

# Poland - Update

[RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA]

RESEARCH PARTNER CENTRE

**FUNDACJA PRACOWNIA BADAŃ I INNOWACJI SPOŁECZNYCH "STOCZNIA"**

THE UNIT FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND RESEARCH – SHIPYARD

Maria Bal

The Unit for Social Innovation and Research – Shipyard

## The Unit for Social Innovation and Research – Shipyard

### [CONTACT]

Fundacja Pracownia Badań i  
Innowacji Społecznych “Stocznia”  
**The Unit for Social Innovation  
and Research – Shipyard**  
ul. Bracka 20a  
00-028 Varsavia - Polonia  
Tel. +48 228270105  
stocznia@stocznia.org.pl  
**[www.stocznia.org.pl](http://www.stocznia.org.pl)**

A non-governmental and independent research and social innovation centre. Actions taken by the Shipyard concentrate on three key issues: development of local communities, social innovations and civic participation.

It was created with the aim of providing critical and reliable description of the challenges of social life in Poland and searching and promoting effective, innovative methods of reacting to them based on civic participation. It also sets itself a target of formation and intellectual development of persons from different environments, ready to engage in public affairs in a way going beyond individual interests.

What is especially important in actions run by the Shipyard is the reinforcement of co-operation between two environments: researchers-scientists and civil activists working also in non-governmental organisations.

## INDEX - Poland

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	116	<b>3 Of volunteers and organisations</b>	124
<b>1 Background, evolution and distinctive traits</b>	116	3.1 Motivations for volunteering	125
<b>2 The role of religious organisations</b>	117	3.2 Barriers	126
		SUPPORT BODIES	128
LEGAL FRAMEWORK	118	<b>1 Support measures</b>	128
<b>1 Overview of laws and regulations</b>	118	<b>2 Support bodies</b>	128
<b>2 Norms in support of volunteering</b>	118	2.1 Volunteer Centres Association	128
2.1 Volunteers' Rights	119	2.2 Spring Association	128
2.2 Fiscal Policies	119	2.3 The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity	128
VOLUNTEERS INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS	120	DEVELOPMENT POLICIES	130
<b>1 Organisational forms</b>	120	<b>1 Public incentives</b>	130
1.1 Non-governmental organisations in Poland	120	<b>2 Civil society initiatives</b>	130
<b>2 Relationship with public sector</b>	121	<b>3 Internet portal <a href="http://www.ngo.pl">www.ngo.pl</a></b>	131
DATA OVERVIEW	122	BIBLIOGRAPHY	132
<b>1 Research and statistics highlights</b>	122		
<b>2 Economic and statistical indicators</b>	122		
2.1 Volunteering in organisations	122		
2.2 Financial and human resources and growth trends	123		

# Historical overview

## 1 BACKGROUND, EVOLUTION AND DISTINCTIVE TRAITS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Volunteering in Poland is a very complex topic. Although the question of volunteering is regulated by law, many areas of social life in which Poles concentrate and are active in still remains unexplored. Some forms of pro-social activities, based on the principles of self-help and spontaneous initiatives are not included in the framework of legal regulations and do not take the form of institutionalised voluntary work.

The history of social activity in Poland dates back to the distant Middle Ages, when help given to those in need was concentrated in the activities of the church. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when Poland was under occupation, social activity did not weaken at all. During this period philanthropy and social self-help were a reflection of patriotism and a social front formed against the occupiers. The significant development in non-governmental organisations took place in the interwar period, following the regained independence (1918 - 1939). In the country devastated by war and occupation, the need for society support was enormous and the response to this need was a rapid development of NGOs; in that time more than 10,000 associations and 3,000 foundations were established. During German occupation in the Second World War, all religious and social organisations were banned, however a strong social solidarity and commitment survived in the form of patriotic self-help and a very united resistance front. After the Second World War, the communist regime finalised the act of destroying the tradition of non-governmental organisations in the country; all such activity was banned, private property taken over by the State and several remaining organisations forced to get involved in the official communist propaganda. People were prohibited from organising themselves and existing organisations lost the trust they previously enjoyed in society. This has left a stigma on the non-governmental organisations still visible today.

It should be pointed out that during the following few decades there were some examples of organisations which were an exception to this rule; in 1956 an official statement was released allowing some secular ecclesiastical associations to resume operations, among them CICs - Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs, which played an important role in shaping and sustaining young people's sense of patriotism and belonging.

The 70's were a period in which the inefficient communist state failed to meet basic social needs. This led to the creation of an "alternative society" – the self-organisation of Polish society, based on mutual help and informal support.

In 1980 the social movement Solidarity (*Solidarność*) was legalised, in opposition to communist rule, and in the next few years Solidarity played a prominent role in the process of regaining independence. In the year 1980 Solidarity became a huge social movement with 2 million members. The introduction of martial law in December 1981 brought to a standstill the foolhardy optimism and dynamic willingness to interact, yet it failed to stop the rapid growth of democratic changes.

After regaining independence in 1989, society was again allowed to freely organise itself. Since then, the third sector has literally blossomed. In just few years tens of thousands of NGOs have been created, and those existing before the war re-established themselves.

As history shows, decades of living under difficult conditions, struggling for independence, but also coping with the irrationality of everyday life, miraculously helped Poles develop unique capabilities of mutual aid. This assistance, however, did not conform to the institutional forms, which can put forward the argument that even now, 20 years after the transformation, social activity exists largely beyond the organisational structures, as an expression of mutual help and informal social structures.

## **2 THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS**

Religious organisations are still places around which many activities

and social initiatives concentrate, including voluntary activities. Historically, the Catholic Church in Poland played a vital role in supporting society. Also these days, parishes form hubs for social life, and church organisations still operate within parishes. These organisations are targeted at different groups of believers: the elderly, parents with young children, youth and students. Youth activity is concentrated in youth groups called *Oaza* (Oasis), or university chaplaincies. These organisations, especially those operating in larger cities such as Warsaw, Krakow, Katowice, Lodz, or Lublin, bring together thousands of young people. These individuals actively participate in the life of their community, support each other, but also are a group that provides help for others and engages in social activities outside their community. Moreover, worshippers of other religions present in Poland, members of the Lutheran Church, the Jewish community, or the Orthodox Church, belong to organisations closely connected to their religious centres. Initiatives raised by them are also aimed at helping people who do not necessarily belong to these communities.

# Legal framework

## 1 OVERVIEW OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Legal regulations concerning non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Poland were introduced by the Act of 23 April 2003. The Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering stated: *"Non-governmental Organisations are legal entities or entities with no legal personality created on the basis of provisions of laws, including foundations and associations. Non-governmental Organisations are not bodies of the sector of public finances in the understanding of regulations governing public finances, and operate on a not for profit basis"* (Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering, April 2003).

## 2 NORMS IN SUPPORT OF VOLUNTEERING

The issue of volunteering is governed by the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering from 2003. The Law defines as volunteer *"a person who voluntarily, and with no remuneration provides services based on regulations specified in the law"* (Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering, April 2003). The Law regulates the principles of volunteer employment, insurance, reimbursement of expenses incurred in connection with performing volunteer work, and the scope of powers.

According to the Law, volunteering may be provided for the benefit of NGOs, the authorities of State institutions and local governments, and units subordinated to State authorities. The Law does not allow the provision of voluntary work in favour of business institutions.

The actual application of the Law, however, pointed to the need of making changes to its records. The result is a revision of the Law from March 2010. only a few changes were introduced to the scope of volunteering:

- Extension of the types of organisations that may provide public benefit activities.
- Extension of the activities falling under the definition of "public duties".
- Introduction of new forms of cooperation between public administration and third sector, i.e. determination of the principles of consultation, the establishment and operation of support activities to NGOs by local authorities, the issuing of guarantees, or non-governmental guarantees to the organisations and entities authorised to conduct charitable activities, as well as provision of loans by local governments.
- Changes in the programmes of cooperation.

- Clarification of the principles of outsourcing of public tasks.
- The definition of a public benefit organisation.
- Possibility of setting up the Provincial Councils of Public Benefit Activity with an advisory/consultative character.
- The amendment to the definition of volunteering:  
*"Each volunteer is a person who voluntarily and without compensation carries out the task based on the principles specified by the Act."*

#### 2.1 VOLUNTEERS' RIGHTS

Legal provisions enable the signing of a legal agreement between the volunteer and the organisation on whose behalf they carry out their work. On the basis of such an agreement, volunteers receive an insurance cover, may have their costs reimbursed, and at the end of their contract can obtain a document certifying their work. However, the activity carried out on a voluntary basis is not part of the overall length of service.

#### 2.2 FISCAL POLICIES

Public Benefit activities are *"socially useful activities carried out by NGOs in the field of public tasks specified in the Act"*. OPP - *Organizacja pożytku publicznego* (Public Benefit Organisations) status means that the organisation meets certain statutory conditions confirmed by judicial review.

OPP status entitles one to apply for and receive 1% of personal income tax, but imposes a requirement on organisations of additional control mechanisms and financial transparency.

From **January, 1<sup>st</sup> 2004** taxpayers and pensioners in Poland have the opportunity to donate 1% of their income tax for a chosen charitable organisation. The procedure is very simple; in the tax return for that year one has to indicate the organisation they wish to support. The amount received by OPPs (Public Benefit Organisations) for 2008 is nearly 398 million Polish zloty (nearly 104 million Euro), and more than 7 million Poles used this opportunity to support charitable funds.

# Volunteers involving organisations

## 1 ORGANISATIONAL FORMS

### VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

NGOs in Poland may take the form of associations, foundations, churches, religious organisations, chambers of commerce, political organisations.

The most numerous groups of NGOs are:

- Associations 58,237.
- Foundations 9,106.
- Other organisations, such as: Voluntary Fire Brigades (OSP), trade unions, religious bodies, local economic organisations 130,000.

Data are taken from the REGON register (National Register of Economic Entities). Registered organisations, which have ceased operations, are not removed from the database. According to estimates, 25%-40% of registered businesses in reality do not operate.

#### 1.1 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN POLAND

Most currently operating organisations have been established after 1989 under difficult conditions, in a period of political and economic transformations. As polls show, the majority of operating organisations are relatively young; however, the whole sector shows a tendency of maturing. According to the report of the Association Klon/Jawor in 2008, 37% of the organisations had been operating for less than 5 years - a fall of 40% compared to 2006. 18.5% of non-governmental organisations have been operating for more than 15 years.

This may indicate that the time of dynamic growth is already a closed chapter for Poland, there aren't as many entities being founded as they used to, and the activity remains in the hands of those organisations having consolidated a stable position and having their sources of financing guaranteed. Survey results from the year 2008, however, should be confronted with those carried out following the occurrence of the global economic crisis. Poland was the only country in the European Union obtaining a positive level of economic growth in 2009 and the effects of the crisis have not led to a dramatic slump of the socio-economic conditions in the country. Still, no studies are yet available regarding the state of NGOs at the time of global financial crisis.

The essential feature of Polish NGOs is their unstable financial situation. Most organisations do not have any financial reserves. Also, most of them do not employ full-time workers. This uncertain and variable financial situation

is deemed by the representatives of organisations as the most threatening factor for the development and functioning of their organisations. Research shows organisations do not attract many members. According to available data, all forms of non-governmental organisations associate a total of 4 million Poles, which is only 13% of adult Poles. In addition, as shown by estimates, only about half of them are actually actively participating in the life of the organisations<sup>1</sup>.

## 2 RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLIC SECTOR

Cooperation of NGOs with state administration plays an important role in shaping the third sector. It is the public administration, and especially local authorities who are the NGOs' essential partners.

Organisations are increasingly involved in public policy implementation and public administration plays an important role in financing the activities of social organisations in Poland. 30% of organisations maintain regular contact with the government, and as many as 70% with the local government (according to Klon/Jawor Association).

The platform conducting work on the recommendations and legal arrangements regarding the issues of the third sector is the Public Benefit Works Council operating at the Department of Public Utility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Council is an advising and opinion making body. It is led by a team of representatives of NGOs, governmental authorities and representatives of local government units. There is also a team reporting to the Council and whose task is to organise *The European Year of Volunteering 2011 in Poland* event.

<sup>1</sup> Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, *Wolontariat, filantropia, 1%* Raport z badań 2007, <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/353524>, [Klon/Jawor Association, *Volunteering, philanthropy, 1%* Report of the 2007 survey]; Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, *Podstawowe fakty o organizacjach pozarządowych* Raport z badania 2006, <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/353524>, [Klon/Jawor Association, *Basic facts about NGOs* Report of the 2006 survey].

# Data overview

## 1 RESEARCH AND STATISTICS HIGHLIGHTS

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Research on the organisations of the third sector and social life in Poland are conducted in the following centres:

- **Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor (Klon/Jawor Association)** - an organisation for the study of the third sector in Poland, creation and provision of technological tools, strengthening cooperation within the industry and initiating debates.
- **Główny Urząd Statystyczny (Central Statistical Office)** - the State's centre for the collection and statistical analysis of most areas of public life, as well as some elements of the private life of Polish society.
- **Centrum Badania Opinii Publicznej (Centre for Social Opinion Research)** - a research centre leading polls on Polish society's opinions regarding socio-political and economical issues.
- **Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu (Volunteer Centres Association)** - an organisation focused on the theme of volunteering; a body responsible for leading the Volunteer Centres.
- **Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych (Foundation Institute of Public Affairs)** – a non-governmental and independent research and analytical centre; it conducts research, analyses and prepares recommendations for fundamental public policy issues.
- **Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego (Stefan Batory Foundation)** - provides the funds for projects undertaken by non-governmental organisations, leads public campaigns and advocacy activities, monitors the functioning of public institutions, organises conferences, debates, workshops and meetings, and publishes their work.
- **Fundacja Pracownia Badań i Innowacji Społecznych "Stocznia" (The Unit for Social Innovation and Research – Shipyard).**

## 2 ECONOMIC AND STATISTICAL INDICATORS

### 2.1 VOLUNTEERING IN ORGANISATIONS

The study shows that 44% of organisations use the work of volunteers, out of which only half works with more than 10 volunteers. As few as 2% of organisations works with over 100 volunteers (according to the Klon/Jawor Association).

Representatives of the organisations identify the lack of people willing to support the organisations operations on

a voluntary basis, as the second barrier to development after financial problems. However, this particular difficulty does not result only from the low level of Poles' social activity. An equally significant barrier is the one created by the organisations themselves which cannot manage volunteers. The notorious pattern is the one when a volunteer is delegated to manage uninspiring office tasks without being provided with the necessary training for such a job, and on the other hand the employer not really knowing what the volunteers' job should be. Guilty for such a low level of voluntary activity are those organisations which do not have a clear vision of managing volunteers and see no point in putting their effort and funds into adequate training of their future volunteers.

Much of the social activity in Poland takes place outside organisations, mostly through initiatives that are one-off events. Most people are keen to give a donation for a specific, chosen cause. It is much more difficult to trigger individuals to take up long-term actions which demands devoting their time and work for the sake of others. As shown by research in 2008, 68.5% of volunteers (or approximately 6% of Poles) devoted more than 5 hours of their time per year; it is a decrease of 2% compared to 2007<sup>2</sup>. The group of very committed volunteers working over 50 hours per year also decreased during the period 2007 - 2008 to 16% of volunteers, or about 1.6% of Poles.

It should be also pointed out that there are many activities not directly classified as voluntary work, yet still their main concern is supporting charities. Voluntary blood donations, scouts, neighbourhood support, the activity of the rescue organisations, are just a few of those which border on volunteering.

## 2.2 FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND GROWTH TRENDS

The previously discussed Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering only deals with formal volunteering, but many social activities,

areas in which voluntary actions are being conducted, are not eligible for inclusion in the category of volunteering, which causes difficulties in estimating the actual number of community workers.

The research shows that the number of people declaring to take up voluntary actions to help other people has been gradually falling over the past few years. The difficulty of determining precisely what the actual number of people involved in voluntary activities is may be caused by the term 'volunteering' alone, which implies some institutionalised action. This term does not define specific forms of involvement in certain activities, such as sports, or church organisations, where people involved are more likely to be described as "activists", not "volunteers".

Research shows that consistently since 2002, more than half of Poles declares that they work socially. Moreover, "voluntary and unpaid activities for their local community or those in need, make those already engaged in them more and more absorbed (in 2001 they allocated to social work an average of 18 days, in 2003 - 20 days, in 2005 - 21.5 days)<sup>3</sup>". However, these results relate to social work in general, not only in organisations. "The vast majority of Poles (77%) does not work socially in any civic organisation. Others work primarily in one area of social activity (14%), rarely in two (4%), or three, or more (5%)". In 2007 14.1% of adult Poles were involved in social activities for the benefit of local communities (municipalities, neighbourhoods, towns), in 2008-2009 15, 6% (in 2005 - 13.6%, in 2003 - 12.9%, and in 2000 - 8%)<sup>4</sup>

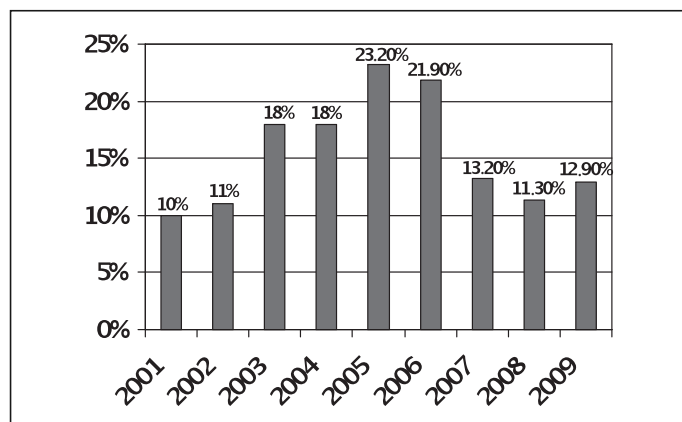
A survey monitoring the degree of involvement of Poles in voluntary activities, conducted by Klond/Jawor Association between 2001 and 2009, claims that the highest rate of involvement in voluntary activity was recorded in 2005, when more than 18% of the population undertook such action. In 2009, social activity was declared by only 13% of people (about 4 million Poles). Meanwhile, in countries with the highest level of public engagement in volunteer work, such as Sweden, Norway, USA, this involvement was at the level of 50% of the population (European Volunteer Centre).

<sup>2</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> CBOS, *The state of civil society in the years 1998-2006. Report on Research*, [www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/diagnozy.php](http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/diagnozy.php)

<sup>4</sup> Social Diagnosis 2007, *Conditions and quality of life of Poles* [www.diagnoza.com/index-en.html](http://www.diagnoza.com/index-en.html)

Table 1 **Percentage of volunteers among adult Poles**



Source: Klon/Jawor Association, op. cit.

### 3 OF VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANISATIONS

#### Who are the volunteers?

The largest group engaging in work for others is young people aged 18 - 30 years (according to the Klon/Jawor Association). The large degree of involvement of this group can be explained by pragmatic reasons: volunteering provides an opportunity to gain additional skills and experience necessary for young people to succeed in a demanding and competitive job market. On the other hand, these are young people ha-

ving a lot of time and energy that can be effectively spent on social activities. Volunteering is also a form of a social activity, which for young people is of paramount importance. In addition, most volunteer programmes address young people. There are less voluntary options demanding higher qualifications, which would be much more attractive to older people. In addition, volunteering is a relatively young field of social activity, which has only been present for about 20 years now. Because of that reason, it is a term fairly unknown to the older generations, not well understood and as a result of it, rejected by them altogether as something not appropriate for them and not matching their idea of social activity. However, young people during their education have already had encounters with volunteering, for example in fairly newly established school clubs, or other voluntary programmes targeted at youth. They are therefore more likely to identify their actions as "voluntary."

Surveys conducted among the volunteers show a relatively low share of participation by people aged 55 and over. This is a clear sign that the actions taken to encourage voluntary work should also be aimed at that group; people with free time on their hands and at the same time willing to stay active and feel needed by the society they live in.

#### What do the volunteers do?

Activities carried out on a voluntary basis can be divided into several

Table 2 **Percentage of volunteers among different age groups**

Volunteer's age	Percentage of volunteers						
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
All adult Poles	10	11.1	17.7	18.3	23.2	21.9	13.2
Under 25 years of age	8.1	11.9	22.5	23.8	25.2	22.1	13.9
26-35 years of age	7.8	9.6	19.4	16.3	21	21.3	10.4
36-45 years of age	10.4	13.6	18.6	17.2	26.8	22.4	16.1
46-55 years of age	14.5	13.6	20.5	18	22.5	26.3	13
Over 55 years of age	10.1	7.1	8.3	15	20.7	18.1	12.7

Source: Klon/Jawor Association, op.cit.

types depending on who is commanding such initiatives, with whom they work, who is the target group and beneficiary, what the nature of the work is and how much time is required for a voluntary action. Studies of social activity of Poles show that in recent years the number of people, who volunteer their time and work for others, has decreased. Activities are mostly taken up in the organisations involved in charity.

In recent years we have been observing a rapid growth of **corporate volunteering**. Run by large companies, this action is aimed at making their employees proactive. Actions taken up by employees are, for example: charitable collections, preparation of packages for people in need, one-off actions of public spaces cleaning, building houses, and providing support for children in hospitals. Corporate volunteering on one hand gives the opportunity to make a visible change, and on the other is a way of promoting the company's image and integrate their staff. Such efforts are carried out e.g. by Microsoft as part of *Dobre okienk@ - Otwórz się na dobre (Good Windows - Open up for good)*, whose aim is to popularise information on Internet safety. Staff volunteering can be a grassroots initiative by employees, as it was in the case of *Kompania Piwowarska* and their "The team not only for special occasions" initiative, Provident company with their *Yes! I help*, and TP Group with *In the interests of others*. These companies' staff members choose and support varied activities themselves. For example *UPS Polska* has established their own internal Commission for Social Activities, which gives funds towards selected actions, and through this also supports local organisations (according to the Responsible Business Forum).

A crucial area is also volunteering **in sports**, and more specifically two aspects of it: participation in organising sport events, and long-term activities, e.g. organising physical activity classes. Mass sporting events organised in Poland are a proof that sport can make thousands of people get involved. A good example is set by the Warsaw Marathon and Half Marathon where as many as 400 volunteers are involved in the organisation and the preparation of the route. Special Olympics are another example where judges, volunteers, coaches, and the assistants involved a team of 5,000. The roller-skates run held in Gdansk attracts 200 volunteers at one time. Examples of permanent volunteering can be found in groups set up by sport fans, i.e. the *Lwy Północy*

(The Lions of the North) Association of the football team Lechia Gdańsk has 50 permanent volunteers. Student Sports Clubs exist thanks to the voluntary work of PE teachers who organise after-school sports activities for children, about 3, 000 of them are involved in such actions. People's Associations/Sports Clubs (LZS) operating in rural areas associate about 6,000 volunteers, who regularly organise classes, physical activities and events.

A separate group of volunteers in Poland are **travel guides** associated in PTTK - *Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze* (Polish Tourist Country-Lovers' Society) organisations, as well as volunteer ambulance teams of Mountain Rescue TOPR- *Tatrzańskie Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe* (Tatry Mountains Rescue Teams) and Water Rescue WOPR- *Wodne Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe* (Water Rescue Teams and Lifeguards). It is a voluntary activity considered to be very noble and prestigious due to the mission standing behind it; being such a volunteer requires tremendous dedication, determination and risking one's own life in order to save others and only a chosen group of highly qualified specialists are members of these associations.

A new area of development is the so called **e-volunteering**. This term refers to the activity of Internet users whose intention is to help others i.e. by co-operating in the creation of new software, writing professional articles, or open publications. In addition, e-volunteering can allow people who previously remained excluded from opportunities to help others, i.e. because of their health restrictions, or even their location, to actively participate in social activity.

### 3.1 MOTIVATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERING

It is worth taking a look at the motivations behind unpaid efforts for others. The most common motivation is a sense of moral obligation to help. However, following those reasons there are responses like "I believe that if I help someone, someone else will help me" and "I enjoy it", which are motivations of a personal nature, referring to one's own profit, even if gaining it would be taking a significant amount of time. Least often mentioned motivations are to repay a debt (10%) and the wish to gain work experience or work (only about 5% of respondents). Sur-

prisingly low is the percentage of people who declare that their incentive is an investment in their career. It is possible that respondents are reluctant to admit such motivation, considering that it does not fit into the common idea of the volunteer-idealist.

### 3.2 BARRIERS

The main reason which prevents people from involvement is lack of time. It's the common response among the respondents, as nearly half of them list it as their main reason. In addition, people who have never been volunteers explain that they are not interested in such activity, or have never even thought about it (28.3%). They also list the priority of looking after their own family as a factor against volunteering for some of their time (12.5%) and, confirming the thesis of non-governmental organisations not opening up to new volunteers, the fact that no one has ever asked them to become volunteers (12.3% of all respondents).

Studies show which groups of respondents did not engage in activities for their local community or in civic organisations' work <sup>5</sup>:

- Non-worshippers (81%)
- Unskilled workers (78%)
- Housewives (77%)
- Labourers and white-collar workers, the unemployed (each - 73%)
- People with primary education (72%)
- Persons aged 65 years and above (71%)
- Residents of towns (72%) and cities with more than half a million citizens (71%)

Marta Gumkowska from Klon/Jawor Association believes that listing lack of time as the reason for not getting involved is not convincing, especially since the majority of volunteers commit themselves for only several hours or several days per year: *"So the reason is not mere lack of time, perhaps more important is the second reason declared by respondents, which is: 'not interested in the matter, I have never thought about it.' It's easy to guess why Poles do not even think about volunteering and I don't want to justify them. Firstly, there is no such tradition in Poland, surely not as visible as in the Anglo-Saxon countries. The genuine need to help others has been distorted by a mandatory 'social action' during the communist era. There's a*

Table 3 **Reasons for voluntary activity (in %)**

<b>The reasons for voluntary activity (in %)</b>	<b>2007</b>
I believe that we should help others (these are my moral, religious, or political views)	60.8
I believe that if I help someone, someone else will help me	36.5
I enjoy it; I am interested in it	33.7
I am not assertive enough to refuse helping	21.6
My friends and relatives are also involved	17.3
I want to gain new skills, learn something new	11.6
It provides me with an opportunity to be among people, make new contacts, lets me use my time effectively	22.8
I have a debt to pay, someone has helped me before	3.6

Source: Klon/Jawor Association, op.cit

<sup>5</sup> Wciórka B., *Stan społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w latach 1998-2006. Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, Warsaw 2006.

Table 4 **Reasons for not getting involved in volunteering**

<b>The reasons for not getting involved in volunteering and philanthropy</b>	<b>Poles not involved in any activity in 2007 (in %)</b>
I have no time	34.8
I am not interested in the matter, I have never thought about it	33.6
My priority is myself and my family	14.8
Nobody has asked me for it	14.3
I don't think I have anything to offer	6.8
I have never come across any interesting group, or organisation	5.4
I don't think I am physically able to do it	3.4
I have no trust in the organisations and I don't think helping them is worthwhile	3.1
I don't know where to look for information on how to get involved	2.7
I have bad experiences of volunteering	2

Fonte: Associazione Klon/Jawor, op. cit.

*possibility that people in villages avoided such distortion; figures show that there are slightly more volunteers in villages. Secondly, no one has taught us how to help; civic education has been and still is, neglected in the school curriculum. However, research from recent years shows that perhaps some-*

*thing is changing in the education system, since the majority of volunteers are among young people and students. It is possible that they have more time, but most importantly, they declare that volunteering makes them happy and that they are interested in social activities”<sup>6</sup>.*

<sup>6</sup> <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl>

## Support bodies

### 1 SUPPORT MEASURES

A major challenge for the expansion of volunteering in Poland is the development and support of the already existing infrastructure of volunteering. It should be emphasised that there are institutions functioning as centres of volunteering, but not having such a name, for example: Social Welfare Centres, local culture clubs, libraries, parishes, centres of local NGOs. There are also many organisations involved in the development of this area, but their specific activities are not conducted jointly in one given direction for the benefit of strengthening the whole voluntary sector. There is still an empty space which should be devoted to surveying volunteering and which would bring together expertise in this field. It also seems that it would be an important challenge to create a dedicated portal, a kind of agent bringing together volunteers with organisations, in which they could take up such action. Currently, this type of portals exist, be it [www.wolontariat.org.pl](http://www.wolontariat.org.pl) or [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl), but still much more needs to be done on this issue.

### 2 SUPPORT BODIES

#### 2.1 VOLUNTEER CENTRES ASSOCIATION

The Volunteer Centres Association (*Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu*) was founded in 1993 in Warsaw. Volunteer Centres Association is a patron of **33 independent organisations** which have the status of Regional Volunteer Centres. The Association deals with the promotion of volunteering, it also organises public campaigns, volunteers' training, develops new initiatives around the subject of volunteering. Examples of programmes in various Centres:

**Volunteering - the First Step into Employment** preparation for work, improvement of the quality of Volunteer Centres' offer.

**Employee Volunteer** - employee volunteer support programme, as a potential area of volunteering development, which is a programme dedicated to business organisations.

**Volunteer 50+** promotes volunteering among people over 50 years old.

#### 2.2 SPRING ASSOCIATION

The motto of the Spring Association (*Stowarzyszenie Wiosna*) is "We help people to effectively help each other." The organisation was founded in Cracow in 2001. Through implemented programmes it seeks to develop mechanisms to effectively enhance the quality of life of those in need. The Association is the intermediary between volunteers, sponsors, and those in need.

Selected activities include:

**Noble Package** - this action is carried out every year before Christmas; volunteers collect information about people in need, the data in anonymous form are published on an Internet database, through which sponsors can declare their assistance to specific individuals. Parcels prepared by the sponsor are then delivered by volunteers to the recipients. In 2008 thanks to 112,000 sponsors and almost **5,000 volunteers** a total of 6.4 million Polish Zloty (1.6 million euro) were given to 8,000 families (48,000 people) from the whole country.

**Academy of the Future** – Working in needy communities volunteers-tutors trained by the Association help children with long-term learning difficulties in science. The programme currently covers 830 children from 12 cities in Poland.

#### 2.3 THE GREAT ORCHESTRA OF CHRISTMAS CHARITY

The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (*WOŚP - Wielka Orkiestra*

*Świątecznej Pomocy*) is a foundation operating in the field of health and education.

Each year for 17 years, the Foundation has been organising **the Finale of the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity**, a nationwide fundraising event. The Finale is a very important social event bringing together millions of people. Throughout the country there are happenings, auctions, concerts and events being organised, some of which are broadcasted on public television.

On 10 January 2010, during one day of the 17th Finale, **120,000 volunteers** collected nearly 43 million Polish Zloty (approximately **11 million Euros**).

In addition to fundraising, the Foundation runs educational programmes for young people, medical training and a centre for volunteer training.

WOŚP is also the organiser of ***Przystanek Woodstock (Woodstock Stop)*** music festival. The festival, which has been organised since 1995, is the Foundation's way of thanking all the volunteers and the supporters of the January Finale. At every festival dozens of Polish and international bands perform. There's also a space for debate called the Academy of Fine Arts, which invites festival-goers to join in a discussion with authorities, journalists and people from the media. **In 2009 500,000 people** came to enjoy the festival.

# Development policies

## 1 PUBLIC INCENTIVES

# VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

During the next few years a series of events will take place in Poland, which will have a significant influence upon the condition and future of volunteering:

- In 2010 the Law on Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering came into force, whose records are likely to improve and strengthen volunteering and the entire NGO sector in Poland.
- Poland as a member of the European Union prepares the celebration of the European Year of Volunteering 2011. There are many events planned to accompany the celebration. A carefully chosen team, working on behalf of the Public Benefit Activity Council at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, is the body responsible for organising the Polish edition of the Year.
- The year 2011 is also the year of Polish presidency of the European Union. The Polish government has chosen volunteering as one of the leading issues to be discussed during their presidency.
- The year 2012 is the year of many sporting events including the largest, the UEFA European Football Championship EURO 2012. This is a huge challenge for the mobilisation of volunteers needed to make the event successful. It has been already established that finding thousands of enthusiastic volunteers should not cause any problems. The only challenge is to make sure the whole potential of such an enormous action connected with the event can lead to long-term strengthening of volunteering structure in Poland, not necessarily associated exclusively with sports.
- The Social Surveys Division at the Polish National Statistical Office Centre co-works on the release of a Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work, prepared by the Johns Hopkins University on behalf of the International Labour Organisation. Poland is the first country in the world willing to implement the Manual and set an example for other European countries and encourage them to measure volunteering.

## 2 CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

The strengthening of volunteering also takes place at image level. Voluntary organisations conduct public campaigns to promote the theme of volunteering, and in some way to disenchant volunteering itself. Social activities are shown as something interesting and important, as something any person could get involved in. In order to promote the variety of different volunteering initiatives, the simple message of volunteering as charity is being gradually put aside. The idea

of volunteering is also promoted through competitions, such as Volunteer of the Year, *Barwy Wolontariatu* (The Colours of Volunteering), or The Magnificent Eight, which is aimed at secondary school students and the Volunteer Centres Association organises a gala celebration of volunteering.

### 3 INTERNET PORTAL [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl)

The [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl) site is the only and largest internet portal in Poland aimed at NGOs, institutions and proactive citizens. This internet service, which serves as **a message board for the third sector**, is a space for the exchange of information; acts as the main source of information on the sector and related events. It publishes free advice and current studies contributing to making the activities of associations and

foundations more professional. Using the site is free of charge.

News and updates are published in a very vibrant section, <http://wiadomosci.ngo.pl>. There were on average 90 messages published per day in 2009, out of which 80% were written by the users of the service.

The portal provides **the most comprehensive database of Polish non-governmental organisations** and institutions and offices cooperating with them in Poland. The database consists of approximately **150,000** records.

A subpage [ogloszenia.ngo.pl](http://ogloszenia.ngo.pl) is a notice board announcing job offers, internships, volunteering offers. Nearly 10,000 offers are being published annually and all of them are posted by the users of [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl).

The [www.ngo.pl](http://www.ngo.pl) portal was created in the year 2000 and is managed by the Klon/Jawor Association.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

CBOS, *The state of civil society in the years 1998-2006. Report on Research*, [www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/diagnozy.php](http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/diagnozy.php)

Czapiński J., Panek T., (eds.), *Social Diagnosis 2007 - Objective and Subjective Quality of Life in Poland*  
Council for Social Monitoring, 2007 [www.diagnoza.com/index-en.html](http://www.diagnoza.com/index-en.html)

Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, *Podstawowe fakty o organizacjach pozarządowych* Raport z badania 2006, <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/353524>,

[Klon/Jawor Association, *Basic facts about NGOS* Report of the 2006 survey].

Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, *Wolontariat, filantropia, 1%* Raport z badań 2007, <http://civicpedia.ngo.pl/x/353524>, [Klon/Jawor Association, *Volunteering, philanthropy, 1%* Report of the 2007 survey].

Wciórka B., *Stan społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w latach 1998-2006*. Komunikat z badań, CBOS, Warsaw 2006.

*Poland – Update in:*  
Volunteering across Europe. Organisations, promotion, participation.  
Ireland, Romania.  
Updates. Comparative Essays.  
v.VI.  
Rome, Spes, 2011. pp. 113 – 132.

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](mailto:europa@spes.lazio.it)

Website: [www.volontariato.lazio.it](http://www.volontariato.lazio.it)