platform.”

Others cooperate organising joint seminars and conferences, public events on common interest issues. A number of organisations are members of international and European voluntary organisations or other networks, and that helps them in the exchange of ideas and in the planning of projects.

“Organising joint seminars or press conferences on issues of common interest; organising activism events (demonstrations, street theatre, etc) on issues of common interest.”

“I have been a member of many Greek NGOs as volunteer and trainer. Also, as coordinator of the Training Needs Working Group of the Alliance Network of European Voluntary Service Organisations, I have the opportunity to communicate and cooperate with many of the NGOs of the network in order to plan projects.”

But networking has its problems and drawbacks, and is often easily hindered by the struggle over the too meagre funds to be had.

“Unfortunately, the competition for the small amount of available funds and the individualism are barriers for coalitions and networking among NGOs in Greece.”

Support bodies

1 SUPPORT MEASURES (QUESTIONNAIRES)

The opinions on measures and initiatives for support to volunteering in Greece that were given by various protagonists of the volunteering world were consistent in pointing out how feeble the state support is.

“A more systematic approach should be taken by the government and the various Ministries.”

“Although there is a considerable interest from the state about volunteering, this interest should be more constant and less occasional.”

The greatest burden springs from the fact that the state support is occasional and not based on objective grounds.

“Something very small has been done but unfortunately it seems that Greece is not a country that invests on NGOs to implement part of the policies right on the field. The endless bureaucracy to obtain a grant, as well as the already destined grants to particular NGOs, constitutes an obstacle to the development of a healthy third sector in Greece. All in all, very few measures have been taken to support voluntary service in Greece.”

Focus on support bodies

(Questionnaires)

Hellenic Centre for the Promotion of Volunteering Anthropos.Gr

[CONTACT]
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΠΡΟΩΘΗΣΗΣ
ΤΟΥ ΕΘΕΛΟΝΤΙΣΜΟΥ
ANTHROPOS.GR
**Hellenic Centre for the Promotion
of Volunteering *Anthropos.Gr***
Feron 5
10434 Athens - Greece
tel. +30.210.8838914
fax +30.210.8838914
info@anthropos.gr
www.anthropos.gr

The Hellenic Centre for the Promotion of Volunteering *Anthropos.gr* was established in 2000 forming a second level Non Governmental Organisation (NGO), which operates as a connection between Greek NGOs, citizens, business sector and state bodies, including local administration, aiming at providing social services and promoting volunteering. Its main goals are:

- Promotion of volunteering on the internet.
- Development of communication between the various organisations using electronic (internet, TV, radio) and printed media (magazines, newspapers, etc.).
- Direct provision of information.
- Promotion of active participation and dialogue to the advantage of the NGO sector.
- Implementation of activities promoting citizens' quality of life.
- Promotion of cooperation among different communities for their adaptation to Greek society, as Greece constitutes now a multicultural society.
- Awareness raising among citizens about issues relating to migration and transfer of populations.
- International co-operation with various organisations in developing countries aiming to improve the economic and social life of their citizens and decrease poverty rates.
- Promotion of new technologies by the NGOs.
- Trainings for NGOs personnel.

The Hellenic Centre for the Promotion of Volunteering *Anthropos.gr* set up the first Greek humanitarian website: **www.anthropos.gr** whose operation is one of the most important activities for the realisation of the association's goals. The webpage has been online since 20th March 2002 and is especially devoted to volunteering, aiming to provide direct information and promotion of citizens' active participation and promotion of an open dialogue.

Anthropos undertakes networking activities for Greek NGOs. It implements the initiative "Our City on a Bike" for the familiarisation of citizens with the most interesting cultural and environmental points in the cities/towns they live in. This initiative is a result of a co-operation

among eight Greek NGOs and the General Secretariat for Youth. It has also undertaken the organisation of the Multicultural Day in Athens, a common effort with migrant and refugee communities in Greece.

Anthropos designs special publications for promoting the idea of volunteering and NGOs' work in the field, for example, through the publication of the magazine "Building Bridges" (*Xtizontas Gefyres*), including issues having to do with the development and humanitarian action of the Greek NGOs.

The association has implemented awareness raising and information campaigns, like the photo exhibition entitled "Through the Eyes of Greek Volunteers" including photos taken from various third world and developing countries and the painting competition for high school students on multiculturalism and migration.

It has also organised seminars for the transfer of know-how for their associates and volunteers aiming at the provision of better services at the grassroots level.

Anthropos was awarded the Certificate of Quality for its activities in the year 2007 by the President of the Hellenic Republic.

It participates in international cooperation such as the Coalition against Poverty in the framework of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (<http://www.stoppoverty.gr>).

QUESTIONNAIRES

Hellenic Centre for the Promotion of Volunteering Anthros.Gr

■ Territory covered	Athens, Greece	
■ Volunteers	10	
■ Staff	2 full time and 2 part time for volunteer support and development	
■ Activities	ENVIRONMENT - NATURE - ANIMALS	Surveillance of the environmental heritage
	CULTURE AND CULTURAL GOODS	Cultural promotion Training
■ Volunteering support activities	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	Public events Publications Festivals, expositions, fairs Promotional campaigns on mass media Meetings and conferences Cultural events
	CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE	Communication
	TRAINING	Individual classes or seminars
	INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION	Magazines and periodicals
	COMMUNICATION	Creation of special communication events Presence on other media Videos and CDs

City of Athens

[CONTACT]

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ

CITY OF ATHENS

Athens City Hall, 63 Athinas St, Kotzia Square

10552 Athens - Greece

tel. +30.210.3722001

fax +30.210.3218550

info@cityofathens.gr

www.cityofathens.gr

The City of Athens supports and promotes volunteering as a way of life. Volunteering encompasses an exceptional educational role that strengthens social cohesion, reinforces the notion of active participation and harmonious coexistence and adds a new element to our lives. The City of Athens seeks to make a substantial contribution to the efforts made by voluntary organisations as well as independent volunteers who participated in the "Volunteer for Athens" programme or the Athens 2004 Olympic Games volunteer scheme. It wants voluntary organisations to maintain their autonomy while offering individual volunteers an outlet through which to channel their energies. This goal is implemented by the adoption of volunteering as a life choice and encouraging team spirit in an effort to reverse the devaluation of ideals. The City of Athens aims to develop a relationship between the municipality and volunteering based on mutual understanding and trust. Volunteering must not substitute or compete with the municipality's responsibilities, or the other way round.

The principal activities in which the City of Athens is involved are:

- Establishing a "Volunteers' House" on municipal property incorporating a secretariat which will provide support and information to volunteers and voluntary non-governmental organisations.
- Reinforcing the municipality's "Volunteer for Athens" programme.
- Offering volunteers lifelong educational programmes certified by UNESCO.
- Instituting a Time Bank.
- Setting up local councils in each city district.
- Creating a registry of volunteers and voluntary organisations.
- Instituting volunteer awards.
- Encouraging NGOs and volunteer residents' groups to undertake surveillance of parks and squares in their locality.
- Arranging for volunteer groups in collaboration with the Athens Municipal Police and City District Councils to take care of squares and parks during hours when citizens are present, in order to further heighten residents' sense of security.
- Introducing a voluntary street work programme.
- Developing creative workshops.

The city of Athens encourages retired senior citizens to work as volunteers, provides volunteers with insurance coverage when they carry out volunteer duties, and plans to sign a protocol of cooperation with the Church concerning volunteering and social welfare. The City of Athens offers citizens the possibility to work in a group, to acquire skills, to meet new people.

QUESTIONNAIRES

City of Athens

■ Territory covered	Athens	
■ Volunteers	4	
■ Staff	1 full time for volunteer support activities	
■ Activities	CULTURE AND CULTURAL GOODS	Social cultural animation Training
	ENVIRONMENT - NATURE - ANIMALS	Animals' protection Surveillance of the environmental heritage Rubbish collection, cleaning beaches and woods
	HEALTH	Donation and/or collection of blood
■ Volunteering support activities	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	Public events Promotional campaigns on mass media Festivals, expositions and fairs Philanthropic events
	COMMUNICATION	Presence in local and national newspapers Creation of special communication events Press releases

Voluntary Services Department of the Youth & Sports Organisation of the Municipality of Athens

[CONTACT]

Οργανισμός Νεολαίας και Άθλησης (Ο.Ν.Α.)
Voluntary Services Department
of the Youth & Sports Organisation
of the Municipality of Athens
20, Satovriandou Street
10432 Athens - Greece
tel. +30.210.5284879-882
fax +30.210.5284883
ona_pres@otenet.gr
www.ona.gr

The Voluntary Services Department belongs to the Youth & Sports Organisation of the Municipality of Athens. It promotes the commitment of Athens' citizens in voluntary sport, cultural and social activities. It carries out sports, cultural and social projects. Many sport, cultural and social events are successfully organised with the assistance of Athenian volunteers.

QUESTIONNAIRES

**Voluntary Services Department of the Youth & Sports Organisation
of the Municipality of Athens**

■ Territory covered	Athens	
■ Volunteers	4	
■ Staff	13 full time for volunteer support activities	
■ Activities	ENVIRONMENT - NATURE - ANIMALS	Intervention for the protection of the environment Participation in the artistic expression festival Rubbish collection, cleaning beaches and woods
	SPORTS	Promotion of sports practice Amateur sports
	HEALTH	Promotion and coordination of first aid Donation and collection of blood
	CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND TUTELAGE	Day dedicated to health and women information about women's rights
■ Volunteering support activities	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	Sports events Public events
	COMMUNICATION	Press releases Own web site
	INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION	Books, manuals and booklets
	CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE	Events' organisation Training processes
	TRAINING	Individual classes and seminars

ELIX Conservation Volunteers Greece

[CONTACT]

ΕΛΙΞ - ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ
ΕΘΕΛΟΝΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ
ELIX - Conservation Volunteers Greece
Veranzerou 15
10677 Athens - Greece
tel. +30.210.3825506
fax +30.210.3814682
elix@elix.org.gr
www.elix.org.gr

ELIX is a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) which cultivates voluntary conscience and promotes voluntary offering. It is a civil, not for profit association and its main activity is the organisation of international programs of voluntary work and youth exchange. Since 1987, the Non Governmental Organisation ELIX has been cultivating voluntary conscience and promoting voluntary service. ELIX's main goal is the contribution to personal development and people's evolution as citizens of the world through their active participation in public life. ELIX realises international actions of voluntary participation having as main targets the protection of the environment, the preservation of cultural heritage, the promotion of civilization and social service.

Activities

- Organisation and coordination of international work camps in Greece, of two weeks' duration.
- Organisation and coordination of one-day or two-day voluntary actions at national level.
- Attraction of volunteers from abroad and from Greece.
- Sending abroad of Greek volunteers to work camps of two weeks duration, through the cooperation with the international organisation network Alliance of Voluntary Service Organisations.
- Reception of foreign volunteers to programs of voluntary service which are held in cooperation with Greek organisations, institutions and state bodies which offer social work, for periods of 6-12 months (European Voluntary Service - EVS).
- Sending of Greek volunteers to programs of voluntary service in Europe for periods of 6-12 months (European Voluntary Service - EVS)
- Organisation and participation in educational seminars concerning the coordination of international groups of volunteers, intercultural education etc.
- Organisation and participation in actions related to the European Programs: YOUTH IN ACTION (Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service, Support measures), EQUAL, LEONARDO, GRUNDTVIG, having as main target the participation in the European ideal, the exchange of know-how, the promotion and certification of voluntary work.

As its main achievements ELIX considers:

- Offering young people the possibility to work in a group, to acquire skills, to meet new places and ways of living and become active citizens.
- Offering local societies the opportunity to show the natural and cultural wealth of their area, to come into contact with young people from all around the world, to share with them their customs and habits and also to familiarise with the idea of volunteerism.
- Offering the authorities the opportunity to take advantage creatively of the voluntary work that is offered to them and at the same time to familiarise with the value of voluntary service.

Member of the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisation.

QUESTIONNAIRES

ELIX Conservation Volunteers Greece

■ Territory covered	Greece	
■ Volunteers	8	
■ Staff	2 full time and 1 part time for volunteer support activities 2 full time and 1 part time for other activities	
■ Activities	SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	Support, relation, animation activities Promotion of temporary custody for children Re-education/reintegration Facilitated transfer service
	ENVIRONMENT - NATURE - ANIMALS	Intervention for the protection of the environment Rubbish collection, cleaning beaches and woods Surveillance of the environmental heritage History and architectural heritage protection
	CULTURE AND CULTURAL GOODS	Social cultural animation Training
	CIVIL PROTECTION	Prevention and/or fire fighting Prevention/assistance in case of natural disasters
	CITIZENS RIGHTS AND TUTELAGE	Tutelage of citizens and participation Civil rights
■ Volunteering support activities	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	Promotional campaigns on mass media Public events Meetings and conferences Cultural events Festivals, expositions, fairs

QUESTIONNAIRES

ELIX Conservation Volunteers Greece

CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE	European voluntary service International volunteering and networking
TRAINING	Courses
INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION	Information office Magazines and periodicals
COMMUNICATION	Presence in local and national newspapers Presence on other media Periodical publications or newsletters Own web site Press releases

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 PUBLIC INCENTIVES

Public incentives are limited to rare specific campaigns, such as 0.5% KPS - *Koinotiko Plaisio Stirksis* - a public funding program for NGOs. The interaction is mainly through European projects, in particular through the Youth and Youth in Action programme.

2 CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

The most important third sector initiatives aiming for a better promotion and impact of volunteering are:

- Festival of NGO associations
- 5th December volunteer day's event
- Conferences
- Each association runs several focused activities through all the year
- Promotion through mass media in the frame of the social publicity spaces on national TV and radio channels.

3 ON INFRASTRUCTURE FOR VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

What emerged is that there isn't a widespread debate on how the volunteering infrastructure could contribute as far as institutional support is concerned. Both voluntary organisations and public bodies lack a specific idea on what a volunteering infrastructure could mean and produce. Only one organisation gave an opinion on this:

"State of the art: Greek public sector implements mainly actions that are coming from the EU without financing in a strong way NGOs' activities. The main problem in Greece is the malfunction of a wide part of the public sector and the unbearable bureaucracy that can discourage from submitting any proposal at national level. A national platform called the 800 MKO campaign aims to raise the awareness and increase functionality in the relations between NGOs and public sector. Its main aim is to provide a legal status and base to NGOs in Greek law. However there is still a lot to be done to achieve the standards of other European Union countries at third sector level."

4 STRATEGIC GOALS

Uniting the extremely fragmented sector towards common goals of major recognition and institutional support relies on few but well characterised networking initiatives. As far as networking is concerned, several platforms, mainly thematic ones, have been settled to strengthen the action of many small organisations struggling for a common aim. This is a big achievement considering that NGOs collaboration is quite a new phenomenon in the Greek reality of third sector.

The 800 NGOs Campaign is an attempt of more than 800 NGOs to lobby for modifications in the Greek constitution, inserting articles recognising and supporting the NGOs activities and structures.

5 EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE (INTERVIEWS)

Significant European experiences of Greek NGO leaders lead them to affirm that volunteering broadens horizons, increases communication skills, knowledge of different cultures and is a great tool for establishing solid relationships among organisations and volunteers. It renews motivation and enthusiasm and provides different and alternative solutions to common and shared issues.

“Our members are coming from all around Europe and our activities are taking place each time in a different country. For this reason, our members are volunteering in different places. At the same time, having personally experienced the European Voluntary Service I am convinced that, through volunteering in a different country, you open your horizons, you learn about different cultures, you cooperate with people from different cultures, you develop different communication skills and you seem to realise that we are not only part of our neighbourhood but part of the whole world.”

Learning from experiences abroad and from more solid volunteering traditions leads to constant comparisons and builds a strong drive for betterment.

“Comparing to other European countries volunteering in Greece is yet immature although during the last twenty years there has been an increasing involvement of people and youth in particular.”

“Volunteering in other European countries is a great tool for establishing relationships between participating organisations and volunteers themselves. Getting to know the problems organisations in other countries are facing and the way they solve them helps you bring back ideas and tools for your organisation and renews your enthusiasm and commitment.”

To this end programmes such as Youth in Action are considered very positively for the enhancing of transnational volunteering across Europe.

“I believe that more or less all the NGOs in the EU share the same concerns and problems. However, there are countries where the structures help NGOs more than others. I really support the Youth in Action program and I believe that programs of this kind really help and support the work of NGOs and help volunteering grow in Europe.”

From the interviews, many ideas have come out on how the European initiative could support volunteering. Some of the actions on which the European institutions should concentrate, as indicated by Greek volunteer leaders, follow below.

Many ideas rely heavily on the positive experience of the Youth and Youth in Action programmes:

- Creation of the European Volunteers Card (as proposed at the European Youth week in 2008) allowing Europe-wide discounts to volunteers.
- A common European system for the assessment of competences modelled on the Youth Pass but extended beyond the Youth in Action programme.
- Include work camps in institutionally supported volunteering activities.
- Making mandatory for all countries the covering of the expenses

es faced by volunteers in the course of their commitment.

- A user-friendly website presenting all the European volunteering opportunities.
- Promotion of volunteering, especially in schools, universities and ministries.

Others see in the European level a possible source of advancement of the very same issues already pursued, so far with little success, with institutions at national level. The claims on Europe therefore are towards:

- Creating a network among all the initiatives working on the same issues, with a view of helping especially the smaller community organisations who find it harder to build alliances.
- Promoting funding to specific volunteer projects, accompanied by closely monitoring and making accountable the organisations who administer such funding.
- Adopting norms and an adequate legal framework in support of volunteering.
- Establishing statistics for volunteering.

Given that in general transnational cooperation is seen as extremely positive, the main motivations to engage in projects with voluntary organisations in Europe are to be found mainly in the beneficial effects these will have on:

- The exchange of knowledge, ideas, best practices.
- Seeing the same issues from different perspectives and realities.
- The potential for common campaign and projects between organisations working on similar issues.

- The development of the volunteers involved in terms of their specific skills but also on their enthusiasm, commitment, motivation and personal growth.

The sharing of information among all potential participants to projects with other European organisations is also of paramount importance. As interviewees put it, when asked about their interest to engage in and expectations from transnational projects:

“The exchange of ideas, practices on the same issue but from different realities and perspectives; the development of our volunteers involved in the project; the big impact the project can have on different people and places.”

“Exchange of knowledge, multiculturalism, common campaign actions.”

“Projects focusing on specific issues and mainly on best practices, skills development, introduction or creation of specific new tools on issues such as fundraising, outreach, planning, evaluation etc. (not general contact making / skill sharing projects); projects between organisations working on the same issues in order to implement common strategies in a geographical area.”

“Probably, I believe that nothing can motivate me more than projects which are funded by an EU institution. I believe that the Youth in Action program really stimulated voluntary service in Europe. If volunteers can travel to other countries and these costs are covered, more and more new people are going to volunteer. If also these actions are presented in the right way and the information is distributed to all, then the results will be fantastic.”

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Maria **Nomikou**

President of the organisation AEGEE (Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe/ European Students' Forum) Academy, former Youth and Education Coordinator of Fair Trade Hellas, youth trainer member of the Pool of Trainers of the European Youth Forum and the Pool of Trainers of the Greek National Agency of Youth in Action, volunteer for the WWF in the field of environmental education and campaigns. Involved in educational activities through arts in not formal education contexts.

Gerasimos **Kouvaras**

Country Director of Action Aid Hellas (2007-today); director of Amnesty International, Greek Section (2004-2007); special advisor to the Ministry of Education for NGO sector / Greek representative in the Youth Working Party of the Council of the EU (2002-2004) and Chair of the Youth Party during the Greek EU Presidency; general manager, Institute of Philanthropy (2000-2002); head of Volunteer Department,

Hellenic Children's Museum (1996-1999), managed 150 young volunteers and interns (including EVS volunteers).

Maria **Pantazidou**

Campaigners' Coordinator with Amnesty International Greece, she also volunteers with YMCA in Thessaloniki.

Konstantinos **Antonopoulos**

ELIX-CVG. More than ten years experience as a volunteer. Volunteer coordinator and organizer of work camps and long to mid-term voluntary projects.

George **Kalmpourtzis**

ELIX-CVG. Volunteer and volunteer trainer, youth and EVS mentor and project coordinator, international youth trainer and organizer of educational and recreational activities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apostolides L., *Το εθελοντικό κίνημα στην Ελλάδα και η κοινωνία των πολιτών*, Athens, Ellinika Grammata Edition, 2002.

Arktouros, *Εθελοντισμός και φυσικό περιβάλλον*, Athens, Ioii A. Ifanti, 1999.

Blaustein A.I., *Make a Difference: Your Guide to Volunteering and Community Service*, San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Brown C., *Working in the Voluntary Sector*, Oxford, Cromwell Press, 2005.

Colins J. et al, *How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas*, London, Penguin Books Ltd, 2002.

Conroy P. and Pierce M., "Pathways to Information: developing and Integrated approach at local Level", *A Working Paper of the Comhairle Research Series*, Dublin, 2000.

Dunn A., *The Voluntary Sector, the State and the Law*, Portland, OR, Hart Publishing c/o, 2000.

General Secretary Of Youth, V-PRC Institute, *Οι νέοι του καιρού μας*, Athens, Papazisis Edition, 2000.

Giannis N., *Κοινωνία των πολιτών και νεολαία*, Athens, Papazisis Edition, 2001.

Giannis N., "Voluntary Sector and Youth", *Working Papers of the Greek National Youth Agency*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, Athens, 2001.

Gozdzik-Ormel Z.K., "Have Your Say", in *Manual on the revised European Charter on the Participation of young People in Local and Regional Life*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2008.

Osborne S., *Voluntary Organisations and Innovation in the Public Services*, London, Routledge, 1998.

Polizoidis P., *Εθελοντισμός στην κοινωνική προστασία*, Ellinika Grammata Editions, 2006.

Rosenberg B. and Lampard G., *Giving from Your Heart: a Guide to Volunteering*, iUniverse, Lincoln: NV, 2005.

Smith J.D., *Smith Volunteering in Europe: Opportunities and Challenges for the 90's*, London, Energize Books, 1994.

Stebbins R.A. and, Graham M., *Volunteering As Leisure / Leisure As Volunteering*, Cambridge: MA, Cromwell Press, 2004.

Stone S., *Volunteering Around the Globe: Life Changing Travel Adventures*, London, Penguin Books Ltd, 2001.

Theodorakis A., *Η Κοινωνία των πολιτών, νέα συνισταμένη του κοινωνικού μοντέλου*, Athens, Papazisis Editions, 2003.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Anthropos

First Greek website for the promotion of volunteering.

<http://www.anthropos.gr>

[Greek]

Pandoico - Pan-Hellenic Network of Ecological Organisations

An association of grassroots environmental organisations around Greece.

<http://www.pandoiko.gr>

[Greek]

MKO Syntagma for Greek NGOs

<http://www.mkosyntagma.gr>

[Greek]

Hellenic Federation of Voluntary Non Governmental Organisations

<http://www.ngofederation.gr>

[Greek] [English]

Citizens in Deed

<http://www.ergopoliton.gr>

[Greek] [English]

Elix - Conservation Volunteers Greece

<http://www.elix.org.gr>

[Greek] [English]

City of Athens

<http://www.cityofathens.gr>

[Greek] [English]

Greece in:
Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation.
Greece, Hungary, Austria, Denmark, Cyprus.
v. III.
Rome, Spes, 2009. pp. 9 - 48.

For publications, initiatives and collaborations please contact:

SPES - Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio

Via Liberiana, 17

00185 Rome - Italy

Tel.: +39.06.44702178

Fax: +39.06.45422576

E-mail: europa@spes.lazio.it

Website: www.volontariato.lazio.it