

Ireland

[REPUBLIC OF IRELAND]

[POBLACHT NA HÉIREANN]

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VOLUNTEERING IRELAND

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COUNTRY FACT SHEET

- **Population** 4,239,848
- **Area** 70,273 sq. km.
- **Population density** c. 60 inhabitants per sq. km.

■ **System of government**

The Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. The *Oireachtas* (National Parliament) consists of the President, who is elected by the people, and two houses: *Dáil Éireann* (the House of Representatives) and *Seanad Éireann* (the Senate) whose powers and functions derive from *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (the Constitution) enacted by the people in 1937. There are a further 114 local authorities across 26 geographical counties.

- **European elections** 2009: 12 European Parliamentarians

■ **Social security and welfare system**

The social welfare system is administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs (from March 2010: Department of Social Protection). It is divided into three types of payments. (1) Social insurance payments (for example, maternity benefit and contributory state pension) are given to people who satisfy specific contribution conditions (PRSI-Pay Related Social Insurance) and necessary circumstantial conditions. (2) Means tested payments (for example, job-seeker's allowance) are primarily designed for people who have insufficient social insurance based payments. (3) Universal payments (for example, child benefit) are paid regardless of a person's social insurance record or income.

■ **Public health system**

Entitlement to health services is based primarily on residency and

means, rather than payment of tax and social insurance. Any person, regardless of nationality, who is accepted by the Health Service Executive as being ordinarily resident in Ireland, is entitled to either full or limited eligibility to health services (separate rules apply to visitors who are resident in the country for less than a year). If a family's income is below a certain threshold, its members are entitled to hold a medical card giving free access to most medical services. Non-medical card holders are entitled to certain free hospital services but must pay for most other medical services. Certain general health services are available to all people on the basis of need, regardless of whether or not they hold a medical card (for example, costs of drugs to treat certain illnesses, school health services, health promotion). Many people avail of private healthcare.

■ **Level of education**

20-24 years old who have completed secondary schooling	2008: 97%
25-64 years old who have completed the highest level of secondary schooling	2002: 61%

■ **Immigration rate**

Non-Irish nationals comprised 10.3% of the population in 2006

■ **Growth rate**

1,12%

■ **Employment rate**

15-64 years old (total – male – female)	July - September 2009 62.1% - 66.5% - 57.6%
55-64 years old (total – male – female)	65.2% - 60.4% - 57%

■ **Unemployment rate**

15-64 years old (total – male – female)	July - September 2009 12.7%- 15.6% - 9.1%
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Glossary

1 DEFINITIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1.1 VOLUNTEER

A volunteer is a person who undertakes any type of volunteering activity.

1.2 VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY

Volunteering is defined 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 reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses. Voluntary work can be both 'formal' (undertaken through and on behalf of an organisation) and 'informal' (undertaken outside an organisational setting).

In the report of the National Committee on Volunteering¹, it is noted: "The act of volunteering is not always recognised as being such and the language of volunteering is not always used to describe activities that may be considered as acts of volunteering. At times, individuals do not see themselves as being engaged in a volunteering role. In other cases, 'volunteering' as a concept is seen to have negative connotations or associations. Alternatively, organisations may not treat de facto volunteers as volunteers."

1.3 VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

Voluntary organisations (more often known as 'community and voluntary organisations') contribute to the public good and contain some element of voluntary participation. Although these organisations often have paid staff, they would not be voluntary without the input of volunteers. It is important to note that the governance structures of these organisations are almost always entirely voluntary. Organisations that involve volunteers outside of board level are increasingly described as 'volunteer involving organisations'.

¹ National Committee on Volunteering, *Tipping the Balance: Report and Recommendations to Government on Supporting and Developing Volunteering in Ireland*, 2002, www.volunteeringireland.ie/docs/tipping_the_balance_october_2002.pdf, p.41.

1.4 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRE

The volunteering infrastructure in Ireland contains a number of components to promote, support and facilitate volunteering. These include national organisations, local volunteer centres and other initiatives.

2 VOLUNTEERS ON VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS)

Volunteering is regarded positively by all, although the challenges of getting more people to volunteer are also recognised by all.

Historical overview

1 ROOTS: BEFORE 1900

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

There is a longstanding tradition of 'caritas', a concept broader than 'charity', dating back to mediaeval times. Early Christians were recognised for their caring actions. This eventually led to the institutionalisation of care, as monasteries provided shelter for the homeless, medical care for the sick and sanctuary for those in trouble with the law.

A strong tradition of Protestant philanthropy also existed from the late eighteenth century. It was most visible amongst the ascendancy classes and aimed to address the poor physical, social and medical conditions of those who were economically deprived.

With the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, clergy and members of religious orders entered the voluntary arena in greater numbers. Poor Laws introduced statutory welfare provision during the 1830s, but were enforced so rigidly that many in the population were excluded from entitlement. The Catholic Church began to dominate health, education and social service provision. Many voluntary hospitals were set up (primarily Catholic but also Protestant) and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was established.

There was also a strong surge of voluntary activity in the late nineteenth century in the shape of cultural nationalism and the Gaelic revival movement. Organisations such as Conradh na Gaeilge and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) were instrumental in developing a notion of what it meant to be Irish and creating a sense of social solidarity².

2 THE BRIEF CENTURY: 1900 – 2000

Ireland was a primarily rural society until the 1960s. A tradition of 'cooring' (from the verb 'comhair' meaning 'to cooperate') and the organisation of a *meitheal*³ in order to get farm work done were important cornerstones of peasant Ireland. Such social solidarity maintained and sustained rural communities.

The Irish cooperative movement was developed around the turn of the century and drew its initial inspiration from the urban working class cooperatives in Britain. Production and marketing of farm produce became the basis of an expanding

² National Committee on Volunteering, *Tipping the Balance: Report and Recommendations to Government on Supporting and Developing Volunteering in Ireland*, 2002, www.volunteeringireland.ie/docs/tipping_the_balance_october_2002.pdf

³ "A Meitheal is the Irish name for a work group, conveying the idea of 'connection with neighbour.' Traditionally, the term referred to rural agricultural groups" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meitheal>).

rural cooperative movement, which has grown into large agribusiness today.

The concept of self-sufficiency applied at local level was taken up in the rural regeneration movement of the 1930s. For example, Muintir na Tíre - the National Association for the Promotion of Community Development in Ireland - proposed the foundation of voluntary organisations based on the unit of the parish, which would foster cultural and social activity.

By the 1960s, the historical dominance of the Catholic Church in supplying essential welfare services was beginning to wane. The state gradually moved in and also began to provide support to voluntary organisations to deliver certain social services. The 1960s also saw the start of the community development movement, especially in urban areas, which was strongly supported politically and financially by both the state and the European Commission.

Building on a long tradition of the Irish Catholic missionary, the twentieth century saw increasing numbers of secular development workers going overseas, both voluntary and paid⁴.

3 WHERE WE STAND: 2001 - 2008

The decline in the influence of the Catholic Church has been dramatic, although it continues to play a not insignificant role within the sector. There has been considerable growth in the number of organisations in the sector, including many self-help groups and rights-based organisations. The concepts of social capital, social entrepreneurship and active citizenship have also gained ground. A volunteering infrastructure began to be built from the late 1990s onwards. There has also been a big increase in organisations sending volunteers overseas, often on very short-term assignments. Economic pressures caused by the recession are a cause of significant uncertainty within the community and voluntary sector.

4 VOLUNTEERING NOW (INTERVIEWS)

Volunteering plays a valuable role in the social fabric of Ireland. It also has an influence overseas through international volunteering by Irish people. There is a tension between the freedom and informality that characterises voluntary action and the demands for formalisation of volunteering in the name of good practice.

Ireland has a well-established volunteering ethos and the crucial role that volunteering plays in Irish society is well-respected. It is often stated that if everybody in Ireland who volunteers suddenly stopped doing so, the country would cease to function. In particular, people tend to gravitate towards faith-based, social care and sporting organisations (especially the GAA), although self-help and campaigning also feature strongly. There has been a particular growth in organisations that send volunteers overseas.

Yet, there are many more non-volunteers than there are volunteers and there is a lack of societal clarity as to what volunteering is and what it ought to be. Many people volunteer but would never actually claim to be volunteers, which has led to a definite underestimating of volunteering in official figures. Too often, the focus is on the fact that volunteers do not get paid, as opposed to the free choice they are exercising when they are working towards something that they care about. The interviewees expressed a number of further concerns that they had for volunteering:

- Irish society is increasingly urbanised with an accompanying disconnection by individuals from local community affairs.
- There is a lack of recognition of the different types of 'voluntary' organisations that exist: from volunteer-led and supported by paid staff to staff-led and supported by volunteers.
- There are some clear benefits to the formalisation of volunteering (identifiable start and end dates, role descriptions, volunteer training,

⁴ National Committee on Volunteering, *Tipping the Balance: Report and Recommendations to Government on Supporting and Developing Volunteering in Ireland*, 2002, www.volunteeringireland.ie/docs/tipping_the_balance_october_2002.pdf

insurance, child/vulnerable adult protection, fundraising guidelines, volunteer recognition initiatives, etc).

- However, there is a danger in overformalisation and risk avoidance, for it could lead to a sanitised and constrained version of volunteering, which could both reduce volunteer numbers and dampen the imagination for what voluntary action could be and could achieve.
- Small informal groups can be just as useful as large highly structured organisations; a 'one size fits all' model can, and should, therefore never apply.

We live in an uncertain world, where globalisation has taken away power at all levels, from the individual to the national. Getting involved on a voluntary basis with something allows people to reclaim some influence. As such, volunteering is very empowering and a great expression of participatory democracy. The challenge is getting more and more people involved on a voluntary basis to do as much work for the

social good as possible; people need to be reminded and reassured that everyone can volunteer.

Voluntary organisations should complement and enhance work being done by statutory and private bodies at local and national levels, not substitute for them. Likewise, volunteering should not be seen as a substitute for paid salaried positions. Volunteers can be regarded as a useful additional resource that helps deliver on an organisation's existing mission. However, they should not be limited to this. Volunteering should also be about people coming together, being radical, taking risks and directly meeting identified community needs. Furthermore, volunteering should be responsible and responsive. It is important that volunteers, at whatever level of the organisation, are engaged with the work that the organisation is set up to do, and committed to its cause. There are question marks over the extent to which some corporate volunteering and short-term 'voluntourism' initiatives achieve this objective.

Legal framework

1 OVERVIEW OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

There has, up until recently, been a discernible absence of legislation on/regulation of the third sector. The term 'third sector' is used rarely in Ireland. Neither is there a commonly agreed description or definition of this sector. Terms used to describe the wide range of bodies that work outside the public and private sectors include: 'community and/or voluntary sector', 'charitable sector', 'nonprofit/not-for-profit sector', etc. Furthermore, there was, until very recently, no statutory definition of a 'charity'. The granting of a charity (CHY) number by the Revenue Commissioners is still only a tax designation permitting limited fiscal benefits; it is not a specified legal status.

1.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Historically there has existed limited legislation. The funding relationship between the state and voluntary organisations, especially in the sphere of health and social care provision, has been underpinned by various legislative acts dating back to the 1950s. In addition, there are in existence laws concerning fundraising activities in the form of street collections, house to house collections, lotteries, etc. The most significant development was the 2009 enactment of the Charities Act, setting out a definition of charitable purpose for the first time in primary legislation. The Act has begun to be implemented, although its full provisions will not be implemented for several years. It is also important to note that in 2006, the country's census included a question on volunteering for the first time in history.

1.2 NORMS IN SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERING

There is no specific legislation that directly promotes or prevents voluntary activity. Legislation relating to equal status, health/safety/welfare, immigration and many other issues applies to everyone equally. Paid staff are protected in the workplace through an extensive body of employment legislation. By definition, volunteers are not employees and are therefore not afforded such employment rights. Volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses are not given explicit consideration by the Revenue Commissioners and there are no specific legal provisions in relation to insurance for volunteers. Persons in receipt of social welfare benefits are required to seek permission from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (from March 2010: Department of Social Protection) before commencing any form of volunteering.

2 PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

Since 1987, Ireland has had a model of 'social partnership'; an approach to governance and policy making in which government selected social partners work together in an attempt to forge agreed public policy. The five 'pillars' of social partnership are employers, trade unions, farmers, environmental, and since the year 2000, community and voluntary. In that year also, Community and Voluntary Fora were established in each city and county as part of the process that set up of country's 34 County/City Development Boards. Public sector agencies are encouraged to consult with local fora on their local policy proposals. There is a trend towards increased public consultation on public policy matters for individual organisations and citizens, but there are few legal requirements for this. In 2006, the *Taoiseach* established the Taskforce on Active Citizenship, in order to encourage citizens to engage more positively and to a greater extent with the world around them.

3 FISCAL POLICIES

Having CHY (Charity) status gives exemption from a range of taxes:

- Income Tax.
- Corporation Tax.
- Capital Gains Tax.
- Deposit Interest Retention Tax.
- Capital Acquisitions Tax.
- Stamp Duty.
- Dividend Withholding Tax.

Charitable tax exemption does not relieve an organisation of its obligations as an employer to operate the Pay As You Earn tax system for its paid employees. There is no general Value Added Tax exemption for charities. However, there are a number of specific reliefs from Value Added Tax which may relate to charitable activities. The Irish Charities Tax Reform Group lobbies for an improved fiscal environment for Irish charities.

4 ROLLS AND REGISTERS

There is no complete definitive database of volunteer involving organisations in Ireland. The majority of organisations are small and sometimes ephemeral. The Centre for Nonprofit Management identified at least 24,000 not for profit organisations operating in Ireland for its The Hidden Landscape project and published a database of those that participated in its research (see below). Examples of national databases include:

- **Directory of the Irish Nonprofit Sector**, Centre for Nonprofit Management, (2006 CD-ROM with 4000+ entries available to order), www.cnm.tcd.ie/publications
- **Directory of National Voluntary Organisations and Other Agencies**, Citizens Information Board (575 entries in 2008) www.citizensinformationboard.ie/publications/voluntary_sector/downloads/directory_of_volunteers2008.pdf
- **Ireland Involved Online**, Volunteering Ireland's online civil society marketplace - due to be launched later in 2010.
- **Irish Links directory**, (number of entries not readily available) www.activelink.ie/content/irish-links
- **List of bodies who have been granted charitable tax exemptions**, Revenue Commissioners (7610 entries in 2010) www.revenue.ie/en/business/charities.html
- **SectorConnector Online Directory of Community and Voluntary Organisations**, The Wheel (2210 entries in 2010) www.wheel.ie/user/content/view/full/4753
- **Volunteering opportunities database**, Volunteer Centres Ireland (c. 4000 entries in 2010) www.volunteer.ie/Search-Apply-for-a-new-Volunteer.html
- **Volunteer involving organisations database**, Volunteering Ireland (5479 entries in 2010).

In addition, there are many different local databases (for example, Cork City Community database with c. 100 entries in 2010, <http://community.corkcity.ie>) and thematic databases (for example, Voluntary Arts

ireland

Ireland's directory - number of entries not readily available - www.vai-ireland.org/cgi-bin/website.cgi?tier1=ireland&tier2=directory&fp=true).

5 LIST OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Charities Act 2009

Health Act 2004

Childcare Act 1991

Charities Act 1973

Health Act 1970

Income Tax Act 1967

Street and House To House Collections Act 1962

Charities Act 1961

Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956

Health Act 1953

Volunteers involving organisations

1 ORGANISATIONAL FORMS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Irish law gives individual adults 'legal status', which affords them recognition in the legal system and offers them a certain amount of legal protection. However, it does not recognise a group of people as having legal status if they do not have a formal legal structure. The process of 'incorporation' confers a separate legal status on a group. The Irish community and voluntary sector comprises both unincorporated and incorporated entities. There are three types of unincorporated organisational structure: unincorporated associations, trusts and benevolent societies. Incorporated bodies can be either companies limited by guarantee without share capital or industrial and provident societies (co-operatives)⁵.

1.1 VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR DIFFERENCES

There is an incredible diversity of voluntary action. Volunteers are involved in most aspects of civic life, both on an *informal* basis and within the formal structure of a volunteer involving organisation. There are many different ways of classifying organisations in the community and voluntary sector. These include:

- Age.
- Geographical location.
- Legal structure.
- Description: not for profit organisation, voluntary organisation, community organisation, nongovernmental organisation (NGO), charity.
- Type: stand-alone organisation, head office/branch, umbrella organisation.
- Activity: very wide range, but dominated by community development, primary schools, social services, sports, cultural groups, recreation and social clubs.
- Beneficiary: individuals, organisations, rural/urban, etc.
- Geographical remit: local, regional, national, international.

⁵ The Wheel, *Solid Foundations: A Resource Guide for Building Strong and Effective Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector*, 2007

- Income: level, source, etc.
- Number and type of volunteers.
- Number and type of paid staff.
- Governance structures⁶.

2 RULES AND FUNCTIONING

Unincorporated associations and companies limited by guarantee without share capital are currently the most commonly used organisational structures within the community and voluntary sector.

Most unincorporated associations have a governing document known as a 'constitution' that outlines the aims, activities and rules for running the group. They tend to be governed by 'management committees'. Setting up an association is relatively easy but affords no legal protection to its individual members.

The governing document of a company limited by guarantee is known as the 'memorandum and articles of association'. Company members control the company but elect 'directors', who govern the company on their behalf; they are usually known as the 'board'. Becoming a company can be costly, time intensive and onerous in terms of Companies Registration Office administration, but it limits the liability of directors and allows the organisation to enter into contracts in its name.

Selection methods for members of governing bodies vary and include election, invitation, co-option and appointment by a funder.

Both types of organisation may apply for a CHY number from the Revenue Commissioners, but are under no obligation to do so. Organisations with a CHY number may not remunerate members of the governing body for their governance role, nor may they have paid staff on their governing body, unless special permission has been granted for this by the Revenue Commissioners⁷.

3 RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLIC SECTOR

3.1 OVERVIEW

Published in 2000, the *White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector* laid out proposals for the relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector, including:

- Formal recognition of the role of the sector in contributing to the creation of a vibrant, participative democracy and civil society.
- Designation of Voluntary Activity Units in relevant government departments.
- Introduction of various consultation mechanisms, including best practice guidelines.
- Multi-annual funding to become the norm for agreed priority services and activities.
- Holding of regular policy fora by relevant departments and agencies.
- A strong government commitment to implement all the decisions in the White Paper.
- Immediate funding (7 million pounds) for national networks and other federations, community and voluntary infrastructure and supports, Community and Voluntary Fora and a research programme.

Many within the community and voluntary sector would argue that a large proportion of the recommendations of the White Paper have been ignored and that its effect has been limited. Notwithstanding, the state does provide significant funding to the community and voluntary sector through various channels: national government departments, local government and semi-state agencies. The key government department is the Department of Community, Rural and

⁶ Donoghue, F. *et al*, *The Hidden Landscape: First Forays into Mapping Nonprofit Organisations in Ireland*, Centre for Nonprofit Management, 2006, www.cnm.tcd.ie/publications/CNM%20Mapping%20Report%20Amended%20version.pdf

⁷ The Wheel, *Solid Foundations: A Resource Guide for Building Strong and Effective Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector*, 2007

Gaeltacht Affairs (from March 2010: Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs), which runs a range of funding programmes, including one to support volunteering.

There is a small but growing trend of the state moving way from grant support to community and voluntary organisations and towards the use of service level agreements in which the organisations deliver certain social services on a contractual basis.

Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 recognises the valuable role of the community and voluntary sector and commits to deepening the partnership between statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations:

“The Government recognises that community and voluntary activity forms the very core of a vibrant and inclusive society. The great strength of voluntary activity is that it emerges organically from communities. While the Government should not seek to control and be involved in every aspect of voluntary activity, it does have a responsibility to provide an enabling framework to help the sector. Where this involves direct supports, a delicate balance must be struck between having relatively light regulation and maintaining proper accountability.”⁸

GHK in their 2010 Study on Volunteering in the European Union: Country Report Ireland have noted:

“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.”⁹

3.2 FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW

(INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

There was the recognition amongst interviewees that despite high levels of bureaucracy, the public sector provided significant financial support to the community and voluntary sector, especially during the

1980s, 1990s and the early years of the new century. This has, however, led in many instances to a dependence on government funding, which can be unhealthy and have negative repercussions. There is also a conflict between the growing trend of community and voluntary organisations being contracted by the state to deliver public services (through service level agreements) and their role as agents for change. If organisations are in receipt of significant public funding, they lose the freedom to be critical of government and its policies. It can be argued that voluntary organisations and volunteers should be advocates for social change, which means challenging the status quo. The relationship between the sectors is therefore uneasy and would benefit from a more open and ongoing dialogue, with meaningful consultation processes in which the particular expertise of the public sector and the community and voluntary sector is recognised explicitly. There needs to be an honest debate about which services are best delivered by the state and which by the community and voluntary sector. Furthermore, opportunities should be explored which would add value to the work being done within the community and voluntary sector, such as the provision of standardised liability insurance for volunteers and the opening up of public buildings for use by community groups.

Many constructive, collaborative and cooperative relationships have developed between the community/voluntary and public sectors. In a best case scenario there is symbiosis between a public sector that is good at administration and policy implementation and a community/voluntary sector that is responsive, creative and flexible in its delivery of services and activities. Having volunteers adds to the legitimacy of civil society organisations.

In Ireland the community/voluntary sector has developed historically in such a way that it delivers many services and activities that in other countries are the sole responsibility of the state. Many organisations receive direct funding from the state to deliver these services and activities, so it could be said that the state outsources part of its function

⁸ *Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015*, p.70, www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Towards2016PartnershipAgreement.pdf.

⁹ GHK, *Study on Volunteering in the European Union: Country Report Ireland*, 2010, p.18. <http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/eyv2011/doc/National%20report%20IE.pdf>.

to the community/voluntary sector, and therefore relies on the sector, and ergo on voluntary involvement. However, it is questionable whether the intrinsic value of volunteering is sufficiently recognised.

The interface through which statutory funds for the community/voluntary sector are administered and monitored is the public service. There are both positive and negative aspects of this relationship. On the positive side, the relationship and the regulatory role of the public sector has created a (just) demand for increased transparency and accountability on the part of community/voluntary organisations, leading to improved practices and a better stewardship of public funds. However, the reporting requirements attached to public funding can prove problematic, placing demands on community/voluntary organisations for sophisticated systems that they lack and capacities they do not have. Furthermore, there appears to be a trend towards giving larger grants to fewer organisations, which can have a detrimental impact on highly localised activity that adds significant social value to a local community (for example, voluntary arts activity). There is also a gap between what funders are looking for and how groups of volunteers perceive themselves, for they may not think of themselves in terms of 'active citizenship' or 'social cohesion'. One further distinct trend in recent times has been the 'professionalisation' of the community/voluntary sector; that is, an increase in paid members of staff, often aided by government funding. This has led in some cases to a diminished role for volunteers and a culture that seems to militate against voluntary involvement within many organisations.

Another thorny issue is that of advocacy. By definition, not for profit organisations are independent from government and a key role performed by the community/voluntary sector is being an independent voice that speaks up on behalf of the marginalised; being a voice for the voiceless. Advocacy is vital for a healthy and democratic society. Unfortunately, there is an inherent tension between the state and the community/voluntary sector in this regard. There is a saying in Ireland: 'don't bite the hand that feeds you'. There are many organisations who are reluctant to speak out for fear of losing the funding on which they rely; their independence is therefore compromised and they cannot adequately fulfil their missions to speak out against inequalities and injustices.

There are a number of consultative forums through which the community/voluntary sector can engage to shape the development of public policies (for example, the community and voluntary pillar of the social partnership process), but the ability of organisations to engage at this level depends on their skill in developing and adopting policy positions, making submissions via official channels and then lobbying the state, from public servants through to elected representatives. This is not the sole preserve of large organisations; some small organisations have shown that they can be very successful in this role. However, there is not an overarching, well-defined, collaborative or mutually beneficial relationship between the state and the community/voluntary sector. The sector should play a larger role in helping to define public policies due to its proximity to, and understanding of, public policy issues.

Data overview

1 RESEARCH AND STATISTICS HIGHLIGHTS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Research data on volunteering and voluntary organisations within Ireland is limited and uncoordinated. This has led to, for example, conflicting national volunteering rates that cannot be easily compared over time. Notwithstanding, some of the most significant research findings of recent years are listed below.

Fleming, P. & Magini, C. (Volunteering Ireland), *The Implications of Immigrant Civic Participation in Community and Voluntary Organisations and Community Work*, Integrating Ireland, 2008.

- The concept of volunteering (as defined in Ireland) is new to most immigrant volunteers on their arrival in the country.
- The 25-44 age group is most representative of immigrant volunteers in Ireland.
- Most immigrant volunteers are from other European Union member states or Africa.
- Most immigrant volunteers are involved in service delivery and campaigning.
- Although not without its challenges, volunteering by immigrants has an overarching positive impact on both the individual volunteers and the organisations they are involved with.

“Many saw volunteering as the only way to really get an opportunity to actively participate in Irish community, especially for asylum seekers and refugees.” (p. 11)

Taskforce on Active Citizenship, *Statistical Evidence on Active Citizenship in Ireland*, 2007, [www.activecitizen.ie/UPLOADFILES/Mar07/Statistical%20Report%20\(Mar%2007\).pdf](http://www.activecitizen.ie/UPLOADFILES/Mar07/Statistical%20Report%20(Mar%2007).pdf).

- Regular volunteering increased from 17.1% of the population in 2002 to 23.1% in 2006, whilst active community involvement went up from 21.7% to 29.0% for the same period.
- People who are well-educated, married with children and who are settled in a location for a long time are more likely to give time to community and voluntary activities.
- Those in paid employment and self-employment are more likely to be actively involved than those who are not (homemakers, unemployed people and students).
- Rural areas appear to attract most volunteers/active community members.
- Sports, religion, schools and community/residents' groups provide the backbone of active community engagement.
- Ireland's reported group membership and volunteering rates are average to slightly below average for OECD countries,

but rich in terms of informal social networks.

Central Statistical Office, Census, 2006, www.cso.ie/census/census2006_volume_11.htm.

- More than 553,000 persons (16.4% of population aged 15 and over) undertook voluntary work in the month previous to the census having been carried out.
- The 45-54 age group had the highest participation rate in voluntary activities.
- Social or charitable work was the most common type of volunteering, followed by sporting activities.
- The 20-24 age group and those people classed as 'unskilled' were most under-represented in the volunteering profile.

Donoghue, F. *et al*, *The Hidden Landscape: First Forays into Mapping Nonprofit Organisations in Ireland*, Centre for Nonprofit Management, 2006, www.cnm.tcd.ie/publications/CNM%20Mapping%20Report%20Amended%20version.pdf.

- The mean number of volunteers in organisations is 795, but over half have 15 or fewer volunteers.
- The oldest organisations have the highest numbers of volunteers, yet volunteers are regarded as being more important by younger organisations.
- Volunteers are regarded as important for all types of organisations, but especially sports/recreation groups, followed by those concerned with the environment, arts/culture and religion.
- 31% of organisations reported an increase in volunteer numbers and 20% reported a decrease.
- Almost 9% of Irish organisations' volunteers are based overseas.

National Economic and Social Forum, *The Policy Implications of Social Capital*, 2003, www.nesf.ie/dynamic/pdfs/No-28-Social-Capital.pdf.

- The European Values Survey showed an increase in membership of associations in Ireland from 49% in 1990 to 57% in 1999, with the proportion of people doing unpaid voluntary work for an organisation increasing from 27% to 33% over the same period.

- The overall level of community involvement or volunteering is in the region of 20% across the whole population.
- Volunteering and community involvement is higher among people in mid-life (40-64 years).
- Levels of educational attainment (and, by association, socioeconomic status) are strongly related to engagement.
- Those who perform home duties, who are ill and who have a disability are less likely to be engaged.

National Committee on Volunteering, *Tipping the Balance: Report and Recommendations to Government on Supporting and Developing Volunteering in Ireland*, 2002, www.volunteeringireland.ie/docs/tipping_the_balance_october_2002.pdf.

- Volunteering is a reciprocal relationship, although too much can be expected of volunteers.
- Organisations do not sell themselves strongly as centres of volunteer activity/attractive places to volunteer.
- There is continuum of 'light' to 'structured' management of volunteers.
- Young people (aged 15-21) desire volunteering opportunities that are fun, allow a sense of ownership, fit in with individual priorities, and show concrete results.

Ruddle, H. & Mulvihill, R., *Reaching Out: Charitable Giving and Volunteering in the Republic of Ireland - The 1997/8 Survey*, National College of Ireland, 1999.

- There was a decline from 38.9% to 33.3% of the adult population volunteering between 1992 and 1998.
- There is a positive association between volunteering rates and educational attainment, socioeconomic status and living in towns (as opposed to cities and villages).
- Volunteering rates in the late 1990s were highest in the South-East of the country and lowest in the North-East.
- Believing in the cause is the main reason for getting involved in volunteering and seeing the results is the main benefit.
- New demands on time are the main reason people give up volunteering.

2 ECONOMIC AND STATISTICAL INDICATORS

In 1995, the not for profit sector's income was 3.24 billion pounds, accounting for 9.3% of Gross National Product (its operating expenditure was slightly higher). If the imputed value of volunteering is included, the figures rise to 3.7 billion pounds and 10.7% of Gross National Product. The most significant contributor was the public sector (2.41 billion pounds from central and local government, various third parties, the EU and national lottery monies), followed by private giving and earned income. It is important to note that 56% of this income went to education and research organisations and 29% went to health organisations. These categories include large and highly formalised ('by the state' not 'of the state') bodies such as voluntary hospitals and schools.

"Fundraising has been identified as the most frequent activity in which volunteers are engaged. Moreover, the most oft-cited problem for the future viability of organisations tends to be the issue of funding. These data confirm what has been indicated by previous research, therefore, and suggest the wider ramifications of this issue. These data, for example, raise issues for fundraisers such as the saturation of different funding sources and the dependence of not for profit organisations on a relatively limited number of sources of finance."¹⁰

In 2002 volunteers in Ireland contributed between 204 million and 485 million euros to the Irish economy (the cost of volunteers in that same period was between 3.45 and 4.37 million euros)¹¹.

2.1 TYPES AND RANGE OF NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

During 2005, the Centre for Nonprofit Management surveyed nearly

5000 not for profit organisations in Ireland. Using the International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations, these could be divided into¹²:

- Development and housing (more than 800).
- Education and research (more than 800).
- Sports and recreation (c. 700).
- Social services (more than 500).
- Arts, culture and heritage (more than 300).
- Environment (more than 200).
- Advocacy, law and politics (c. 200).
- Health (c. 200).
- Religious groups (c. 100).
- Trade unions, business and professional (c. 100).
- International development (less than 100).
- Philanthropy (less than 100).

2.2 FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Further to the section above, the surveyed organisations' activities could be described as follows:

- Culture and arts (1477 = 35.0%).
- Recreation and social clubs (1435 = 34.1%).
- Environmental (1255 = 29.8%).
- Sports (1223 = 29.0%).
- Economic, social and community development (1112 = 26.4%).
- Other education (1072 = 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%).

¹⁰ Donoghue, F. et al, *Uncovering the Nonprofit Sector in Ireland: Its Economic Value and Significance*, The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, 1999, p. 12, www.cnm.tcd.ie/publications/uncovering%20pdf.pdf

¹¹ Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, *Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland*, 2005, www.oireachtas.ie/documents/committees29thdail/jcastrag/reports/Volunteers.pdf

¹² Donoghue, F. et al, *The Hidden Landscape: First Forays into Mapping Nonprofit Organisations in Ireland*, Centre for Nonprofit Management, 2006, www.cnm.tcd.ie/publications/CNM%20Mapping%20Report%20Amended%20version.pdf

- Civil rights and advocacy (768 = 18.2%).
- Physical health (759 = 18%).
- 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%).
- Grant making (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%).

The mean income of the organisations in the survey in 2003 was 738,205 euros, but the median income was only 40,000 euros, showing that a small number of organisations receive most of the sector's income. These tend to be the largest and most long established organisations, especially in the fields of health and education/research. 53.9% of expenditure goes on staffing costs, with a further 37.6% on operating costs. Capital and other expenditure makes up the rest.

Human resources for the purposes of the research were divided into governance structures, volunteers and paid staff. The mean number of full-time employees per organisation is 21, although half reported having five or fewer. In addition, many organisations employ part-time staff and staff on state supported employment schemes. Fe-

males outnumber male employees in the order of almost two to one. The oldest organisations tend to employ the largest numbers of staff.¹³

2.3 FUNDING

Sources of income for organisations can be classified as follows:

- State (59.8%).
- Fees (14.6%).
- Private donations (10.5%).
- Deposit income (8.1%).
- Membership (3.2%).
- Other (2.4%).
- Corporate donations (1.4%).

Organisations are often also in receipt of in-kind income (for example, equipment and *pro bono* services).¹⁴

2.4 GROWTH TRENDS

The 2005 survey undertaken by the Centre for Nonprofit Management showed that almost half of all organisations reported increases in the size of their paid workforce, especially the oldest and youngest organisations. A third of organisations (especially young organisations) reported an increase in volunteer numbers with less than a quarter reporting a decline. Long-established organisations were most likely to report an increase in income.¹⁵

Recent anecdotal evidence would suggest that many organisations in the sector (of all types) are experiencing a contraction in staff num-

¹³ Donoghue, F. *et al*, *The Hidden Landscape: First Forays into Mapping Nonprofit Organisations in Ireland*, Centre for Nonprofit Management, 2006, www.cnm.tcd.ie/publications/CNM%20Mapping%20Report%20Amended%20version.pdf

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

bers and income, due to the present economic situation. Volunteer numbers appear to be on the increase, however.

3 OF VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANISATIONS (INTERVIEWS)

3.1 MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

Individuals volunteer for a complex variety of reasons, including: cultural reasons (the Irish *meitheal*) integrating into a new locality; work experience/career development; initiating and maintaining social contact; feeling part of a movement; filling time; wanting to have an impact; giving something back (especially to an organisation that has assisted them or someone in their family), etc. Often people volunteer in response to a perceived need (this is particularly true in the case of disaster relief) and simply a desire to 'do something' in order to improve the social, economic or environmental fabric of a place. Volunteering can take place far away (for example, overseas development work), but more often happens in a local area. Whenever individuals volunteer, they do so in order to fulfil some sort of need in themselves; volunteering is therefore a very human expression of individuality. It is neither a selfish nor a selfless activity; whenever people 'put back', they 'get back' in terms of enjoyment, a sense of achievement, etc.

The reasons why people do not volunteer (or stop volunteering) vary considerably too:

- Never having been asked directly.
- Lack of spare time.
- Never having thought about it.
- Lack of readily available information about volunteering opportunities.
- Disability.
- Lack of experience.
- Having caring responsibilities.
- Organisations not properly handling offers to volunteer (for example, by not responding to enquiries).
- Having had a negative volunteering experience.
- Negative or limited perception of volunteering.

- Fear of not fitting in, not having required skills, having to go to lots of meetings/fundraise, etc.
- A lack of understanding about the realities of being a volunteer (particularly an overseas volunteer).
- The 'hero volunteer' (s/he who gives enormous amounts of time to one or more causes and who may be publicly recognised for doing so at volunteer awards ceremonies) because potential volunteers may feel that they cannot offer that level of commitment themselves.
- 'Red tape' (bureaucracy).
- Simply not interested.

3.2 NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Securing financial resources for the running of the organisation is a more pressing need than securing human resources in the shape of volunteers (indeed, many organisations are experiencing a growth in volunteer numbers as unemployment and underemployment levels rise). However, organisations are aware of the need to sustain their volunteering ethos and volunteer base in a changed environment in which increased formalisation is inevitable, people have less time available to volunteer, are unlikely to volunteer for life, and demand more from their voluntary work (choice, short-term assignments, recognition, etc).

The most significant organisational challenge appears to be survival in the current economic crisis. The greatest challenge in relation to volunteering is continuing to attract sufficient numbers of people in a society where lifestyles and expectations are changing rapidly.

Having to devote so much time and energy to economic survival means that less time is available to spend on matters relating to volunteering. Comhlámh would like to see more 'buy-in' to its quality standards programme for overseas sending organisations than it does at present. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul noted its main difficulties as an ageing membership base, a tension between volunteers and paid staff and 'competition' from other organisations that involve volunteers. The GAA recognised that in order to be self-sustaining, it must continue to attract young people into the orga-

nisation. This requires a reduction in time commitment requirements and marketing in a way that suits this age group, for example using new information and communications technology advances. Many

people want to get involved in the sporting side of the organisation, but there is always much administrative work to be done as well and finding people who are willing to do this can be difficult.

Representation and coordination bodies

1 NETWORKS AND FEDERATIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

The sector has a large number of networks, umbrella groups and the like, operating at all levels, from local to regional to national and beyond. Examples of national networks include:

- **Care Alliance Ireland**, national network of voluntary organisations supporting family carers, www.carealliance.ie
- **Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups**, first and largest shared services centre for the community and voluntary sector in Ireland, www.carmichaelcentre.ie
- **Community Platform**, promoting the equality and anti-poverty agenda in Ireland, www.communityplatform.ie
- **Disability Federation of Ireland**, an advocate for the voluntary disability sector, www.disability-federation.ie
- **Dóchas**, the Irish association of nongovernmental development organisations, www.dochas.ie
- **Irish Environmental Network**, network of national environmental organisations, www.ien.ie
- **Irish Rural Link**, representing the interests of community groups in disadvantaged rural areas, www.irishrurallink.ie
- **National Federation of Voluntary Bodies**, national umbrella organisation for agencies that provide direct services to people with intellectual disability, www.fedvol.ie
- **National Youth Council of Ireland**, representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland, www.youth.ie
- **Professional Association of Volunteer Managers Ireland**, network of managers, both voluntary and paid, who spend the majority of their time coordinating the work of volunteers, www.volunteeringireland.ie/page.php?id=68
- **The Wheel**, support and representative body connecting community and voluntary organisations and charities across Ireland, www.wheel.ie

2 NETWORKING (INTERVIEWS)

For most organisations, networking with others is a natural way of working that they engage in on an ongoing basis, although the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) stands out for operating in a much more insular manner. Comhlámh's sphere of work is global and two of the organisations interviewed (Special Olympics and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul) are part of worldwide movements; international networking is therefore the norm. Local partnerships also occur. However, most networking between organisations happens at national level, especially

for joint campaigning work and the exchange of knowledge and resources. There was a shared feeling that networking, both formal and informal, is essential and can be very positive. Meaningful, collaborative, synergistic relationships can reap valuable rewards, especially if the organisations involved hold similar values and have

similar aspirations. It is important to be broadminded, open and flexible when working with other organisations and to recognise that it can be very draining of resources. Comhlámh has developed a useful strategy document in order to inform its partnerships with other organisations, donors and institutions.

Support bodies

1 SUPPORT MEASURES (QUESTIONNAIRES)

The current government, which has been in power since 1997, has placed voluntary activity and active citizenship firmly on the agenda. The template for the relationship between the state and the community/voluntary sector is set out in both the *White Paper* and in *Towards 2016* (the current social partnership agreement) and is characterised, in principle, by the creation of an enabling environment in which voluntary activity can occur. Since the publication of the *White Paper*, the state has invested in the development of infrastructure to support volunteering, recognising the importance of the role played by national volunteer development initiatives such as Volunteering Ireland and Volunteer Centres Ireland and by investing in a wider infrastructure that includes local volunteer centres, third level institutions, programmes run in key volunteer involving organisations, local area partnerships, corporate social responsibility and the development of philanthropy. Whilst there is an obvious commitment from government to support volunteering, the infrastructure is still relatively young (having been started in only 1997, when Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups set up Ireland's first volunteer support centre: the Volunteer Resource Centre, which was the forerunner of **Volunteering Ireland**). One of the interviewees commented that the infrastructure is "*ad hoc; not very well defined and [there is] unhelpful infighting between local and national bodies*". In comparison with equivalent jurisdictions such as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the investment in volunteering per capita is relatively low. Thus, whilst some advances have been made, these are not yet sufficient for the job in hand. Government could and should do more, including, according to one interviewee, develop "*a national policy on volunteering*".

2 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRES

Ireland's volunteering infrastructure is relatively new and conti-

nually evolving; the listing below therefore does not claim to be definitive; especially not in terms of overseas volunteering. Most organisations operate on an income that is made of various sources (statutory, private, fees, fundraising from the public, etc).

- National organisations dedicated to volunteer development
- **Boardmatch Ireland** www.boardmatchireland.ie
- **Campus Engage** (see following section)
- **Professional Association of Volunteer Managers Ireland** (c/o Volunteering Ireland)
- **Volunteer Centres Ireland** (see following section)
- **Volunteering Ireland** (see following section)

- National organisations dedicated to overseas volunteering
- **Comhlámh**, Volunteering Options programme www.volunteeringoptions.org
- **Irish Aid Information and Volunteering Centre** www.iri-shaid.gov.ie/centre
- **Niall Mellon Township Trust** www.nmtownshiptrust.com
- **Suas Educational Development** www.suas.ie
- **Voluntary Service International** www.vsi.ie
- **Voluntary Service Overseas** (see following section)

National organisations that play some other role in volunteer development

- **Bar Council**, Voluntary Assistance Scheme www.lawlibrary.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=542&m=f,
- **Business in the Community Ireland** www.bitc.ie
- **Gaisce** www.gaisce.ie
- **Social Entrepreneurs Ireland** www.socialentrepreneurs.ie
- **The Wheel** www.wheel.ie
- **Voluntary Arts Ireland** (see following section)
- **Young Social Innovators** www.youngsocialinnovators.ie

Regional/local educational initiatives supporting volunteering

- **Dublin Institute of Technology**, Certificate in Volunteering www.dit.ie/volunteer, Community Links www.communitylinks.ie and DIT Student Action www.dit.ie/studentaction
- **National University of Ireland, Galway**, ALIVE programme www.nuigalway.ie/alive
- **University College Dublin**, UCD Centre for Service Learning Community Engagement and Volunteering www.ucd.ie/community and UCD Volunteers Overseas www.ucdvo.org
- **University of Dublin, Trinity College**, Trinity Volunteers Opportunities Forum www.tvof.tcdlife.ie and the Centre for Nonprofit Management www.cnm.tcd.ie

Local organisations dedicated to volunteer brokerage

- **Carlow Volunteer Centre** www.volunteercarlow.ie
- **Clare Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerclare.ie
- **Cork Volunteer Centre** www.volunteercork.ie
- **County Wicklow Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerwicklow.ie
- **Donegal Volunteer Centre** (not an independent entity) www.volunteerdonegal.ie
- **Drogheda Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerdrogheda.ie

- **Dublin City North Volunteer Centre** (not an independent entity)
- **Dublin City South Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerdublincitysouth.ie
- **Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerdlr.ie
- **Fingal Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerfingal.ie
- **Galway Volunteer Centre** www.volunteergalway.ie
- **Kerry Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerkerry.ie
- **Kildare Volunteer Centre** www.volunteerkildare.ie
- **Longford Volunteer Centre** (not an independent entity)
- **Mayo Volunteer Centre** www.volunteermayo.ie
- **Meath Volunteer Centre** (not an independent entity) www.volunteermeath.ie
- **Monaghan Volunteer Centre** (not an independent entity) www.volunteermonaghan.ie
- **Sligo Volunteer Centre** www.volunteersligo.ie
- **South Dublin Volunteer Centre** www.volunteersouthdublin.ie
- **South Tipperary Volunteer Centre** www.volunteersouthtipp.ie
- **Volunteer Limerick** (not an independent entity and not a member of Volunteer Centres Ireland) www.volunteerlimerick.ie
- **Westmeath Volunteer Centre** (not an independent entity) www.volunteerwestmeath.ie

Focus on support bodies

(Questionnaires)

Campus Engage

[CONTACT]

Campus Engage

Community Knowledge Initiative

CELT

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www.campusengage.ie

Campus Engage is a national network of higher education institutions in Ireland seeking to embed, support, enable and recognise student volunteering for active citizenship. Its mission is to increase the scale of student volunteering. It does this through training and support for higher education institutions to develop volunteering programmes and the building of case studies and a network of practitioners.

Member of the Talloires Network: an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education (www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork).

QUESTIONNAIRES

Campus Engage

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Territory covered | Ireland |
| ▪ Volunteers | None |
| ▪ Staff | The organisation has one full-time member of staff, dedicated to volunteering development. |
| ▪ Volunteering support and development | The organisation offers (in order of importance): meetings/conferences, training, information, consulting and communication services. Its biggest recent achievements were a national conference to highlight and discuss the role of higher education in promoting active citizenship through volunteering and service learning and the publication of a book entitled <i>Mapping Civic Engagement in Irish Education</i> (www.campusengage.ie/site/view/82). |

Voluntary Arts Ireland

[CONTACT]

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www.vairland.org

Voluntary Arts Ireland is a charity that encourages people to take part in arts or crafts activities. Its goals are to: promote a passion for participation in art; create a policy and funding environment in which arts groups can thrive; and support groups so that they offer accessible high quality arts experiences. Its services include group development support, a youth arts pilot, consultancy, advocacy and information provision. Its existence has led to a higher profile for voluntary arts, better support for individual local arts groups and an increase in arts volunteering.

Member of The Voluntary Arts Network: aims to promote participation in the arts and crafts across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (www.vairland.org).

QUESTIONNAIRES

Voluntary Arts Ireland

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▪ Territory covered | Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. |
| ▪ Volunteers | 2 part time
In addition, it is governed by an executive committee made up of volunteers. |
| ▪ Staff | 2 full time
5 part time
3 freelancers

Approximately half of all staff time is devoted to volunteering support and development. |
| ▪ Activities | CULTURAL PROMOTION
TRAINING
SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANIMATION |
| ▪ Volunteering support and development | CONSULTING
INFORMATION
TRAINING
PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES
COMMUNICATION SERVICES
RESEARCH
ADVOCACY |

Voluntary Service Overseas Ireland

[CONTACT]

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www.vso.ie

Voluntary Service Overseas is a global development agency that works through volunteers (<http://community.vsointernational.org>). VSO Ireland was set up in 2003/4. Its mission is to eliminate world poverty. It engages in training, consultancy, small business development and advocacy.

The organisation's main achievement has been the establishment of a higher diploma in education in Ethiopia which, since 2005, has trained several thousand teachers, has increased the quality of education for 800,000 children and seen a rise of nearly one million more children in school.

Member of

- *Dóchas*: Irish association of nongovernmental development organisations (www.dochas.ie)
- *Comhlámh*: action and education for global justice (www.comhlamh.org)

QUESTIONNAIRES

Voluntary Service Overseas Ireland

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Territory covered | Ireland (but working in 44 developing countries in Africa, Asia and South America). |
| ▪ Volunteers | The governance function of the organisation is carried out by volunteers.
There are some 80 Irish VSO volunteers working overseas, each giving more than 20 hours per week. |
| ▪ Staff | 1 full-time and 1 part-time member of staff for volunteer support and development. |
| ▪ Activities | SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
HEALTH
HUMAN RIGHTS
CULTURE |
| ▪ Volunteering support and development | CONSULTING/ASSISTANCE
COMMUNICATION
PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES
TRAINING |

Volunteer Centres Ireland

[CONTACT]

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www.volunteer.ie

Volunteer Centres Ireland is a representative body, support agency and membership organisation for a growing number of local volunteer centres. Its vision is a society in which everyone who wants to has access to meaningful volunteering opportunities, in which they feel valued, that contribute to the development of community. Its mission is to develop and support a national volunteering infrastructure in Ireland with a network of local volunteer centres at its heart, to ensure best practice in volunteering and to inform and influence policy on volunteering in Ireland. Its aims are to: represent volunteer centres, act as a support agency and ensure a coherent high quality level of service; advocate for a national volunteering infrastructure; improve the knowledge base and understanding of volunteering and the volunteering infrastructure in Ireland; support, promote and facilitate volunteering in Ireland; and maximise the ability to deliver.

Its biggest achievements are effective lobbying for a volunteer centre policy, its quality standards system based on peer review, its volunteer management training programme and its database that is shared with all member volunteer centres.

Member of CEV - European Volunteer Centre: the voice of volunteering in Europe

QUESTIONNAIRES

Volunteer Centres Ireland

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Territory covered | Ireland |
| ▪ Volunteers | The number of volunteers fluctuates and is generally eight to ten, each giving between two and 20 hours weekly. The board is also made up of volunteers. |
| ▪ Staff | 4 full-time staff for volunteering support and development. |
| ▪ Volunteering support and development | INFORMATION PROVISION, COMMUNICATION
TRAINING
PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES
CONSULTANCY |

Volunteering Ireland

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Volunteering Ireland is the peak body for all organisations involving volunteers in their work and a representative voice for volunteering in Ireland. Its vision is for Ireland to be a country that embodies the principles of citizenship and democracy, values participation, and empowers everyone to be involved in all aspects of Irish society through voluntary activity in the neighbourhood, community and world we live in. Its mission is to inspire, promote, support and celebrate volunteering in Ireland and abroad. Its aims are to: inspire and enable everyone to get involved and make the best contribution that they can through volunteering; promote volunteering and active citizenship in all its forms to the public, media, organisations and policy makers; support organisations in developing skills to make volunteering a fulfilling and rewarding experience for both the organisations and the volunteers; and celebrate volunteering.

Its biggest recent achievement was the 2009 Ireland InVOLved awards programme (www.irelandinvolved.ie)

Member of

- CEV - European Volunteer Centre: the voice of volunteering in Europe
- IAVE - International Association for Volunteer Effort: exists to promote, strengthen and celebrate the development of volunteering worldwide (www.iave.org).

QUESTIONNAIRES

Volunteering Ireland

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▪ Territory covered | Ireland |
| ▪ Volunteers | 16 part time
22 on an occasional basis.
The board is also made up of volunteers. |
| ▪ Staff | 4 full-time and 4 part-time for volunteering support and development. |
| ▪ Volunteering support and development | ADVOCACY
CONSULTING
COMMUNICATION
PROMOTION
INFORMATION PROVISION
TRAINING |

Development policies

1 PUBLIC INCENTIVES

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

In late 2000, the government set up the **National Committee on Volunteering**, a large committee representing a range of interests with a budget of 1 million pounds. Its function was to appropriately mark the 2001 United Nations International Year of Volunteers and examine and make recommendations on:

- The possibilities for recognition and accreditation for voluntary work and for training undertaken as a volunteer
- Measures to widen the pool of volunteers
- The range of supports needed in order to promote, sustain and develop volunteering.

The committee published its *Tipping The Balance* report in 2002 and was then wound up.

In 2005, the **Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs** published their report *Volunteers and Volunteering in Ireland*, which made 12 recommendations concerning the country's volunteering policy, volunteering infrastructure and funding issues.

In 2006, the Taoiseach established the **Taskforce for Active Citizenship** with a view to starting a 'national conversation' on the topic. It published its results in 2007 and a steering group is currently working on implementing the report's wide range of recommendations.

Between 2005 and 2009, the **Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs** (from March 2010: Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs) made available core funding for volunteer centres. In 2009, it published a policy for the funding of local volunteer centres, that required, amongst other things, membership of Volunteer Centres Ireland and the adherence to quality standards.

The **Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs** (from March 2010: Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs) recently designated Volunteering Ireland as the national coordinating body for 2011, the European Year of Volunteering.

2 CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

Both volunteering infrastructure organisations and other organisations within the community and voluntary sector run a wide variety of initiatives, activities and events to value and promote volunteering. These range from award schemes such as Volunteering Ireland's *Ireland InVOLved* awards and promotional events such as *Give It A Swirl* coordinated

by Volunteer Centres Ireland and Dublin City Volunteer Week, an initiative of the Dublin City North and South Volunteer Centres

3 ON INFRASTRUCTURE FOR VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

There were divergent views among the interviewees on the issue of measures and initiatives for support to volunteering. Many felt that there had been a lot of public investment in voluntary organisations and volunteering, whereas others felt that it had been inadequate. Examples mentioned were:

- Boardmatch Ireland
- Business in the Community Ireland
- Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre
- Local volunteer centres (*there were mixed views about the quality and usefulness of these*)
- National Awards to Volunteers in Irish Sports (*www.volunteersin-sport.ie as well as many other award schemes, both internal and external to organisations*)
- Social Entrepreneurs Ireland (*but this plays a limited role as its focus is on a small number of individuals*)
- Special Olympics
- Taskforce on Active Citizenship (*there was some concern that the recommendations from the Taskforce's report would be forgotten about, despite a steering group having been set up to progress these*)
- The Ideas Campaign (*www.ideascampaign.ie*)
- Volunteer Centres Ireland
- Volunteering Ireland.

It was pointed out that for every 1 euro invested in the community and voluntary sector, there is a return of 5-8 euros (see the work of Lester Salamon and colleagues www.ccss.jhu.edu). There is serious concern about funding cuts which are leading to some groups having to close their doors.

Finally, the GAA firmly believes in creating its own programmes to

support volunteering within the organisation. This is partly due to the enormous size of the organisation and partly due its prevailing culture. Thus, for example, they have rolled out an extensive club officer training programme to train around 4000 club officers around the country. The programme is delivered by trained volunteer facilitators. They are also in the process of developing an online registration system for volunteers; again this is being done in the main by a volunteer. However, there is also a recognition that the GAA could tap to a much greater extent into the existing volunteering infrastructure for information, support, training, etc.

The inherent benefits of volunteering must be protected. Volunteering is about freedom. Whilst voluntary effort must be recognised and volunteers' rights must be protected, we must at the same time be careful that we do not undermine that freedom through over-regulation. The role of volunteering should be to ensure a better quality of life, to engender a greater sense of place and to give people a greater ownership of issues. People should be empowered to be 'actors' instead of 'spectators'. Volunteering contributes to civil society and it should impact on policy development, by replicating successful initiatives elsewhere.

There is probably no need for special laws governing volunteering, but there is scope for other interventions. Issues that need to be addressed include: easy access to low cost insurance for volunteers and their voluntary activity; volunteer training; the protection of children and vulnerable adults in voluntary settings (both within Ireland and overseas); greater protection of the PRSI (social insurance) contributions of long-term overseas volunteers in order to ensure they are not disadvantaged on their return; and greater engagement between volunteer involving organisations and employers.

Careful thought must be given to the structures that have been/will be put in place to support volunteering. The Taskforce on Active Citizenship's recommendations are as much about what existing structures (including government departments) can do to enhance citizenship, as it is about the creation of new structures. Although local volunteer centres are broadly welcomed, there are concerns both about their function and geographical remit. One interviewee felt that small groups of people with good ideas for, for instance, improving their local communities

should be encouraged and supported to do so, but that volunteer centres do not currently appear to fulfil the role of supporting new informal associations. Another pointed out that volunteering is essentially a highly localised activity, yet most volunteer centres operate on a county-wide basis, which is not necessarily the most appropriate level at which to inform the citizen about volunteering needs.

To create an enabling environment for volunteering, it is necessary to fully understand what the key elements of such an environment are and what factors detract from this environment. What disempowers and disenfranchises people, thereby preventing them from engaging through voluntary activity, and what are the best measures to overcome these barriers? It is also necessary to have a way to adequately measure the impact of any interventions.

The lack of current research with reliable data is a major stumbling block. There needs to be investment in a comprehensive research programme for civil society and volunteering, the results of which would give feedback on the efficacy of current offerings as well as inform the development of future initiatives. It is accepted by all that some sort of infrastructure is necessary for volunteering to be enabled and for it to thrive, potentially reaping major returns on investment for the state, local communities, individuals and society as a whole. Whilst the growth and funding of local volunteer centres and national volunteer development agencies is broadly welcomed, there is no sense of the current infrastructure being properly coordinated in line with other public initiatives. For example, at present it is known from census data that a minimum of 16% of the population over 15 volunteers, equating to 553255 people. The majority of these volunteers have found their own volunteering opportunities, and yet the emphasis in terms of government investment has been in a brokerage system, which in 2009 placed 4389 people. Is this the best and most effective way to spend public money or can greater impacts can be gained through other initiatives, such as building capacity in volunteer involving organisations that enable better systems of volunteer management? Or, could it be that through the brokerage system, people from marginalised groups who would not otherwise volunteer are being enabled to do so? Without adequate data, the answers to these questions are simply not known.

4 STRATEGIC GOALS

All components of the Irish volunteering infrastructure have development plans. The fact that 2011 has been designated as the European Year of Volunteering provides an excellent opportunity to refocus on volunteering in Ireland a decade after the celebrations of the 2001 United Nations International Year of Volunteers. Furthermore, the 2012 world conference of the International Association of Volunteer Effort is due to be held in Dublin, which will assist this process.

5 EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE (INTERVIEWS)

Whilst an ethos of volunteering or 'service' may not be as present in Europe as it is in North America, European volunteers exhibit a lot of loyalty to voluntary organisations.

The European Union should be involved in promoting, supporting and facilitating volunteering, but take each country's historical and cultural uniqueness into consideration. There should be a focus on mobility. In addition to schemes like Youthpass (www.youthpass.eu) and Europass (www.europass.ie), there is scope for a European volunteering passport and for intergenerational volunteer initiatives. There is a particular role for volunteer exchange programmes within the European Union, to prevent the 'reinvention of the wheel', to offer fresh thinking about how to enrich our societies, and to assist countries where volunteering is less well valued and supported. Volunteer time should be allowed to contribute towards matched funding in EU funded projects. Furthermore, funding might be made available for volunteer training and for campaigning work that would allow a certain level of autonomy from national government in order to critique national policy.

Many organisations are already involved in European volunteering projects and would be willing to engage in more, provided that these would be mutually beneficial. For example, Comhlámh is already involved in a European campaigning project, provisionally entitled Alternatrade, sourced through the Trialog (www.trialog.or.at) partnership fair in Vienna. The process of securing European partners

proved very successful for the organisation, but was very resource intensive, both in terms of financial costs and staff time. Thus, whilst similar initiatives would be welcome, they would be unlikely to engage

in many such projects at any one time. 2011, the European Year on Volunteering (www.eyv2011.eu) is an excellent opportunity to ensure greater engagement.

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Mary **Davis**

Managing Director of Special Olympics Europe and Eurasia; the world's largest sports programme for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. She headed the largest global sporting event to take place in 2003: the Special Olympics World Summer Games involved many thousands of Irish volunteers and made a significant impact on the country. In 2006, she was appointed to chair the country's Taskforce on Active Citizenship.

Marian **Harkin** MEP

A passionate advocate of volunteering at local, regional, national and European levels. She has extensive volunteering experience focusing on socioeconomic development, especially in the West of Ireland. In 2008, she was nominated as MEP of the Year for her outstanding commitment to the campaign for the European Year on Volunteering (2011).

Kieran **Leddy**

Organisation and Development Manager with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), a sporting and cultural organisation incepted in

Ireland in 1884. It has in the region of 2300 clubs throughout the country run on an almost solely voluntary basis. He has been involved at all levels of the GAA for his entire life and previously worked for the Irish Farmers' Association.

Kieran **Murphy**

National Director of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, an international Catholic organisation that has operated in Ireland for some 164 years. It is the largest voluntary charitable organisation operating in Ireland, with 9500 volunteers and 500 paid staff working together to fight poverty. He has worked for many years in volunteer involving organisations both in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Deirdre **Murray**

Director of Comhlámh, a member and supporter organisation open to anyone interested in social justice, human rights and global development issues, with an extensive programme to support quality overseas volunteering. She is a lifelong volunteer in the fields of overseas development/development education, both in Ireland and overseas. She has worked in China and Ethiopia.

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Supporting the development of the community and voluntary sector by strengthening boards and management committees.

www.boardmatchireland.ie

[English]

Business in the Community Ireland

Advice and guidance to companies in Ireland on corporate responsibility and corporate community involvement.

www.bitc.ie

[English]

Carmichael Centre for Voluntary Groups

Services centre for the community and voluntary sector in Ireland.

www.carmichaelcentre.ie

[English]

Conradh na Gaeilge

Gaelic League.

www.cnag.ie

[Irish] [English]

Dublin City Volunteer Week

a week of events and festivities celebrating the volunteers of Dublin city.

www.dublinvolunteerweek.com

[English]

GAA - Gaelic Athletic Association

Largest sporting/cultural organisation in Ireland.

www.gaa.ie

[English]

Give it a Swirl

The national day of volunteering.

www.volunteer.ie/Give-it-a-Swirl-the-National-Day.html

[English]

Ireland Involved Awards

Awards scheme organised by Volunteering Ireland showcasing the work of volunteers across the country and celebrating Ireland's volunteers.

www.irelandinvolved.ie

[English]

Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre

Space to raise awareness of the Irish government's overseas development programme and providing information on volunteering opportunities.

www.irishaid.gov.ie/centre

[English]

Irish Charities Tax Reform Group

Creating a policy climate in which philanthropy can thrive.

www.charitytaxreform.com

[English]

Irish Statute Book

Database comprising the Acts of the Oireachtas, Statutory Instruments and Legislation Directory.

www.irishstatutebook.ie

[English]

Muintir na Tíre

National Association for the Promotion of Community Development in Ireland.

www.muintir.ie

[English]

Revenue Commissioners

For tax information on charities.

www.revenue.ie/en/business/charities.html

[English]

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Largest voluntary charitable organisation in Ireland.

www.svp.ie

[English]

Social Entrepreneurs Ireland

Supporting social entrepreneurship in Ireland.

www.socialentrepreneurs.ie

[English]

Special Olympics Ireland

One of the largest community and voluntary organisations in Ireland.

www.specialolympics.ie

[English]

Suas Educational Development

Movement dedicated to supporting high quality education in targeted under-resourced communities, with programmes in India, Ireland and Kenya.

www.suas.ie

[English]

Taskforce on Active Citizenship

Set up by government in 2006 to promote active citizenship, including volunteering.

www.activecitizen.ie

[English]

The Wheel

Providing support, advocacy and leadership for community and voluntary activity.

www.wheel.ie

[English]

Voluntary Arts Ireland

Supports the development of the voluntary arts and crafts sector.

www.vaireland.org

[English]

Voluntary Service Overseas Ireland

World's leading independent, international development organisation that works through volunteers to fight poverty in developing countries.

www.vso.ie

[English]

Volunteer Centres Ireland

Network of local volunteer centres in Ireland.

www.volunteer.ie

[English]

Volunteering Ireland

National volunteer development agency.

www.volunteeringireland.ie

[English]

Volunteering Options

Website operated by Comhlámh, setting a standard for overseas volunteering.

www.volunteeringoptions.org

[English]

Young Social Innovators

Fires young people (15-18)'s passion to change the world for good.

www.youngsocialinnovators.ie

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