

Italy

[REPUBBLICA ITALIANA]

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

- **Population** 57.888.200 inhabitants
- **Area** 301.277 sq. km.
- **Population density** 189,7 inhabitants per sq. km.
- **Present form of government** Parliamentary republic

■ System of government

In accordance with the Constitution, the Italian territory is divided into regions, provinces and municipalities. There are 20 regions, designated as 15 regions with ordinary statute and 5 regions with special statute (Valle d'Aosta, Trentino - Alto Adige, Friuli - Venezia Giulia, Sicily, Sardinia). These 20 regions are subdivided into 110 provinces.

- **European elections**
10 -13 giugno 2004 78 European parliamentarians

■ Social security and welfare system

The most recent model, based on collaboration between public, private and not for profit sectors, involves all institutional subjects in a vertical relationship of subsidiarity and designation by the State, which is no longer the sole provider of services, but rather has taken on the role of arbitrator and regulator for the social service market with the implementation of the "Triennial National Plan", which indicates the course and priority of intervention. Based on guidelines elaborated at the central level, the regions draw up a "Regional Plan for Social Policies", while the municipalities either organise and distribute services directly or designate them to private subjects.

■ Public health system

Characteristically universal and financed through taxes. With the Healthcare Reform (Law 421/1992 and Leg. Decree 502/1992), a dose of competitiveness was introduced in order raise the level of ef-

iciency and quality of the services. This entails the recognition of private, profit and not for profit subjects, in possession of particular professional and organisational requisites to become one of financial suppliers in the public health system

■ Level of education

Percentage of young adults (aged 20-24) who have completed secondary schooling (2004) 69,9%

Percentage of adult population (aged 25-64) who have completed the highest level of secondary schooling: 44,3%

- **Immigration rate (2001)** 3,4% of the population

- **Growth rate 2003**
(report of annual births/deaths per 100 inhabitants) 1%

■ Employment rate (2003)

Population between the ages of 15 and 64: 56,1%
42.7% female
and 69.4% male

Population between the ages of 55 and 64: 18,5% female
and 42,8% male

■ Unemployment rate (2003)

Population between the ages of 15 and 64: 8,4%
11.3% female
and 6.5% male

SPES - Associazione Promozione e Solidarietà

Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato del Lazio

Founded in 1998, SPES sustains and empowers the activities of voluntary organisations that operate in Latium (region Lazio), whether listed or not in the Regional Voluntary Register, through the promotion of innovative initiatives, activities and advisory services provided free of charge. SPES is present throughout the territory with a network of branches and information points, grouped around the head offices in Rome and the four provincial centres for volunteering.

SPES services

The operative philosophy behind SPES is that of enhancing the resources already present in the region through setting up a network that allows the experience and patrimony of volunteering to be exchanged among the voluntary organisations to better their performance. In fact, voluntary organisations possess specific competences, relative to their own sector of intervention which can contribute to a reciprocal enrichment of their initiatives.

Promotion and Guidance

Activities aimed at spreading knowledge of active volunteering, good practices and a culture of solidarity through:

- Promoting volunteering among the young.
- Guidance for individuals and groups interested in voluntary work.
- Setting up "Schools and Volunteering" desks.
- Fostering local and European thematic networks.
- Organising promotional events in all the Latium provinces in collaboration with other associations and thematic networks.
- National Civil Service.

Counselling and Assistance

The following advisory, support, and counselling services are provided free of charge:

- Constitutive deed, statute, budget, listing in the regional register.
- Insurance cover, modules, calendar of events and public tender notices.
- Norms on the sector, privacy acts, safety in the work place.
- Organisation and management of the organisation, employment regulations.
- Administrative and book-keeping assistance.
- Financial resources and fund-raising.
- Budget.
- Communication and social marketing.

- Cataloguing and registration of documents.

Training

Providing educational and learning activities to support voluntary organisations through:

- Courses, seminars and encounters at the various provincial centres and at the premises of the organisations on technical-administrative aspects (book keeping, basic IT courses, regulations).
- Counselling and support in planning, promoting, organising and conducting training activities for organisations, groups of organisations or volunteers and thematic networks.
- Training volunteer coordinators, local operators and the young involved in National Civil Service projects.
- Publication of an annual catalogue which contains all the courses available for volunteers and volunteer organisations in Latium.

Communication, information, and documentation

Information, data and support material through a series of services and means:

- Quarterly review "Reti solidali".
- Sector news, newsletters, monographs.
- Series of publications on sector regulations and other issues regarding the voluntary sector.
- Regional volunteering portal www.volontariato.lazio.it.
- Research, studies, dissemination of data on volunteering issues.
- Voluntary organisations data bank.
- Territorial and sectorial mapping of organisations.
- Documentation centre and on-line archive Bibliotec@OnLine.

Project planning

Skills and useful instruments in:

- Locating sources of funding.
- Project planning regarding participation in public tenders (national, local, public and private).
- "Desk Europe", working on training, link to transnational partners, work groups, tutorship and technical assistance in project

planning, management, budgeting and accounting of European projects.

- Assistance in the co-planning of welfare service proposals in the context of the Area Plan (Law no. 328/2000).
- Pilot projects.
- Regional thematic networking.

Logistic Services

The following equipment is at the disposal of organisation members at the SPES head office and at its provincial volunteer centres: telephone service, fax machine, photocopy machine, computer, printer, meeting room, video projector, video recorder, overhead projector, Internet connection and mailing address services. Moreover, premises and locations for events and exhibitions in the open are also at the disposal of the voluntary organisations.

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[Ksenija Fonovic]

PARTNER CENTRE FACT SHEET

SPES

■ Population served 5,250,900

■ Geographic area 5 provinces of the Lazio region, 17,207 sq.km

■ Organisations members 7

■ Organisations served 1245

■ People employed full-time 7
part-time 20

■ Number of volunteers	on the Board and in controlling organs	13
	in services and activities (2004)	12
<hr/>		
■ Annual budget year 2004	1,161,350 Euro	
<hr/>		
■ Local agencies	4 provincial head offices "Case del volontariato"	
	11 basic services contact points	
<hr/>		
■ Services offered	Training	X
	Advice	X
	Information	X
	Practical resources	X
	Representation	X
	International networking	X
	<i>other:</i>	
	Accounting and administrative assistance	
	Civil Service projects for voluntary organisations	
	Promotion of volunteering and active citizenship	
Support to voluntary organisations in project development		
Fostering partnership between voluntary organisations and public institutions		
Research and documentation		

INDEX - Italy

SECTOR OVERVIEW	p. 246	5.1 Pro-social participation of citizens	262
1. Historical background	246	5.2 Surveys on organised solidarity	264
1.1 Reasons behind the growth of the third sector	246	6. Phenomenological framework and processes	264
1.2 Historical evolution of volunteering	247	6.1 Dynamics of the phenomenon	264
1.3 Regulating the third sector: components and features	248	6.2 A more balanced distribution	265
1.4 The emergent role of third sector organisations	250	6.3 Active citizenship	265
		6.4 Identity definition	265
		6.5 Strengthening the organisation-managerial aspects	265
2. Figures regarding the third sector and volunteering (as of 2001)	251	6.6 Additional fields of intervention and specialisation	266
2.1 Figures regarding not for profit organisations	251	6.7 More professionals in organisations	266
		6.8 Small voluntary groups	266
3. Juridical and organisational forms of the third sector	254	6.9 The difficult renewal	266
3.1 Volunteering and voluntary organisations	254	6.10 Networking organisations	267
3.2 Social Promotion Organisations	256	6.11 Different approaches and missions	267
3.3 Social cooperatives	256	7.7. Monitoring, representation and support bodies of the third sector and volunteering	268
3.4 Civil law foundations and foundations of banking origin	257	SUPPORT BODIES	270
3.5 Non-governmental organisations for development cooperation	258	1. Voluntary service centres	270
4. The role of volunteering in the new welfare system	258	2. Nature, composition and relations with the territory	270
4.1 Relations between public administrations and voluntary organisations	260	2.1. The personnel and the activities	271
4.2 Research results: from the recognition of volunteering to participation in social policies-making	260	3. The services	272
		4. Social accounting and quality system	274
5. Voluntary action of citizens and organisations	262	<i>Bibliography</i>	275

Overview of the sector

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development of the third sector in Italy goes back to the mid 1970s when the dyadic system, made up of the Market and the State, became obsolete as it was no longer capable of satisfying all the needs and emerging instances of an evolving society. A civil society was emerging, richer and more differentiated than in the past, brought about by the growth of a strong participatory spirit of the middle classes.

In this new scenario, civil society promoted the emergence and reintroduction of various kinds of organised and juridical figures. Some of these had already been established in Italy, though with a different awareness of their own political and cultural role, such as volunteering and associationism.

The evolution or the creation of new actors, diversely characterised, was the direct consequence of the changing needs and expectations of citizens for a better quality of life (social and health services closer to the citizens, the environment, life long learning, civil protection). There was also a significant change in the relationship between the State and the citizens, who were now capable of greater participation and organisation in answering to the needs of society and dealing with issues of “general interest”, by operating directly on the territory. All this led to certain processes of social innovation which, in some cases, were translated into organisational innovation, as can be seen in the creation of juridical forms of social solidarity cooperatives, later defined as “social cooperatives”.

The third sector - also known as “third way”, “civil economy”, “third dimension” or “social private sector”, or generically identified as the “not for profit sector” - constitutes a quantitatively significant and differentiated galaxy of different juridical categories. The common element that unites all these forms is that they are all private, non profit making organisations whose scope is that of social utility or solidarity in various sectors of intervention. They all aim to foster direct citizen participation, amplify their specific activities, provide services and redistribute resources.

1.1. REASONS BEHIND THE GROWTH OF THE THIRD SECTOR

One of the reasons for the growth and success of the third sector organisations basically springs from the **crisis of the welfare state**, which had become practically inefficient due to the following reasons:

- A fiscal crisis brought on by a seriously unbalanced economic model based upon monetary conveyance instead of services provided¹. Increased taxation only lengthened the agony of the Italian welfare model and, above all, high-

¹ Up to the 1993 Dini Decree, 90% of the resources were conveyances and the remaining 10% were allocated to services.

lighted the dissatisfaction of certain quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in welfare services.

- A crisis of an organisational nature: poor efficiency and quality of services supplied. Given the need to limit the expenditure, the first cuts were to personnel, and hence to services.
- A crisis regarding the legitimisation of the model, in which particularism prevails over the universality of the responses, and the incapacity to sustain the growing demand of services.

Great welfare reforms (from Presidential Decree No. 616/1977 to Law No. 833/1978 *Institution of national health system* which, moreover, acknowledges the role of volunteering in Art. 45). Within these reforms, volunteering collaborates with public services, and at times substitutes for them, in case the State is unable to curb the up-and-coming social problems such as juvenile hardship, the degradation of urban outskirts, the break up of the family unit and the new poor.

- These reforms came about following the administrative decentralisation of social competencies, thus making the territory the context which provides for welfare services. Local authorities were made responsible for elaborating and managing social policies. Decentralisation was further extended to encompass budgetary decisions and the types of services to provide (an emblematic experiment can be seen in Law No. 285/1997 *Dispositions for the promotion of rights and opportunities for children and adolescents*).
- An increase in social participation in community life led to the identification of problems and attempts to tackle them (the community is seen as the place for self-realisation as citizens). Volunteering, in particular, which represents an important means of participation, passed through a period of extraordinary growth in the 1980s - a period of crisis for political and ideological agencies of representation, such as political parties. There was an awareness that politics need not necessarily be practised only within political parties. By consequence, it became possible to contribute to the overall development of democracy by the taking on the responsibility of controlling, stimulating, proposing and carrying out a real and not only declaimed participation.

1.2. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering in Italy has undergone changes in its development and mission through time, whilst remaining loyal to the fundamental values of solidarity and gratuitousness. Volunteering, in fact, is not a new phenomenon, as the first organised forms of volunteering were established in Tuscany in the 13th century with the *Confraternite di Misericordia*, and augmented in the 19th century with the spread of the *Gruppi del Volontariato Vincenziano*, as well as other groups who concretely expressed the dictates of the Church's social doctrine. In the second half of the 19th century, alongside these organisations, other forms of citizen solidarity based on the values of socialism sprang up in the form of *Pubbliche Assistenze*, the *Società di Mutuo Soccorso* and the *Casa del Popolo*.

However, the phenomenon was marginal and strongly characterised by a compensatory, charitable valence, and separate from the public welfare system which, moreover, had a secondary place in public authority policies up to the 1970s.

Afterwards, volunteering passed through a transition phase: from a traditional reparative and charitable role, it moved on to pursue one of prevention and social promotion, with the intent of helping to remove the causes that produce discrimination, social hardship, environmental degradation and poor quality of life. Various factors contributed to this. Apart from those already mentioned, and valid for the entire third sector, the following are worthy of note:

- The renewal of the post-council Church² and the institution of *Cari-tas* (1973) which has the promotion of volunteering among its objectives, and which organised the first ever conference that convened all the voluntary organisations (Naples, 1975, "Volunteering and Human Promotion").
- The coordination and organisational growth of the voluntary sector with the creation of *Movimento del Volontariato Italiano* (Italian Voluntary Movement) in 1978, and the biennial conventions on volunteering held in Tuscany. The one held in Viareggio in 1980 was a historical event because it sanctioned the self-awareness of volunteering as a political subject³.

- The growing attention of public institutions towards volunteering became evident in the 1980s when their attitude switched from the formal recognition of volunteering as a complementary resource, to the full acknowledgement of its importance and contribution made to public policies.

1.3. REGULATING THE THIRD SECTOR: COMPONENTS AND FEATURES

The third sector has not yet been placed into a juridical framework that encompasses the entire sector, rather, laws have been provided only for its specific components. Italian legislation has so far disciplined five components, here presented in order of time:

- Non-governmental Organisations - NGOs (Law no. 47/1987 *Norms that discipline Italian cooperation with developing countries*).
- Voluntary organisations (Law no. 266/1991 *Framework law on volunteering*).
- Social cooperatives (Law no. 381/1991 *Regulations regarding social cooperatives*).
- Foundations of banking origin (Law no. 461/1998 *Authorisation to the Government to reorder civil and fiscal regulation of conferring institutions and the fiscal regulations of banking reorganisation operations*).
- Social promotion associations (Law no. 383/2000 *Regulations on social promotion associations*).

Moreover, Law no. 328/2000 *Framework law for an integrated system of interventions and social services* re-examined the IPAB -Isti-

tuto Pubblico di Assistenza e Beneficenza (Public Charity and Assistance Institute), the first institution of codified assistance in Italy (Law no. 6972/1890 *Norms on public charity and assistance institutions*), thus significantly reducing the number of entities that are of a private juridical nature. Even the *Patronati* (welfare organisations affiliated with the Italian trade unions), that can partly be analogous to the third sector, have recently been reviewed by Law no.152/2001 *New regulations for "patronato" and welfare institutes*. Last of all, two juridical figures that traditionally belong to the third sector, such as the *Comitati* (Committees) and *Foundations not of banking origin* are regulated by the Civil Code.

The choice of recognising the various actors and institutions of the third sector in a separate manner in Italy is unique in Europe. On the one hand, it attests to the attention and recognition of the specific entities while, on the other hand, it does not clarify which subjects make up the third sector with the relative membership requisites.

Therefore, it is no wonder that several observers, given such a fragmented reference of norms, have put forward a proposal for a single text on not for profit that would define the sector and outline the necessary requirements for organisations to belong to it. For the moment, the sector has a set of tax regulations (Legislative Decree no. 460/1997) that may give rise to the phenomenon of creating fictitious not for profit entities, as there is no control on the requirements that a subject of this type must possess in order to benefit from these tax benefits. Several interpretations have been given, even of a juridical nature, that account for this confusion in the not for profit sector; this might explain why there exist different criteria in including the existing forms of organisations within the sector⁴.

² The encyclicals *"Apostolicam Actuositatem"* (1965) and *"Sollicitudo Rei Socialis"* (1987) are important to this regard. The first explicates the condition upon which charitable action "is above any criticism and appears as such"; "the obligations of justice need to be carried out, so that what one offers as an act of charity is already owed as an act of justice; hence one eliminates not only the effects but also the causes of evils...". The second states that solidarity "is not a sentiment of vague compassion or of superficial intendment for the evils of many people both near and far. On the contrary, it is the strong and persevering determination to commit oneself for the common good, that is, for the good of all and of each individual, so that everyone is responsible for everyone else" (No. 38).

³ The National Convention of Viareggio dealt with the issue: "Volunteering, society and public powers" indicating the "need to promote a juridical regulation of the relationship between the public and private sectors".

⁴ Cf. A theory put forward by Poli A., *Alla ricerca del Terzo settore*, Larino (CB), Centro di Servizio per il Volontariato, I Quaderni del Melograno No. 5, 2004.

In 1997, a parliamentary commission was set up to analyse the third sector, though without clarifying a definition for it, as can be seen in examining the work carried out by this commission, made public in February 2001, three months after the emanation of Law No. 328 in November 2000, which sets aside an entire article (Number 5), for the role of the third sector, though without defining it thoroughly.

Even the scientific community, apart from presenting various interpretations on the reasons of the significant development – at an international level – of the third sector, seems divided as to the conceptual frameworks and diverse disciplines⁵. On the other hand, the empirical knowledge of the phenomenon, along with its characteristics and manner of operating, are still insufficient and rather fragmented. In any case, recent studies have reached an agreement in defining the characteristics of a third sector organisation. The co-existence of the following **5 crediting elements**⁶ define a third sector organisation as a body that:

- is not profit distributing;
- must have a private juridical nature;
- has a formal statute;
- is self-governing (must not be manipulated or controlled by either the public or private areas);
- must have a certain quota of voluntary work (even if this is simply non-remunerated activities of the governing body).

Specific legislation in Italy requires a sixth requisite which consists in the “democratic nature” of the organisation (elections of leading positions and effective member participation, see for example Law 266/91 or Law 383/00).

From a statistical point of view, there is an inclusive type of defi-

nition in which the common denominator is represented by two requisites - its private nature and the pledge of the non-distribution of profits – as can be seen from two recent *ISTAT* surveys: the *First Census of Not for Profit Institutions* in 1999, and the *Eight Census on Industries and Enterprises* in 2001. Therefore, it is evident that not for profit sector ranges from large hospitals working within the national health service to small parish volunteer groups. For example, if one considers the requisite of voluntary work, the results of the *ISTAT* survey in 1999 must be scaled down by 20%.

An attempt to define the not for profit sector is that of utilising classifications which provide further requisites:

- Principal sectors of activity (health, welfare, development cooperation, education, etc).
- Principal income: public or private.
- Orientation towards the market/non market, in that the activity carried out can either be directed or not to the sale of goods or services provided.
- Mutual help orientation or that of public benefit⁷.

However, the third sector on the whole is a necessarily composite group, made up of organisations with different roles, characteristics and degrees of complexity, as well as diverse internal relationships and juridical forms. The reasons for its success are not only reliant and linked to the need to face the shortages of the public system, but they are also structural and cultural, and answer to the responsibility taken on by local communities in creating goods and services of public benefit. Today, it is possible to affirm that the not for profit represents the “other” sector, mainly because it is a way to produce relationships based on reciprocal trust, including economically important ones which provide services⁸.

⁵ The first to deal with the not for profit organisations in a systematic manner were the economists, Weisbrod in 1975.

⁶ Cf. Barbetta G., *Senza scopo di lucro. Dimensioni economiche, legislazione e politiche del settore nonprofit in Italia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1996 who presents data from an international research project conducted by the Johns Hopkins University of Baltimore (comparison of 12 countries).

⁷ “Mutual help” bodies are defined as those that carry out their activities in the interest of the members and/or partners; while the entities or the institutions of public utility are those that orientate their activity in the interest of third parties or those external to the group of associates.

⁸ Cf. Donati P. 1996 (see bibliography) who identifies the specificity of the third sector in the production of “relational goods” and in the capacity to promote a culture trend towards the improvement of human relationships and social cohabitation based on solidarity.

1.4. THE EMERGENT ROLE OF THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

The most typical and traditional functions of the third sector are:

- advocacy and social promotion,
- experimental projects and advancing new services,
- management of services,
- redistribution of resources.

Also, new functions have recently emerged.

Redefining welfare

This attitude springs from the awareness of various components of the not for profit sector of the necessity to contribute to expanding the system of social protection through specific project planning. It means that organisations play a fundamental role in the creation of a welfare mix of a solidarity nature, rooted in the community. This would allow to override individual answers provided by the various actors by an integrated system of social protection with the collaboration of all (orchestration and synergy of all the forces)⁹. In view of a welfare mix, besides verifying the results, the public institution is meant to guarantee the programming, represent the driving force behind initiatives and keep the final responsibility towards citizens and social and economic forces. This process of reducing the role of the public institutions (which is not a mere externalisation of services) is irreversible, not only for what regards the limits of public intervention, but also due to the merits of the not for profit sector. Up to now, the principal contribution of not for profit entities has been to disclose the many needs in society (especially of the underprivileged categories). Traditionally, it has been the volunteering that voiced the latent request of services and demonstrated that these needs can be met by providing services, rather than by increasing monetary conveyance, and that human resources and private funding can

also be involved in providing them.

The growth of productive capacity

This is necessary due to the greater operational role played by the third sector. The third sector is looked upon today with great expectations in view of its occupational potential, above all in reference to social cooperatives. The employment figures of the sector are considerable, amounting to more than 600,000 employees (2001 ISTAT data) involved “in the unwavering and continuous production of services of public utility. Consequently, the contribution of these organisations to the gross domestic product and employment has increased”¹⁰. And with it, the need to define the role and importance of a new juridical figure such as the social enterprise, currently under debate in Parliament.

The propagation of the values of solidarity, participation, active citizenship

It starts from the valorisation of the social resources and the importance of solidarity. The third sector in general, and volunteering and social promotion associationism in particular, cannot be separate from a commitment of an educational nature. It means the emphasis should be placed upon reinforcing the concept of personal solidarity, that of individual citizens, rather than on the volunteer, or the cooperative, or association member.

2. FIGURES ON THE THIRD SECTOR AND VOLUNTEERING (AS OF 2001)

A summary of the actors that make up the third sector is briefly provided below, followed by a presentation of each type of organisation.

⁹ Nessun soggetto o servizio può esaurire da solo le risposte ai bisogni dei cittadini, poiché queste non sono solo tecniche ma anche di senso, relazionali, a valore aggiunto di integrazione.

¹⁰ Cfr. di Borzaga C. e Musella M., *Produttività ed efficienza nelle organizzazioni no profit (Introduzione)*, Lavis (TN), Edizioni 31, 2003.

1. VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS (sources: FIVOL and ISTAT) ¹¹	26,400 thousand organisations	4. CIVIL LAW FOUNDATIONS (source: Fondazione 'G. Agnelli') ¹⁵	3,000 approx.		
	18,293 registered in regional registers		more than 50% set up in the last 15 years		
	950,000 active volunteers		500,000 Euro: average patrimony		
	1,855,000 active donors (estimate)				
	2,480,000 partners, members, supporters (estimate)				
	1,199,000 Euro income (ISTAT)				
2. SOCIAL PROMOTION ORGANISATIONS	35,000 paid workers (estimate)	5. FOUNDATIONS OF BANKING ORIGIN (source: ACRI Italiane) ¹⁶	89		
	170,000 centres, branches, clubs, enterprises ¹²		36 billion Euro patrimony		
3. SOCIAL COOPERATIVES (TYPE A & B) (sources: ISTAT and Consortium 'G. Mattarelli') ¹⁴	3,5 million active/members (estimate) ¹³	6. NGOs (Non-governmental organisations for development cooperation)	1,018,000 Euro allocated (2001)		
	5.515 attive con bilancio nel 2001		7. COMMITTEES	160 (the most well-known, members of the Italian NGO Associations)	
	7,000 approx. formally established			3,200 (ISTAT '99)	
	60% of Type A and 197 consortiums			8. IPAB (Public Charity and Assistance Institute)	1,000 privatised (4.200 subjected to public regulations)
	211,800 members				80.000 employees
	173,348 paid workers				9. PATRONATI (welfare organisations affiliated with the Italian trade unions)
24,451 volunteers	(several thousand local branches)				
2,112,153 beneficiaries, of which	10. ECCLESIAICAL BODIES (e.g. Caritas, religious congregations)	unknown			
18,692 underprivileged		8.000 bodies ¹⁷ (estimate)			
3,919,000 Euro (turnover 2001)					

Last of all, the status of ONLUS (Legislative Decree no. 460/97) is given to not for profit organisations of public benefit. They have the possibility of carrying out marginal commercial transactions to which various tax concessions are applied.

2.1. FIGURES REGARDING NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

The most recent *General Census on Industry and Services* (ISTAT 2001) reveals the existence of 235,232 not for profit organisations

¹¹ ISTAT carried out a two-year study on Voluntary Organisations listed in regional voluntary registers. Cf. ISTAT, *Le organizzazioni di volontariato in Italia*, anno 2001, in "statistical summary", Rome, 30.1.2004.

¹² Estimate based on the first 1999 ISTAT census; the figure includes non-professional sports associations.

¹³ This estimate was reached by elaborating 1999 ISTAT (not for profit) together with FIVOL data (volunteering) 2001.

¹⁴ The Consortium 'G. Mattarella' carries out a periodical study on social cooperatives, see Centro Studi CGM, *Comunità Cooperative. Terzo rapporto sulla cooperazione sociale in Italia*, Turin, Edizioni Fondazione G. Agnelli, 2002.

¹⁵ See *Per conoscere le fondazioni. I mondi delle fondazioni in Italia e all'estero*, Turin, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1997.

¹⁶ ACRI prepares an annual report on foundations of banking origin, the latest of which is *Ottavo rapporto sulle fondazioni bancarie (the 8th Report on Banking Foundations)*, published in *Supplemento* No. 3 - 2003 of "Il Risparmio".

¹⁷ A specific study conducted by the *Consulta Ecclesiale Nazionale* on welfare bodies, periodically indicates the work, that is the welfare services provided by those connected to the Catholic Church in Italy, but not the organisations. See Sarpellon G., *Chiesa e solidarietà sociale*, Turin, Elenici, 2002.

and confirms the upwards trend of the phenomenon which in the period 1991-2001 almost tripled in numeric terms (+283,3%)¹⁸. Even local organisations are on the increase (+131,2%), though to a lesser extent; so are the number of employees (+75,8%) (see table below).

The third sector has undergone a far greater expansion than any other economic activity compartment, and this indicates the vitality of civil economy, both in terms of development as well as in occupational potential, in a nation with an increasing need for services that can provide a better quality of life for an aging population.

Two trends have emerged on the national scene in recent years:

- The generalised growth of the advanced tertiary and services sector, that regards both enterprises and families.
- The reduced dimension of local public authorities and a cut down on personnel involved, due to a combined process of privatisation and outsourcing, which includes welfare services.

The withdrawal of the public sector from several traditional activities from the public sector is quite evident in the health system (-53.7%

health care structures from 1991 to 2001), with a consequent growth of private enterprises that operate in health care and social services (+51.8%), and of enterprises that provide social and personal services (+16.5%). A similar shift in services management can be seen from the public to not for profit organisations.

In fact, 50.8% of organisations that provide welfare services were set up after 1990, along with 38.2% of those who operate within the health system. Together, the welfare sectors have the greatest share of employees for the not for profit organisations (53.4%), while representing no more than 12.6% of the local structures (see tables below). All the various juridical forms of the third sector have contributed to this increase to varying degrees. The most important variation in the period between the censuses from 1999 to 2001: 6 out of 10 social cooperatives run welfare services - with a consequent great increase in the numbers of employees. They are followed by legally recognised organisations that have a more complex structure and greater resources (see table below: Not for profit institutions and employees in the 1991 and 2001 census).

The welfare not for profit organisations per period of establishment, comparison with the total number of organisations

DESCRIPTION	Up to 1950	From 1951 to 1960	From 1961 to 1970	From 1971 to 1980	From 1981 to 1990	After 1990	TOTAL
Welfare Sectors:							
• health care	4,5	5,9	9,6	17,8	23,9	38,2	100,0
• welfare	6,4	2,9	2,7	10,9	26,4	50,8	100,0
<i>Total</i>	4,6	2,2	3,6	11,1	23,3	55,2	100,0

Source: Elaboration of ISTAT data *1st Census of not for profit organisations and enterprises*.

¹⁸ In consideration of the much greater accuracy of the 2001 census compared to the previous one on not for profit institutions, the difference in the percentage figures should be accepted with reserve.

Local structures of not for profit organisations, employees and volunteers per sector of activity - Census 2001

SECTORS OF ACTIVITY	LOCAL STRUCTURES		EMPLOYEES		VOLUNTEERS	
	a v.	%	a v.	%	a v.	%
Research and development	2.313	0,9	4.591	0,9	13.477	0,4
Education	11.154	4,4	100.158	20,5	56.574	1,7
Health	7.093	2,8	76.985	15,8	288.336	8,7
Welfare	24.731	9,8	183.625	37,6	342.882	10,3
Activities of associative organisations	107.833	42,6	78.889	16,1	1.378.506	41,6
Culture, sport and recreation	97.926	38,6	30.187	6,2	1.223.604	36,9
Other activities	2.294	0,9	14.088	2,9	11.948	0,4
Total	253.344	100,0	488.523	100,0	3.315.327	100,0

Source: ISTAT - 8th General census on industries and services.

Not for profit organisations and employees of 1991 and 2001 census; the total, divided per juridical figure; typology of figures present in the welfare sectors (absolute value and % and % variation of the two censuses)

NOT FOR PROFIT	CENSUS 1999	CENSUS 2001			VARIATION % 2001-1999
		a.v	%	%	
ORGANISATIONS	221.412	235.232	100,0		+6,2
• Legally constituted organisations	61.309	62.23	26,5		+1,5
• Informal organisations	140.752	156.133	66,4		+10,9
• Social Cooperatives	4.651	5.674	2,4		+22,0
• Foundations	3.008	3.077	1,3		+2,3
• Other	11.692	8.117	3,4	+1,5	-30,6
EMPLOYEES (a)	531.926	488.523	100,0	82,9	- 8,2
• Legally constituted organisations	116.553	84.074	17,2		-27,9
• Informal organisations	102.423	105.318	21,6		+2,8
• Social Cooperatives	121.894	149.147	30,5		+22,4
• Foundations	50.674	41.332	8,5		-18,4
• Other	140.382	108.652	22,2		-22,6
Employees with temporary contracts (b)	79.949	100.525		17,1	+25,7
EMPLOYEES (a +b)	611.875	589.048		100,0	-3,7
Volunteers	3.221.185	3.315.327			+2,9

Source: Elaboration of ISTAT data (2001 General census of industries and services and 1999 First census of not for profit institutions and enterprises).

3. JURIDICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL FORMS OF THE THIRD SECTOR

A brief description is provided below of each of three types of organisations of the third sector mainly associated with welfare services.

3.1. VOLUNTEERING AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS (VO)

When one speaks of volunteering it is necessary to distinguish between the voluntary activities of a physical person – which can be either carried out alone, or within public/private bodies, or within voluntary organisation. A *volunteer* is a person who freely carries out an activity for the benefit of others or of the community, without financial gain. Probably the best definition of a volunteer was given during the International Year of Volunteers in the Charter of Ethics of Volunteering (2001)¹⁹.

Volunteering has two particular and distinctive characteristics:

- The **gratuitousness** nature (the volunteer can receive reimbursement for documented expenses at the very most) of the person who operates with the spirit of giving and reciprocity with others.
- The spirit of **solidarity**²⁰ for the defence of rights and to help others in need, or for the protection, development and greater availability of common goods to increase the quality of the life of citizens.

A voluntary organisation (VO) is an organised group, endowed with its own autonomy and identity, capable of working towards meeting objectives that are of a solely solidarity nature. Volunteers form the backbone of a voluntary organisation and are mostly responsible for the decisions taken, and are the persons who determine which ob-

jectives to pursue.

Volunteering today is essentially an organised phenomenon which has undergone an enormous development since the mid 1970s, following the modernisation and decentralisation of the welfare system. Since then, the phenomenon has passed through a transition of traditional assistance services to pursue practices of prevention and social promotion in the intent of contributing to remove the causes that produce marginalisation, degradation and poor quality of life. In 1991, the framework Law No. 266 defined the requisites of volunteering and the aspects that regulate the relationship between the VO and the public administration, together with the juridical recognition of public entity partners. More recently, an ultimate legitimisation came about with amendments to Title V of the Constitution (Constitutional Law no.3/2001 *Amendments to Title V of the Constitution*, Art. 118 last paragraph).

The criteria used in Law 266/91 to define a voluntary organisation – and therefore of utmost importance when it comes to listings in the regional Voluntary Registers – are highlighted in the following diagram:

The nature of a voluntary organisation is therefore:

- Explicitly of a **solidarity nature** (to the benefit of third parties) for the development of a greater social justice (extension and enforcement of rights) or of civil protection.
- Of a **promotional nature** in various sectors of social life (culture, sports, education): it's final aim is to produce public good, to valorise "goods" and render them available to all. These are interventions that improve the quality of life of all the citizens²¹.

¹⁹ A volunteer is a person, who, having carried out the duties of every citizen, places her/his own capacity at the disposal of others, for the community or for all humanity. She/he operates in a free and gratuitous manner promoting creative and effective responses to the needs of beneficiaries of her/his own action and contributing to the realisation of common goods.

²⁰ **Solidarity** is carried out explicitly towards third parties (support of the weak sections of the population, development and civic rights promotion, civil protection) or is finalised to promote and place at the disposal of all, in various sectors of social life (culture, sports, education) "goods" otherwise non found or to acquire.

²¹ For example, this means that social club for the elderly exclusively dedicated to entertainment of its elderly members is not a voluntary organisation but an association for social promotion.

Criteria to register as a voluntary organisation in the Voluntary Register according to Law 266/91

COMPOSITION	JURIDICAL FORM	STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING	GRATUITOUSNESS	SOLIDARITY	OBLIGATIONS
Made up prevalently of the spontaneous (voluntary) and gratuitous services of volunteers and its own supporters.	The one that is the most suitable (as long as it is compatible with the solidarity aim).	The statute or the agreements among the members. The democracy of the structure. Elections held for the governing positions.	Absence of profit-making objectives. Gratuitousness of the associative positions and of the services provided by the members.	Solidarity objectives of the voluntary activity (Art. 2). Solidarity purpose (Art. 3).	Formation of the budget (must declare the assets, the contributions or the bequeaths received, as well as the modality of approving the budget).
Paid staff exclusively in the limits necessary for the regular functioning of the organisation or when needed to qualify or specialise the activity carried out.		The criteria for admission and exclusion of members, their duties and rights.	Gratuitousness of the services provided.		

Historically speaking, volunteering has had the role of generating organisations of the third sector (for example, the first social cooperatives as well as part of the present social promotion organisations).

In the DNA of many of these organisations there is the philosophy and inspiration of volunteering, especially if they avail themselves of the valuable and operative contribution of a considerable number of volunteers. However, there is the need for voluntary activity to acknowledge and distinguish itself in the richness, articulation and heterogeneity of the third sector of which it is only one of the components today. On the one hand, there is the risk of generalising

voluntary activity into “everything is volunteering”. On the other hand, there is the risk of a minimalist vision of its current function and presence, considering the great emphasis attributed to civil economy and social enterprise²² in the social market of goods and services.

3.2. SOCIAL PROMOTION ORGANISATIONS

A social promotion organisation consists of a group of persons united to pursue common objectives that are not of a commercial nature²³. Today this type of organisation has taken on a renewed iden-

²² The law on social enterprises is under parliamentary examination.

²³ This juridical form is regulated by the First Book of the Civil Code that makes the distinction between legally constituted organisations (with juridical personality) and informal organisations. With legal recognition an association has juridical personality to all intents and purposes.

tity defined as “social”, which means it does not apply to trade unions, political parties or to professional associations or categories – as was the case in the past. Social associationism is currently undergoing a phase of expansion in terms of organisations, members and activities. This growth in volume and consensus is also due to its evolutionary history. In the last twenty years these organisations have shown growing interest in social issues and solidarity, promoting voluntary initiatives, projects and groups.

The pro-social importance of these organisations is emblematically represented by the two largest Italian associations for social promotion: *ACLI* and *ARCI*, which have 1.8 million members distributed in almost 13,000 local and regional organisations and committees.

Both associations have redefined their role in society and freed themselves from their strong political origins – to the advantage of promoting participation for concrete solidarity addressed to finding solutions to real social problems. The focus today is on volunteering, social cooperation and on large intervention projects in the European scenario. This stage in the evolution of social associationism differentiates the various fields of activity and projects, and has discovered active citizenship as a motive of aggregation which, at the same time, is the result of associative activity.

The characteristics and role of social associationism are very close to those that denote voluntary organisations – as can be seen in some large associations²⁴. However, what distinguishes one from the other, is the possibility of remuneration for members and the mainly mutualist importance given to the activities which benefit the members and satisfy common interests in the circle of associates.

Another type of organisation, principally for the protection of the disabled, has been on the Italian scene since the mid 1970s. These historic associations were created following the great welfare reforms, promoting the needs and codifying the requests of the disabled without being able to satisfy them in many cases: *ANFFAS* and *AIAS* are two of the most important, along with the recent proliferation of associations to safeguard the mentally ill.

A third characteristic of social promotion organisations, distinct from other types of the third sector bodies, is that they often incorporate various functions and organisational forms which are added to their historically mutualist valence. For example, there are consumer associations such as the *Lega dei Consumatori* or *Cittadinanzattiva*, which have an increasingly greater following and importance, while in the education field there is *AGESCI*, which in many cases sets up training courses for its own members woven into programmes for solidarity development, with specific interventions of voluntary activities.

3.3. SOCIAL COOPERATIVES

The *cooperative sociali* (social cooperatives) are a social phenomenon that commenced in the mid 1970s with the first *cooperative di solidarietà sociale* (social solidarity cooperatives) set up from the experience of voluntary activity and organisations that found themselves managing social services of great economic importance.

Initially, organisational forms of social cooperatives were based on the idea that solidarity could also be carried out through economy enterprises. In other terms, it conjugates the private interests of some (possibility of employment and income) with a general interest, based on fiduciary relations, and acquires the characteristics of an enterprise with a social scope.

The social solidarity cooperatives extended their range of interest to social intervention and promoted the insertion of the weak and marginalised groups. Hence, legislation also took this aspect into consideration, extending the concept of mutuality: the beneficiaries are also the non members (“extended mutuality”). The definitive juridical recognition of social cooperatives came about with Law 382/91 which has had a considerable impact, making the phenomenon visible and conferring a good reputation to this typology of organisation. The law attempts to put several instances together: the term solidarity disappears and the importance of enterprise is highlighted, while the base

²⁴ For example, this is the case of *AUSER*, where two federated components co-exist, but are distinct and autonomous from each other.

of social cooperatives can be considered a mixed social base.

Essentially there are two types of social cooperatives: “type A” cooperatives produce services (social, welfare and educational); while “type B” cooperatives are those of production and employment, which include among their aims the integration of disadvantaged categories into the workforce (minimum 30% of employees with special needs). Social cooperatives have had an exponential growth: in the late 1980s there were 500-600 cooperatives in Italy, while in 2001 more than 5,515 active cooperatives were surveyed. These have created about 423,000 job positions of which half are taken up by members.

A specific prerogative of the social cooperative is the stable and continual production of services (mostly in the welfare sector), extended also to other sectors (environment, culture, education and training). Social cooperatives are looked upon with great expectations because of the direct and/or indirect occupational opportunities that they offer to disadvantaged groups in introducing them into the workforce. In fact, it is not by chance that great attention has been given to these cooperatives by active work policies.

The development of social cooperatives is governed by the associations of cooperatives, the consortiums, which have also increased greatly in recent years.

3.4. CIVIL LAW FOUNDATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS OF BANKING ORIGIN

A foundation is a non-profit making entity with its own source of income (the patrimony) governed by a board that utilises the patrimony for social benefit objectives. Today, foundations – about 3,000 in Italy, are a new actor of great importance in the third sector and are growing rapidly: more than 50% have been set up in the last 10 years. Foundations may focus their attention in several areas: education, arts and culture, health, welfare and research. Unlike organisations, founda-

tions must be legally constituted and do not rely on persons – the members – but rather on their patrimony to reach their objectives. They are in some manner related to for-profit enterprises, in that they are often generated by the enterprises themselves; a large part of their assets are managed in the enterprise which make them the connection point between the civil economy, the market and institutions.

Most foundations are located in the north of Italy and this has led to an imbalance of presence and resources in the country. Social policies will be able to benefit from these foundations as long as funds are allocated to projects on the basis of merit and not simply equally distributed to all, thus encouraging the generosity of persons, which introduces an element of complexity and freedom from public dependence.

A case in question is that of “foundations of banking origin” (89 in number): subsequent to the Amato-Carli Law (L. 218/1990 and the consequent Legislative Decree 356/1990), the assets of these foundations have increased up to 50 times. Hence, their considerable patrimony can become one of the key elements in the development of the not for profit sector through financing innovative and emulative projects.

Their task lies mainly in redistributing the resources according to a strategy that evaluates the projects to fund. Foundations can also play a role in attracting new resources, bequeaths and donations from citizens and enterprises, thus taking on the role of a “philanthropic mediator”, capable of directing resources. The juridical fluidity present in Italy has created new models of foundations, from those that support organisations and institutions, to those that collect resources (community foundations)²⁵, to those that directly organise and manage programmes and services (operating), to mixed forms of foundations which combine support and organisational types.

A foundation therefore represents an institutional modality of civil society organisation and constitutes a juridical-administrative infrastructure of stable duration. The space the foundations occupy tends to augment when the State is less present.

²⁵ In the American model, foundations mainly distribute donations by citizens.

3.5. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

These may be either non-denominational or religious types of organisations of civil society, either connected or independent from government institutions. They are specifically involved in the field of international development cooperation in the southern hemisphere countries. The first non-governmental organisations for development cooperation (NGO-DC) were set up in the 1960s with a different structure from the present one, and were limited above all to supporting missions in developing countries. Currently, most Italian NGO-DC are members of three large umbrella bodies, which are:

- *Volontari nel Mondo – FOCSIV - Federazione di Organismi Cristiani di Servizio Internazionale* - (Federation of International Service Christian Organisations) that has 56 NGO-DC of Christian inspiration.
- *COCIS - Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni non governative per la Cooperazione Internazionale allo Sviluppo* (Non-governmental Organisation Coordination body for International Development Cooperation) which heads 35 non-denominational NGO-DC.
- *CIPSI - Coordinamento di Iniziative Popolari di Solidarietà* (Coordination Body of Popular Solidarity Initiatives) which has 28 Christian-based NGO-DC that operate with an approach to cooperation based on carrying out projects without necessarily involving volunteers.

There are also other NGO-DC that are not members of any of the three coordination bodies. Recently, the *Associazione ONG Italiane* (Italian NGO Association) was founded to which almost all the active organisations are members (about 160 entities).

The NGOs operate in all sectors; from health care and agriculture, to the fight against poverty, aid to refugees and war victims, with the common aim of assisting third-world and fourth-world countries. The NGOs are regulated by Law 49/1987 "New regulations on Italian cooperation with developing countries", that regulates all aspects of

Italian development cooperation, though it is now considered insufficient and obsolete. In Italy, there is no Ministry that deals expressly with international cooperation, but only a *Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo – DGCS*, (General Directorate for Development Cooperation) that represents the institutional interlocutor for subjects of Italian development cooperation. In fact, in order to carry out activities with funds placed at their disposal by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGOs must obtain the necessary recognition by the DGCS by providing a series of specific requisites.

4. THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING IN THE NEW WELFARE SYSTEM

The sudden development of the not for profit sector is accompanied in Italy by a trend that gives the third sector, in its various components, a decisive role in the actualisation of the welfare system. The copious legislation, presented previously, represents an institutional regulation process finalised towards conferring the necessary juridical recognition to not for profit organisations to provide services, to make several tax benefits available to them, and to identify with greater precision the forms and means of financial support (of the State, but not exclusively).

The 1990s brought great legislative changes regarding voluntary activity, from the Volunteering Framework Law 266/1991 to Law 383/2000 regulating social promotion organisations which, with the introduction of specific national and regional registers, throws further light on the situation and allows organisations to find their own collocation, without obliging them to change their statute in order to enrol in the only register which existed up to then (the one foreseen in Law 266/1991). Very important were also the laws that led to profound changes in the relationship between the State and local autonomous authorities and in the relationship between local autonomous authorities and citizens and their organisations²⁶. A new welfare and political-organisational system can thus be envisaged (some examples are the direct eligibility of mayors and the Constitutional reform), in which the key principles are the decentralisation of compe-

tencies and decisions regarding expenditure, and the conception of an integrated system of services and intervention in which all actors in a given territory can concur. These laws reformed the institutional competencies on the principle of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity.

The inclination to consider volunteering a resource in health care – after Law No. 833/1978 – was reaffirmed and legitimated with Legislative Decree No. 502/1992 *Riordino della disciplina in materia sanitaria* that provides for forms of participation of citizen organisations committed to safeguarding the right to health care, to planning, to monitoring and assessing health care services at a regional and district level. This aspect was reaffirmed in Legislative Decree No. 299/1999 *Norme per la razionalizzazione del Servizio sanitario nazionale* which fosters welfare integration, the qualification of the services provided, and involves the citizens and consumer organisations in the processes of evaluation. This provides for a complete legitimisation of citizens to intervene, define the choices and verify the results of the public health system. Also in the social sector Law No. 285/1997²⁷ has provided voluntary activity with the possibility of participating in the joint planning of services with local authorities.

The same reform has intervened to promote an “integrated system of social services and interventions” with Law No. 328/2000 – and goes in the direction of creating the co-responsibility of volunteering and the third sector with regards to all decision-making processes on social policies, especially at a local level. This is the indisputable affirmation of equal dignity of voluntary organisations, called upon to become partners of the public authorities.

Last of all, in the footpath of Law No. 266/1991, Art. 118, last paragraph of the reform of Book V of the Constitution²⁸, further stresses

and highlights the importance of volunteering. It essentially affirms that the pursuit of the “general interest” is not the exclusive competence of public institutions, but also regards the action of citizens. The Public Administration not only recognises this sphere of autonomy and the forms of organisation that spring from citizen initiatives, but it also places them in a better position to reach their own public objectives. This is the absolute and definitive legitimisation of the autonomous contribution of citizens in the creation of a welfare mix.

Then there is the participative role in planning, project making and evaluation of social policies sanctioned by Law no. 328/2000. The significance of this law lies in the importance given to programming in creating a local, solidarity-based welfare system based on the co-responsibility of all the social actors (welfare mix or “plural welfare”). The Area Plan (*Piano di Zona*) is the programming instrument that is created with the concerted collaboration of all the active subjects of the territory, therefore also involving voluntary action.

4.1. RELATIONS BETWEEN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

In recent years, voluntary organisations have increasingly requested public recognition: on the basis of Law No. 266/1991, which institutes voluntary registers at the regional level, 75 out of 100 organisations enrolled. At the moment, the tendency to decentralise voluntary registers to the provincial level is underway. Even the official data of the regions confirm the significant increase in the number of organisations from 1997 up to the present, which is equal to + 56.2%.

²⁶ Il processo di riforma avviato nel 1990 con la Legge n. 142/1990 *Ordinamento delle autonomie locali* e la Legge n. 241/90 *Nuove norme in materia di procedimento amministrativo e di diritto di accesso ai documenti amministrativi* (meglio conosciuta come legge sulla trasparenza) ha trovato compimento, prima, con il “pacchetto” di leggi Bassanini (Legge n. 59/1997 *Legge delega per il conferimento di funzioni alle Regioni e agli Enti Locali*; Legge n. 127/1997 *Misure urgenti per lo snellimento dell'attività amministrativa e dei procedimenti di decisione e di controllo* che traduce i principi della L. 59/97 e li articola nel comparto Regioni-EE.LL.; Decreto Legislativo n. 112/1998 *Conferimento di funzioni e compiti amministrativi dello Stato alle regioni ed agli Enti Locali* con il quale vengono trasferite le funzioni dallo Stato alle Regioni e agli Enti Locali) poi, con la riforma del Titolo V della Costituzione (L. c. 3/01).

²⁷ L. 285/97.

²⁸ “Stato, Regioni, Province, Città metropolitane e Comuni favoriscono l'autonoma iniziativa dei cittadini, singoli e associati, per lo svolgimento di attività di interesse generale sulla base del principio di sussidiarietà”.

The tendency to attain public recognition is a fact that should be considered positive, as it indicates that the organisations are established and capable of being operative, by taking on a public function. At the same time, there has also been a growth in contracts and agreements between the public sector and the voluntary organisations for the management of specific interventions or services. In 1997, out of 100 voluntary organisations 34 had contract agreements with the State (*convenzioni*), while this figure grew to 42 in 100 in the year 2001. This acceptance of responsibility in relation to the public administration authorities requires the voluntary organisations to always keep in mind their objectives of autonomous action and to constantly verify whether they are operating along the lines of the management delegation or participation model.

In the period between the two surveys, the tendency of voluntary organisations to collaborate with public bodies in providing services has grown: in fact, 83.6% of the organisations examined declared having had some form of operative collaboration with public administration and services, or having received funds from local authorities. A particularly high increase was noted of the interest to set up relations with the public sector (contracting and collaboration), registered by a specific index which attests that 6 out of 10 organisations are strongly linked to the public institutions (average to high level of relationship).

In the same manner, public funding has become the principal source of income for an increasingly high number of organisations: in 1996 25% of organisations were dependent on public resources (annual budget) and 42% in 2000. Contributions still constitute the most important economic resource (utilised by 48% of organisations).

In conclusion, a problem that volunteering faces today is that of reconciling the role of collaboration with the public institutions, through relationships of contract agreements (*convenzioni*) and acquisition of funds, without losing its indispensable role of putting forward proposals, making constructive criticism and monitoring the public administration.

4.2. RESEARCH RESULTS: FROM THE RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERING TO PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL POLICIES-MAKING

In order to sound out the relationship between the public administration and voluntary organisations, FIVOL launched and conducted a study in 2004 that concerned 138 among larger municipalities (of which 84 are province capitals) and 77 *Aziende Sanitarie Locali* (local health authorities)²⁹.

The role and the importance of volunteering seem essentially and widely recognised. This has become manifest in recent years, following the urge to comprehend and regulate single and organised volunteering with the establishment of the local Registers, in addition to the regional ones, as provided for by Law 266/91. These Registers, apart from allowing the solidarity organisations to gain access to funding and public agreements, sanction their participation in general or specific programming. But the promotional role of the Public Administration towards volunteering appears less incisive; the P.A. seems more orientated towards directly recruiting the gratuitous resource than understanding the phenomenon and informing the citizens about the organisations operating in the territory. Public support to volunteering was found to be important both in terms of promotional events supported or directly created, above all, in partnership with voluntary associations, such as the Voluntary Support Centres. The commitment of the municipalities has been conspicuous, especially as regards guaranteeing premises and equipment to voluntary organisations, mostly scarcely furnished with basic logistic resources. Less widespread, though important all the same, are the actions that attest to the training of volunteers and facilitating access to European funds, which moreover are more suited to projects put forward by the more structured organisations of the third sector.

Regulations regarding organised volunteering are less burdened by bureaucratic procedures than those applied to other components

²⁹ The overall results of the study are being published with the conference proceedings in which they were presented (Rome, 25/02/2005).

of the third sector, and are more orientated towards agreements on specific projects, safeguarding the characteristics of autonomy and proposal that are typical of volunteering. However, various regulation models can be identified, from the more flexible and discretionary ones to those that do not substantially differentiate this component with respect to other providers of the social private sector. In any case, even voluntary organisations are subjected to a prior assessment (apart from the formal one of enrolment in specific public registers) regarding the functioning, experience and activity on the territory.

Even the rather widespread application of the agreements between the public administration and voluntary organisations signals the search for common strategies and conduct. Finally, there seems to be a certain commitment by the public administration to promote innovation and experimentation of new services, availing themselves of the various actors of the third sector, including voluntary organisations, which have had the opportunity in recent years to experiment forms of concerted project-planning, which are useful today in guaranteeing their presence in local programming, co-planning and evaluation of social policies.

In fact, the participation of voluntary organisations in decision-making processes is increasing, whether it be in advisory bodies or in the orchestration, co-planning and evaluation connected with the elaboration of social policies plans, where the voluntary organisations can provide important input on the basis of their specific contact with the needs and expectations of citizens.

Six municipalities out of ten have already drawn up their Social Plan in collaboration with other actors in the territory. Public authorities have recognised that volunteering has a role of primary importance in safeguarding and fostering citizens' rights, and underline the present importance of its eminently political function, because it is a local actor that participates in the elaboration of social and public health care planning. Associated to the traditional role of volunteering, there is also a modern one, that of an effective partner alongside public administrative authorities which guarantees a precise vision of the needs of society, sustained by gratuitous activity aiming at social justice and quality of life for all.

Volunteering is a phenomenon that must avoid the risk of losing its own autonomy, by refusing the role of who simply meets the needs of emergency situations or fulfils delegated services or interventions. In case the voluntary sector is involved in activities with the public sector, what is expected of this sector is the same that should be expected from any other actor of the sector: the quality of the intervention and the operative flexibility to satisfy the changing needs, thus constantly improving the services provided.

5. VOLUNTARY ACTION OF CITIZENS AND ORGANISATIONS

5.1. PRO-SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS

Volunteering of single citizens and organisations has become the object of numerous national research projects and surveys. As regards to the extent of voluntary participation, many estimates have been provided and various studies have attempted to define the phenomenon. All the research and public opinion poll institutes deal with this issue, though they generally do not share a common method, a common delimitation of the sector or a common definition. This in turn does not allow data from the various research groups to be compared. According to ABACUS and Eurisko-IREF, there are 7 million citizens actively participating in solidarity, while ISTAT *Multiscopo* indicates a figure of 4 million. Such great variations are due more to the inhomogeneous layout of the research rather than the different periods in which the studies were conducted.

In any case, all the data highlight the evident upward trend of volunteering and, recently, even the desire towards individual volunteering. When considering the ISTAT *Multiscopo* data, which are of a considerable entity considering the sample population taken and the territorial distribution, the rate of volunteers today is 8.4% of citizens over 13 years of age; this means 4.1 million persons.

The data available from the latest in-depth *Multiscopo* survey go into greater depth as regards the specific issue of volunteering and

The principal national surveys on voluntary participation from 1997 to 2002						
Description	ISTAT Multiscopo 1997	DOXA 1998	EURISKO (IREF) 1999	ABACUS 1999	ISTAT Multiscopo 2001 (+)	EURISKO (IREF) 2002 (-)
Number and context of the sample surveyed	24,000 families	999 people	1,000 people	20,000 people	24,000 families	1,000 people
Age brackets	14 years and older	15 years and older	18 years and older	14 years and older	14 years and older	18 years and older
No. of municipalities	800 municip.	140 municip.	85 municip.	not specified	800 municip.	85 municip.
No. of volunteers (national estimate)	3,600,000	3.900.000	5.985.000	7.500.000	4.145.000 (*)	7.080.000 (*)
Time reference	last 12 months	last 12 months	at the time of the questionnaire	not specified	last 12 months	at the time of the questionnaire
% of adult population	7,3	8	12,6	15	8,4	15,1
% population of:						
- Males	8,1	7,0	12,5	14,6	8,9	17,7
- Females	8,7	8,9	12,7	15,6	8,0	13,6
More than once a week or more than 5 hours per week	40,7	57,8	48,0	not gathered	not gathered	49,3

Fonte: Elaborazione FIVOL su dati istituti demoscopici.

highlight that those who do pro-social activity are generally: male, who carry out voluntary activity neither on a weekly basis nor in a sporadic manner (6 out of 10), without a specific motivation. "Confessional" motivations move 41 volunteers out of 100, others are orientated towards "doing something useful" for others, but without forgetting their own instances of searching for values, of giving a sense to life, of socialisation and of sharing with others. Volunteers classified in the *Multiscopo* survey also include the citizens who donate blood, those who cover social non-remunerated positions in various types of organisations (not only voluntary organisations), those in

philanthropy, while there is 1 citizen out of 2 in this sector that ISTAT is not in a position to define. It is clear that the overall data is influenced by defining uncertainties which render difficult an estimate of the phenomenon on the basis of a probabilistic sample.

A constant observer of pro-social participation such as IREF, highlighted in its latest report (2002) how there is a trend towards volunteering put into practice on an individual basis, rather than in the context of formalised organisations. In retracing the path of the various forms and modes of participation of Italians in the last twenty years, a new phase³⁰ has emerged: that of "personal volunteering". It is a

(*) Dato calcolato sulla popolazione italiana residente al 1.1.2000 (ISTAT)

(+) L'indagine *Multiscopo* tratta in modo approfondito la partecipazione pro-sociale dei cittadini ogni 5 anni; questo spiega l'incompletezza dei dati rispetto alla *Multiscopo* 1997.

³⁰ Diamanti I., *Prefazione. Verso un "volontariato personale"?* (Preface. Towards Personal volunteering?) by Caltabiano C., *Il sottile filo della responsabilità civica. Gli italiani e la sfera pubblica: VIII Rapporto sull'associazionismo sociale*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2003.

commitment taken on an individual basis or in various moments of daily life. It is a phenomenon that is translated into terms of donating both time and money in informal groups, without being too influenced and limited, in a style of life that is moderate, with the ethical use of money, in the critical and responsible consumption of goods, with a sensitivity towards the "fair trade" market, responsible tourism, commitment to great issues of peace and sustainable development. This form of volunteering is strictly tied to a context circumscribed by the life of the subject ("next-door-neighbour" volunteering, parish volunteering) seen as "a form of action rather than organisation. As a form of expression rather than belonging [...] a link that connects the double dimension: a civil commitment and self-realisation". This type of volunteering is often *for oneself* and *with* others.

The season of "integration associationism", characterised by ideological or religious motivation to membership, which gave identity and mission to persons (1970s and previous periods) has finished, and so has the season of "associationism of expression and service" which reflected the demand to face new problems, new emergencies and the new needs of the welfare state crisis (1980s). The tendency of voluntary organisations to become "a resource of the public system" and at the same time a promotional factor of civil awareness, laboratory of social resources with a tendency to structure itself into complex organisations, with enormous resources, up to the period of institutionalisation (1990s) has also come to an end. The new season that is emerging in this decade is that of volunteering understood as personal mobilisation, as "individual voluntary action", as can be seen from the statistical trend: from 16.4% of individual volunteers in 1997 to 20% in 2001. There is also an increase in volunteering that is not encouraged by large national organisations, but by small, local, informal groups, often connected to parishes (from 19% to 28% compared to 1999). This form of volunteering is limited in terms of time

an individual has available, it is performed in one's own context of life, and is carried out along side a style of life marked by altruism and responsibility.

5.2. LE RILEVAZIONI SULLA SOLIDARIETÀ ORGANIZZATA

The research that monitors the phenomenon of organised volunteering in Italy has been carried out by FIVOL - *Fondazione Italiana per il Volontariato* (Italian Foundation for Volunteering), since 1993 and by ISTAT, since 1995. Previously, there was only a single national survey carried out in 1983 by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, conducted by G. Rossi and I. Colozzi³¹, that was then followed by several studies promoted by the *Fondazione Agnelli*, which generally focused on the dynamics and resources of civil society. The FIVOL surveys have been conducted every four years since 1993, following the meticulous work of identifying the actors in this sector divided by region, in synergy with the *Centri di Servizio per il Volontariato* (Voluntary Service Centres). It utilises a specific operative definition to examine the organisations that are operative and active in the field. The latest survey in 2001 carried out a census on 26,437 solidarity organisations and examined 13,089 of them with a specific questionnaire.

The ISTAT survey, conducted every two years, analysed 18,293 organisations in 2001 – both simple membership organisations and associations composed of different organisations, with criteria which at times were inhomogeneous, listed in voluntary registers of the various regions and autonomous provinces³². The seven surveys conducted up to now reveal a growing trend of the phenomenon and a better capacity to understand the various changes that have occurred and its structural and functional characteristics, as well as its extent.

³¹ In any case, the organisations taken into consideration in the surveys were influenced by the vague definitions given to the sector in that period; hence, among the 7,500 organisations analysed there were also social solidarity cooperatives and organisations of various kinds.

³² It may be sufficient to indicate that the number of organisations listed in the registers varies significantly even in comparable territories, such as those of the two autonomous provinces. In the Province of Trento, there were 32 registered voluntary organisations in 2001, while there were 1,228 in the Province of Bolzano.

6. PHENOMENOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND PROCESSES

The following section essentially concerns the present state of knowledge surveyed by the 2001 FIVOL research project, with some additions provided by the biennial ISTAT survey. Apart from highlighting data regarding the structure and the work of voluntary organisations, it also provides a brief outline of the typology of Italian solidarity organisations (cluster) and several comparisons with the 1997 survey.

6.1. DYNAMICS OF THE PHENOMENON

Voluntary action is undergoing a period of great change, both in terms of the number of organisations as well as in terms of the number of persons involved, from volunteers to other actors. It is an important phenomenon also due to the number of persons actively involved, which amount to more than a million. The estimate of volunteers present in the 26,000 organisations surveyed amount to about 950,000 and the majority of these - 58% - provide their services on a continual basis.

Voluntary organisations can also rely on a large component of other active and non active figures (about three million): blood and organ donors (who are, in fact, also members), religious persons and conscientious objectors (substituted now with the young people involved in National Civil Service). Then there are the non active members and supporters, that provide the social and economic base for these solidarity organisations. Finally, there is a growing quota of personnel who are remunerated to various extents within the organisations.

Overall, the economic resources of organisations have also increased, and this fact is even more evident when comparing the same organisations that participated in the two surveys: if in 1997 45.5% of organisations had a budget superior to 5,000 Euro, more than 56.8% reached this sum in terms of budget in 2000. Accord-

ing to ISTAT, the total revenue of registered voluntary organisations went from 675 million Euro in 1997 to 1,119 million Euro in 2001 (+77,6%)³³.

There has also been an increase in the services offered to individuals and therefore the number of organisations that provide these services (7 out of 10) as well as, to an even greater extent, the number of beneficiaries. ISTAT indicates an increase from 2.5 million direct beneficiaries in 1997 to 5.8 million in 2001.

6.2. A MORE BALANCED DISTRIBUTION

The difference in numbers of solidarity organisations present in various areas of the nation is narrowing down. The majority of organisations surveyed are found in the north of Italy (57% compared to 44.6% of the population). This confirms the thesis that it is principally the existence of a rich civil fabric and strong social policies that foster the growth of volunteering, rather than simply social emergencies not tackled by the State. However, a reduction in the difference between the north and the south of Italy is due to the more recent trend of the increased number of solidarity organisations in southern Italy owing to more modern social policies - capable of fostering initiatives of organised solidarity - as well as of an economic development which in many areas of southern Italy has generated a greater participation of citizens in voluntary action.

6.3. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The creation of the organisations surveyed is increasingly connected to the **initiatives of citizen groups** (45 out of 100), differently from the traditional capacity of affiliation of the national voluntary organisations or those of ecclesiastical promotion. These groups are interested in facing issues or social problems within their own commu-

nity and give life to organisations that are set up on an associative basis. The role of advocacy by citizens at a local level is on the increase, as well as by groups of persons that are more capable of safeguarding themselves, representing the needs, facing the problems, and creating public opinion towards the local authorities.

6.4. IDENTITY DEFINITION

The latest survey has revealed that there is a greater share of non-denominational or “neutral” voluntary organisations (27%), compared to organisations that have an explicit or shared culture point of reference (44.3%). The trend reveals an evident reduction in the number of confessional organisations that largely inspired the movement at its origins. The figures drop from 42.5% of organisations surveyed with a Christian or confessional matrix in 1993, to 38.8% in 1997 down to 28.7% in 2001. On the other hand, the most recent increases in numbers involve voluntary active citizenship organisations, which have greatly strengthened the non-vocational nature of the phenomenon and therefore the non-denominational, non-political as well as pluralistic component within solidarity groups. Moreover, the identity of voluntary groups, particularly those recently formed, is seen in the services provided and in the common effort towards reaching results, rather than in the common cultural matrix or view of the world, be it either non-denominational or confessional, of its own members. This aspect is connected to the heterogeneity of the reasons that sustain the individual choices of volunteering today.

6.5. STRENGTHENING THE ORGANISATIONAL-MANAGERIAL ASPECT

Voluntary organisations are more structured today than in the past and operate along organisational-managerial lines. Over time, voluntary organisations have become more “visible and reliable,” in that they operate with continuity (92 out of 100), generally with established office hours (63 out of 100), have a mostly formal structure

(96 out of 100 have a statute), are registered with a notary act (6 out of 100 are informal groups), and have at least two governing bodies (9 out of 100 have more than 1). The most significant growth regards monitoring bodies which account for the tendency to conform to norms of transparency and good management requested with enrolment in voluntary registers and testify the capacity to take on public agreements (*convenzioni*) or projects. The majority of organisations also have internal regulations which define procedures and guidelines of action for its members, and in 50% of the cases these regulations have been created or renewed in the last five years.

6.6. ADDITIONAL FIELDS OF INTERVENTION AND SPECIALISATION

The prominent position of voluntary organisations in traditional activity sectors such as welfare and health care has been confirmed by these surveys (in which 62 organisations out of 100 operate), while there is an increased percentage of organisations that operate in sectors of civil participation, in particular in the context of civil protection, culture, education, sports and recreation, thus giving rise to a greater presence of volunteering in all social fields.

This is regarded as a positive sign because the centre of attention, apart from the individual seen as a subject in need of help, has been extended to civil rights and the promotion of greater social justice. The focus today is also on “common goods” such the quality of life of the citizens, safety of persons, risk prevention, and environmental protection.

6.7. MORE PROFESSIONALS IN ORGANISATIONS

There has been an evident decline in the number of organisations made up only of volunteers (65.4% of the organisations surveyed operate in favour of their own members, as well as non members), and there is now a presence of **professional figures** within voluntary organisations,

along with paid staff. The organisations that employ paid staff have increased by 9% in the period 1997-2001 (21.2%) and increase further to 25% if one considers the occasional paid consultancy. The estimate of paid staff at a national level is a slightly less than 33 thousand workers (excluding paid occasional consultants) with 11,850 employees and 10,800 collaborators. Then there is also the presence of at least 10,000 persons that receive forfeit reimbursement expenses (7.1% of the cases).

6.8. SMALLER VOLUNTARY GROUPS

Voluntary organisations are generally small groups of persons which, in most cases, do not exceed 20 operators. Larger organisations (more than 40 operators) make up a little less than one fifth.

The reduced number of volunteers that are involved on average in voluntary organisations has come about in this phase of change: the number of organisations is on the increase as new ones are constantly being set up, though the average number of activists working within them is diminishing. Two factors may explain this phenomenon: the difficulty of many organisations in guaranteeing the necessary and physiological turn over of volunteers, and the establishment of new organisations based on the activity of very few persons.

6.9. IL DIFFICILE RICAMBIO

Volunteers are basically in the **average age** bracket (46-65 years of age, for 38.4% of the organisations), which means these persons are at the height of human and professional maturity. Even in terms of incidence, this age bracket has decidedly grown since the last survey. The young (under 30 years of age) make up only 8.3% of the organisations, which signals a problem in turn over, and also in the inter-generation cohabitation within the voluntary organisation itself, as confirmed by the fact that no more than 2 organisations out of 10 recruit volunteers from various age brackets.

Presently, voluntary organisations engage fewer volunteers from

the young age bracket; the same problem regards the elderly who tend to prefer social promotion organisations (especially self-governed recreational social centres).

6.10. NETWORKING ORGANISATIONS

The trend towards **networking** is on the increase among voluntary organisations; the tendency is to link up with other voluntary organisations throughout the territory and to become part of umbrella organisations - 53.1% of organisations participate actively.

The phenomenon is increasingly important at a local level where these new voluntary coordination associations, capable of representing volunteering in its "political" function, are set up. On the other hand, the fragmentation of the phenomenon requires a place and a time for confrontation, coordination and agreement with other entities that are capable of expressing shared proposals and presenting them to institutional subjects, which are also interested in confronting the representatives of numerous organisations that operate in the territory.

There is also a greater willingness on behalf of voluntary organisations to **work together on common projects** with at least one other subject in the territory (only 19 organisations out of 100 operate in a completely isolated manner). This is even more interesting if one considers that the privileged connections are those with other voluntary organisations (more for promotional initiatives than for real operative collaboration).

Instead, the relation with schools and training centres regards little less than a fifth of the organisations examined (19.2%) and it has diminished since 1997 (27.3%), even though this collaboration is a means of disseminating the culture of solidarity and making the young more aware of volunteering.

6.11. DIFFERENT APPROACHES AND MISSIONS

Volunteering is a phenomenon that has inevitably been stratified

Typology of voluntary organisation profiles in total and period of establishment

DESCRIPTION Typology	TOTAL		PERIOD OF ESTABLISHMENT			
	n°	%	<1976	1976/1985	1986/1995	1996/2000
1° Traditional welfare organisations	4.317	33,0	25,1	30,6	36,7	36,4
2° Donor support organisations in health care	2.197	16,8	41,9	20,4	7,8	4,1
3° Semi-professional operational organisations	2.786	21,3	18,8	23,0	24,5	15,5
4° Organisations that safeguard the common good	3.023	23,1	9,6	19,7	25,5	36,5
5° Organisations of scarce vitality and production	766	5,8	4,6	6,4	5,5	7,5
<i>Total</i>	<i>13.089</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>100,0</i>

over time, strongly feeling the effects of changes to social processes that have created new needs and which have led to a widening of the sphere of intervention. It is not by chance that one speaks of “*volontariati*” (“volunteerings”, different types of voluntary engagement) in reference to the specialisations and choices made by organised groups of citizens. Five typical profiles of voluntary organisations have been described, based on the latest survey:

Traditional welfare organisations (33%)

Provide the so-called “light” welfare services, more in collaboration with the public services than through contract agreements (*convenzioni*), while receiving most contributions from local authorities. This type of organisation operates to the benefit of numerous categories of disadvantaged subjects who are either in need or at risk. This is the most typical and historic form of volunteering.

Specialist voluntary organisations (16,8%)

Mostly found in the sector of blood and organ donations they promote and gather blood donations Spread out throughout the national territory, are strongly integrated with public health institutions. They operate within the public health system through contract agreements (*convenzioni*), receiving reimbursements and support. Their current strategy is that of retaining donors rather than further expansion.

Operational organisations (21,3%)

These organisations deal with managing the so-called “heavy” services, often in health care (transport, rescue and emergency) and civil protection, that requires greater structural, economic and human resources, and which include professional and paid personnel. These are large organisations, the most reticular in the territory and the operatively most integrated with the State from which they depend greatly for funding, even though they receive various forms of income.

“Common good” organisations (23,1%)

These voluntary organisations operate in sectors of civil participation (environment, culture, training and ongoing education, civil protection, international solidarity). It is considered an emergent typology at present, collaborating in project design with public authorities, with volunteers which are on average younger and more oriented towards a strong commitment towards awareness-raising of the public opinion.

“Other” organisations (5,8%)

They are classified in this manner due to their scarce efficiency and operativeness. They represent the less active organisations, those less equipped in terms of resources and planning capacity, at the margins of the phenomenon and which risk extinction.

7. MONITORING, REPRESENTATION AND SUPPORT BODIES OF THE THIRD SECTOR AND OF VOLUNTEERING

The quantitative and qualitative growth of the third sector has made necessary the establishment of a monitoring agency, which was instituted with Law 662/1996³⁴. In fact, this Agency for not for profit organisations of public benefit, more commonly known as *Agenzia per le ONLUS*, is a governmental agency of public law instituted in 2000 which became effective in 2002 following the emanation of a specific regulation. It essentially has the role of addressing and supporting the third sector organisations in the correct application of the norms in force, and that of promoting and mediating between the not for profit sector and the other political, institutional, economic and social actors³⁵.

The great processes of expansion of the third sector have created the need to establish a political-organisational reference point for this field which is capable of representing the various actors and components. Thus, in June 1997 the *Forum Permanente del Terzo Settore* (Permanent Third Sector Forum) was founded. It presently gathers 104 organisations and represents a movement of about 5 million citizens³⁶. With this Forum, the third sector counts on being a direct interlocutor at the highest levels of political-institutional decision-making in that it concurs to the moral (awareness of being a citizen and assuming this responsibility), social (management of the welfare transformation process) and economic (it has a considerable economic weight from an occupational point of view and prospects of development) growth of the nation.

In 2002, ten representatives of the Third Sector Forum, all exponents of member associations in the Permanent Third Sector Forum, became part of the *Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro* – *CNEL*, (National Council of Economy and Labour) which is the ad-

visory body of the Houses of Parliament and the Government.

In 2004, the *Consulta del Volontariato* (Volunteering Advisory Board) was set up within the Forum, with the intent of representing it at an institutional level.

Since 1991, the *Conferenza Permanente dei Presidenti delle Associazioni e Federazioni nazionali del volontariato* (Permanent Conference of National Voluntary Organisations and Federations Presidents) has also been operative, with a recently renewed statute (2004). It operates at a national and/or international level with the scope of connecting and coordinating the organisations and bodies that form part of the Conference with the objective of culturally representing all the voluntary movement and of perceiving and satisfying the genuine and emerging trends.

Among the actors capable of observing and/or qualifying the phenomenon of volunteering there are: the *Fondazione Emmanuela Zancan* (1964, Padova), *Centro Nazionale per il Volontariato in Lucca (CNV)*, (1984), and *Fondazione Italiana per il Volontariato (FIVOL)*, (Rome 1991).

Universities have also increased their educational offers for those who operate in the third sector with curricular courses, specialisation courses and master degrees.

Apart from the actors who observe the phenomenon, there are others that represent volunteering at an institutional level, such as the Volunteering Advisory Boards (*Consulte del volontariato*) at the national, regional and local levels. Law No. 266/1991 has instituted the *Osservatorio Nazionale del Volontariato* which is the advisory body of the Ministry of Welfare. Among its institutional tasks, which involve studying and funding volunteering projects of national importance, the Observatory also organises the National Volunteering Conference (which takes place every three years).

³⁴ The *Agenzia per le ONLUS* is supposed to guarantee a “uniform and correct observance of regulations and laws” concerning the third sector and the not for profit organisations.

³⁵ Its headquarters are in Milan and it is headed by Prof. Lorenzo Ornaghi. Among its tasks: promoting study and research initiatives, gathering and up-dating data, formulating opinions and observations regarding the fiscal regulations of the third sector, monitoring the collection of funds and information campaigns and soliciting funds.

³⁶ The situation as of 15.3.2005.

Support bodies

1. VOLUNTARY SUPPORT CENTRES

The *Centri di Servizio per il Volontariato* (voluntary support centres) which support voluntary organisations and citizens involved in volunteering, were founded in Italy following the approval of Law no. 266/1991 *Framework Law on Volunteering*, in compliance with its Art. 15. Their mission is to support and qualify voluntary activity. To this end, they provide services for voluntary organisations, both to those listed in regional registers and those who choose not to register. Amongst their other tasks, the voluntary support centres:

- “create the means and initiatives to stimulate the growth of solidarity, promote new voluntary initiatives and empower the existing ones;
- offer qualified counselling and support as well as instruments for the planning, set up and running of specific activities;
- organise training and qualification programmes for members of voluntary organisations;
- offer information, news, documentation and data on local and national voluntary activities.”;

as set out by the Ministry of the Treasury Decree of 8 October 1997 regarding *Procedures for the constitution of special funds for volunteering in Regions* which, besides defining tasks, also sets out the procedures for the institution of voluntary support centres.

The highly innovative nature of voluntary support centres in Italy, which prefigures the principle of subsidiarity ratified by the last paragraph of Art. 118 of the Constitution, initially generated quite some difficulties. This may explain the misunderstandings and the attempt, on behalf of several financial bodies and public institutions, to influence or limit the development of these centres. In fact, some Regions and Autonomous Provinces who felt that their powers had been impaired to some extent, appealed against Art. 15 of Law 266/91, but the Constitutional Court found that the fundamental rights of the citi-

zens, which also include that of active citizenship, should be safeguarded by the State and not managed by the Regions, as they cannot be subordinated to the place of residence.

The voluntary support centres are financed through a Special Fund made available by foundations of banking origin which must provide a contribution of no less than one fifteenth of their revenue, which is set aside for the establishment of voluntary support centres. The total annual sum earmarked for the Special Funds amounts to 54 million Euro, which is then distributed throughout Italy, though not in a homogeneous manner. Every regional Special Fund is managed by a controlling body (*Comitato di Gestione*), made up as follows:

- One member representing the pertinent Region, designated according to the specific regional provisions.
- Four representatives of the largest voluntary organisations in the region - listed in the regional registry - nominated according to the specific regional provisions.
- One member nominated by the Minister for Labour and Welfare.
- Seven members nominated by the Savings Banks involved in Special Fund setting and their authorities.
- One member nominated by the Association among the Italian Savings Banks.
- One member representing the local authorities of the Region (association of the provinces and association of the municipalities), nominated according to the specific regional provisions.

These regional controlling bodies, that hold office for two years, approve the programmes set up by the centres and monitor their implementation.

2. NATURE, COMPOSITION AND RELATIONS WITH THE TERRITORY

The voluntary support centres are private bodies that carry out ac-

		Territorial range				Service centres operating in 2003				
Geographical area	VSCs	Territorial range of VSCs				Central Offices	Branches		Committees	
		Sub- Provincial	Provincial	Interprovincial	Regional		VSCs	N.	VSCs	N.
North West ³⁷	25	-	24	-	1	25	20	65	7	1
North East	18	-	17	-	1	18	13	58	9	3
Central	6	-	2	-	4	6	6	61	3	21
South	19	21	16	-	1	19	6	11	1	2
Islands	4	-	1	2	1	4	3	49	1	3
Italy	72	2	60	2	8	72	48	244	21	30

tivities of common interest, sanctioned by Art. 118 of the Constitution, and are governed by the volunteering movement itself, understood as “autonomous voluntary initiatives by individual citizens and groups.” A good 91.4% of centres are managed by networks of voluntary organisations (54.3%), though the non-voluntary partners amount to 8%, an important figure in establishing relations, though still quite small. There are 4,565 voluntary organisations that are members of voluntary support centres, of which almost 500 are umbrella organisations: thus representing at least 25% of the Italian voluntary sector.

To date, 72 voluntary support centres have been set up in all Italian regions, except for the Autonomous Province of Bolzano and Campania, where the controlling body has approved the institution of centres that will become effective by the end of 2005. Of all the voluntary support centres that have been founded, 10 are regional and the remaining have a provincial dimension. In the regions where there are provincial voluntary support centres, these are generally members of regional coordinating bodies. At a national level, the centres are represented by *Csv.net*, the National coordination body for the voluntary support centres. It collaborates with and assists the centres in their relations with national political and institutional authorities, organises meetings to exchange ideas and experiences, fosters the co-ordination of activities, cultural and professional development, and also work

groups on specific issues.

All the voluntary support centres autonomously manage local structures, even at the very micro-territorial level. There are two common ways of proceeding: branches and committees. The “branch” is a point that provides the services, which is active in the voluntary support centre’s area of competence, while the “committee” is a point that provides the services, which is present in the voluntary support centre’s area of competence but is governed in collaboration with the local voluntary organisations.

Development of the VSC service network

Years	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003
Support Centres	100	218	241	299	346

2.1. PERSONNEL AND ACTIVITIES

Whilst representatives of organisations associated to the voluntary support centres carry out their role of orientation, planning and monitoring in the general assemblies and in other social bodies (there are over 4,000 volunteers employed), the actual provision of services is

³⁷ The subdivision of Italy into areas includes the following Regions: *NorthWest* - Piedmont, Valle d’Aosta, Lombardy, Liguria; *North East*- Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna; *Central* - Tuscany, Umbria, the Marches, Latium; *South* - Abruzzo, Molise, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria; Islands - Sardinia and Sicily.

based on human and professional resources of operators outside these social bodies. Most professional figures who operate in the centres have previous experience in the field of volunteering and the third sector. There are three main types of operators: managerial figures (general coordination, production of services); operational figures (secretarial office, administration, branches, supply of services) and consultants (for the more highly specialised tasks). The centres also utilise volunteers and National Civil Service young people which are, nevertheless, a minority support to the more professionalised operators.

There are currently 519 employees with an open work contract (as some are part-time employees, we can say that they are equivalent to 300 full-time workers): 57.6% are female, 42.4% male; 57.0% are university graduates and 41.6% have a high school diploma. There are 169 workers with project-specific work contracts (temporary): 58.0% are female, 42.0% are male; 71.9% are graduates and 28.1% have a high school diploma. If we consider the commitment made by volunteers (such as the 700 members of the executive councils, the

leaders of work groups and commissions, or the presidents and vice-presidents that often carry out almost full-time unpaid work), but also the type and quality of employment of the operators, the sheer scale of the phenomenon becomes apparent. Operations are carried out by reducing the central apparatus to the necessary minimum, entrusting a part of the service provision to collaborators or external structures, that are usually paid.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the services provided are steadily growing, as can be seen in the table "Services per type of subject". Activity mostly (84.5%) revolves around voluntary organisations and volunteers, and to a smaller extent around other not for profit organisations.

3. SERVICES

There are a variety of services provided by each voluntary support

Services per type of subject	2003		2002		2001	
	No. of actors	No. of services	No. of actors	No. of services	No. of actors	No. of services
Voluntary organisations listed in the regional register	12.704	46.677	11.692	45.838	8.898	16.926
Voluntary organisations not listed in registers	8.076	24.202	8.248	28.012	6.695	11.979
Social promotion organisations ³⁸	2.922	5.117	1.853	3.270	1.596	2.542
Social cooperatives ³⁹	335	663	420	638	307	272
Other not for profit organisations	1.562	2.478	1.766	5.273	1.143	2.161
Local organisations	1.086	1.967	1.278	1.831	980	1.358
Profit-making organisations	47	301	83	331	118	634
Individual volunteers	11.678	14.529	8.374	10.125	5.891	5.784
Others	-	-	294	824	37	6
Total	38.409	98.164	34.008	96.142	25.665	41.662

³⁸ Le *associazioni di promozione sociale*, debbono anch'esse avvalersi principalmente di volontari nello svolgimento delle loro attività, ma possono retribuire alcuni soci, e svolgere attività anche per i soli soci, cose vietate alle organizzazioni di volontariato.

³⁹ Le *cooperative sociali* sono cooperative che svolgono attività a favore di soggetti deboli e svantaggiati o producendo con la loro determinante partecipazione, debbono avere tra i soci anche dei volontari.

centre which has its own peculiar characteristics that are naturally influenced by the member organisations, and also by the type and extent of local needs of voluntary organisations. Nevertheless, there is substantial unity with respect to the fields of intervention and the extraordinary growth in the number of services provided (see table).

Services provided	increase 2001/2003%	2003 services	2002 services	2001 services
Logistics	155,7	39.321	20.145	15.379
Communication	132,1	10.095	6.576	4.349
Information and dissemination (no. of newspaper articles)	47,1	75	60	51
Counselling and assistance	100,1	53.857	38.750	26.914
Hours of training	57,8	29.076	20.952	18.431
Promotional activities	115,2	1.907	889	886
Support to social projects	123,4	1.392	890	623

The type of **logistics services** provided are:

- providing office space and communication services (postal address, e-mail, telephone, fax etc.);
- use of computer at the centre for free;
- supplying computer programs;
- loan of equipment;
- loan of materials and premises for events, conferences and shows;
- typing and photocopying services; etc.

These represent a basic service for almost 10,000 organisations in Italy.

The other type of assistance provided by all the voluntary support centres involves **advisory and counselling** services which include: information, guidance and assistance to facilitate “being a volunteer and doing volunteering”. One group of counselling services is ai-

med mainly at groups and individuals during the constitution phase of their association and to help voluntary organisations cope with the legislation and the regulations. Among these are the following advisory and counselling services:

- legal-judicial;
- fiscal and administrative;
- social security, labour and human resource management.

This type of service has experienced stable growth and is updated continuously with respect to the traditional procedures of supply. The other group of counselling services, more complex also because they often involve new types of professionals or multi-skilled staff, can be grouped together as “counselling services that improve access to opportunities”. They provide consultancy in the fields of:

- training: basic training regarding volunteering and specific training in certain areas of intervention;
- project planning skills for public tenders and for access to funds;
- National Civil Service and European Voluntary Service; etc.

Training continues to be among the most pervasive of services, since it closely involves the volunteers in organisations. In 2003, the voluntary support centres organised more than 1,800 seminars and courses, which involved 23,362 participants. A particularly engaging activity is the joint planning of training schemes: about half of training sessions were created out of the initiatives of either the voluntary organisations or the local or issue-based organisation networks, that also end up being involved in the management and evaluation of the results.

The **communication** services have two main purposes:

- To inform the voluntary organisations quickly and directly, so that they can better seize opportunities.
- To propagate the initiatives of the organisations to create greater public awareness of volunteering and of its value.

Most centres periodically publish information and documents, inform via the Internet and with e-newsletters and have a press office. This comes with the support services provided to voluntary organisations.

The **promotion** of the volunteering “to give a future to organisations and to foster active citizenship”, is a collection of services and activities that links many of the interlocutors within society together and represents the lifeblood of the centres:

- meetings and conferences;
- promotional campaigns;
- organisation and public jamborees;
- shows, exhibitions, sports shows;
- publications;
- volunteering opportunities;
- activities with schools; etc.

In 2003, the number of initiatives and the economic investment doubled that of the previous year, and almost one third of the total promotion activities involved initiatives with schools and for young people. This activity of awareness-raising among the young is strictly connected to the life of organisations: 64% of promotion activity is conducted in partnership with voluntary organisation networks; half proposed by the organisations and half by the voluntary support centres.

The services regarding **support of social project-planning**, provided only by some of the voluntary support centres, involves the supply of funds or the co-funding of projects of voluntary organisations or associations. Some 72% of services involve resources made

available by public tender, regulated by transparent and joint selection systems. Also, 58% of initiatives are proposed by the voluntary organisations and created in collaboration or entrusted directly to the voluntary organisations.

4. SOCIAL ACCOUNTING AND QUALITY SYSTEM

The accessibility to services and the transparency of activities carried out are codified in about 60% of voluntary support centres, through regulations that govern access to services and/or charters for public service. Furthermore, the National Federation promotes the utilisation of social accounting systems to identify, clarify objectives and elaborate strategies, improve work processes and develop relations with the institutional interlocutors. Working “towards social accounting” is an endeavour that is common to all the voluntary support centres, with the aim of improving the accountability of their own activities, through clear and shared guidelines on the types of services and on the needs of the voluntary sector. Linked to this is the path towards the acquisition of quality certification, to which many voluntary support centres are committed.

The ultimate aim is to obtain clear criteria to assess the impact of activities of voluntary support centres on the growth of the volunteering in Italy.

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