

# COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA ON THE UNIVERSE OF VOLUNTEERING IN PORTUGAL

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Final Report

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANIMAR – Portuguese Association for Local Development

BLV – Local Volunteer Banks

CASES – António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy

CEV – Centre for European Volunteering

CNPV – National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering

CPV – Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

IESE – Institute of Social and Economic Studies

ITV – Survey on Volunteer Work

EU – European Union

UNV – United Nations Volunteers

# INTRODUCTION

This document constitutes the Final Report of the Study for the Collection and Analysis of Data on the Universe of Volunteering in Portugal, commissioned by CASES – António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy.

This document addresses the requirements set out in the Tender Specifications and is based on the triangulation of the main analytical elements arising from the multi-method approach adopted, in particular:

- Use of information from desk research (including the documentary analysis of reports, scientific articles and other relevant documents on national and international practices, and the analysis of statistical data);
- Conduct of semi-structured interviews with CASES and other relevant stakeholders;
- Conduct of 13 case studies of Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (OPV) with a diversified profile;
- Administration of a questionnaire survey to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations, including Local Volunteer Banks (BLV) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The Final Report is structured into the following chapters and sections:

- **SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**, which contextualises the subject and objectives of the study, including a delimitation of the subject of the study.
- **METHODOLOGY**, setting out the overall methodological framework structuring this study, such as the methodological approach to be used and a description of each of the information-gathering and processing techniques.
- **GLOBAL TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING**, which presents framework and characterisation elements of volunteering at international level.
- **OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING IN PORTUGAL**, which includes a summary of the main elements characterising volunteering at the national level, including trends and challenges for the future of the sector.
- **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES**, which summarises a set of comparative elements of the volunteering practices in various European countries.
- **CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**, which summarises the main conclusions and guidelines for the future arising from the study carried out.
- **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**, with the list of bibliographical references consulted.

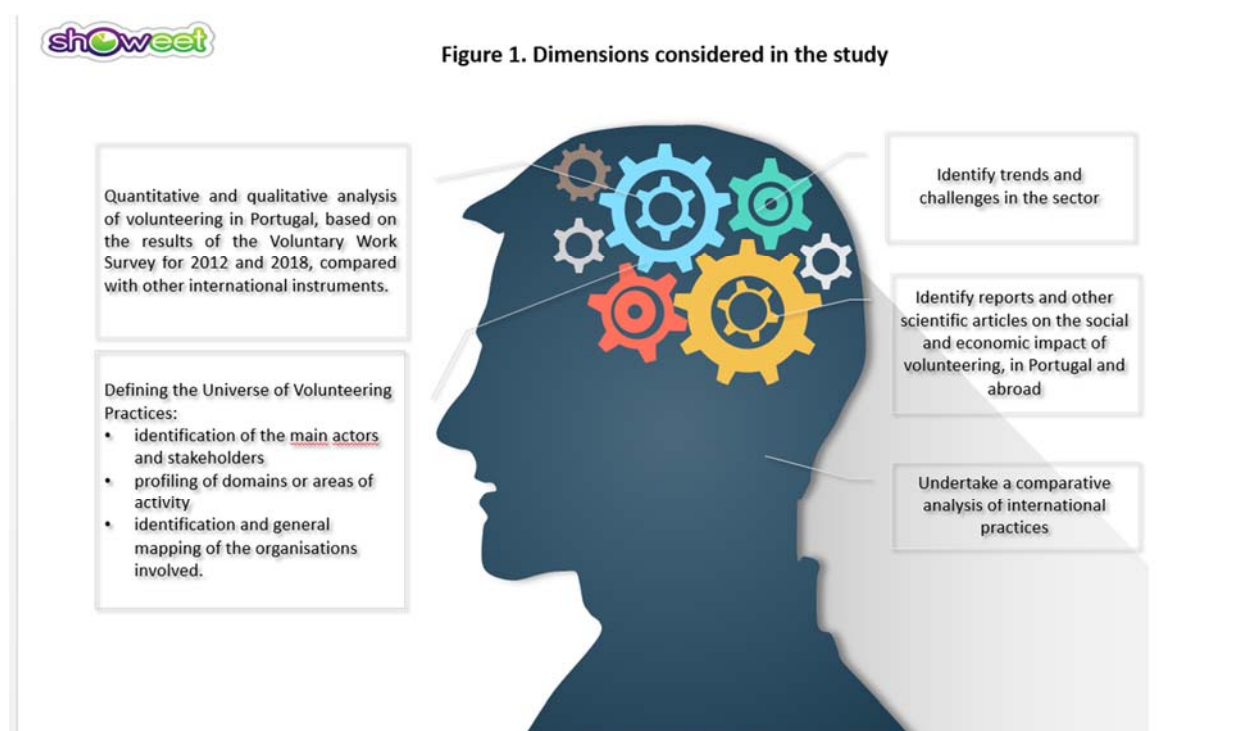
The Report is supplemented by an Annexes volume, containing the guides for the collection of information and the processing of empirical data.

## I. SUBJECT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to collect and analyse data on the universe of Volunteering in Portugal, aimed at deepening strategic knowledge of this sector in order to obtain a holistic view of the sector and prepare an integrated and multidimensional approach.

In accordance with the Technical Clauses, this study will include the analysis of the dimensions set out in the following Figure.

Figure 1. Dimensions considered in the study



### Delimitation of the Subject of the Study

Volunteering, under Law No. 71/98, can be defined as “the set of actions of social and community interest carried out selflessly by people, under projects, programmes and other forms of intervention serving individuals, families and the community, carried out on a not-for-profit basis by public or private entities”.

It should be noted that this definition is considered inadequate for contemporary reality by the stakeholders consulted. Several reasons are pertinent, such as that it does not explicitly provide for corporate volunteering and does not consider community volunteering initiatives promoted by a group of people without legal incorporation.

Although this definition requires updating and a response to contemporary volunteering, the sector covers a very diverse typology of promoting organisations, with a heterogeneous set of activities/sectors/target groups and a diverse profile of volunteers.

The role of association officers is also important, as they form part of the universe of volunteering and have their own framework – the Statute of Association Officer. However, given the nature of this study, it is only of interest to involve entities whose activity profile consists of organising volunteering actions.

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This study, taking into account the objectives defined, is based on a perspective focused on the Volunteer-Promoting Organisations in Portugal (OPV), their characteristics and challenges, rather than on a perspective centred on “volunteers”.

In order to clarify the scope of the Study, it should also be noted that this does not cover:

- The activities assigned by legislation to Volunteer Firefighters for fire prevention and firefighting, rescue in emergency situations such as floods and landslides, and the transport of the injured and sick, including pre-hospital emergency response and other civil protection actions. Where Humanitarian Firefighter Associations carry out other types of volunteering activities, these will be considered within the Study.
- Development cooperation and humanitarian aid activities abroad;
- The activities of association officers on a volunteer basis, that is, the governing bodies and officers of social economy entities.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### II.1. Principles of the Methodological Approach

The provision of services for the collection and analysis of data on the universe of volunteering in Portugal represents a complex and demanding undertaking, particularly given the scarcity and fragmentation of existing information, the heterogeneity of the organisations working in this sector – many of them informal in nature – and the diversity of the various thematic areas covered. In this context, the methodology adopted sought to respond appropriately to the challenges that this study presents:

✓ **Multi-method perspective**

This approach draws on multiple sources of information and combines various data-gathering and analysis methods, as described in the following sections, allowing the quantitative and qualitative dimensions and the secondary and primary sources to be combined, and bringing to the Study different complementary perspectives and forms of knowledge aimed at fully responding to the study's objectives.

**Figure 2. Information-gathering methods**



The selection of these techniques took into account the following aspects:

- **Suitability** – selection of the techniques best suited to the Study's objectives, the methodological approach adopted, and the production of information relevant to those objectives;
- **Proportionality** – consideration of the resources and time available for the Study, prioritising the simplest solution where sufficient to meet the Study's objectives;
- **Triangulation** – prioritising an approach that includes a complementary set of information-gathering techniques, making it possible to cross-reference information from mutually independent data/sources;
- **Complementarity** – in order to minimise the specific limitations of each technique.

✓ **Technical cooperation between the Technical Team and CASES and the Monitoring Group**

A critical factor for the overall success of the work is the establishment of a climate of close and responsive technical cooperation between the IESE Team, CASES, and the Monitoring Group, in particular at the following levels: (i) provision of information; (ii) brokering of contacts with the organisations involved; (iii) discussion of progress updates on the work; and (iv) informed feedback on the Study's outputs.

**Final Report**✓ **Active participation of the system of stakeholders/interested parties**

The involvement and participation of the various stakeholders represented a fundamental methodological principle, decisive both for gathering high-quality information relevant to the Study and for the discussion and validation of results.

This participation was secured through engagement and discussion mechanisms designed to capture the diverse perspectives and interpretations of volunteering in Portugal and its main challenges.

**II.2. Information-Gathering Techniques**➤ **Desk Research – Documentary and statistical data analysis**

The documentary and data analysis and literature review aimed to provide the Team with relevant information to deepen existing knowledge, delivering a technical and scientific basis for the various analyses, both from a triangulation perspective with the other sources of information and, more directly, for responding to the Study dimensions:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of volunteering in Portugal, taking into account the results of the Survey on Volunteer Work for 2012 and 2018, compared with other international instruments;
- Comparative analysis of international practices.

The documentary collection drawn upon is markedly heterogeneous, encompassing, among other sources, statistical data from INE and EUROSTAT, national Reports of the Centre for European Volunteering, other national and European studies and reports, and scientific articles. The section entitled Bibliographical references presents a list of the main references used for this study.

To operationalise this technique, all documentation gathered was subjected to in-depth reading and detailed content analysis. For the systematisation of information — and as internal working documents for the team — various tools were used, such as summary matrices and tables, diagrams, flowcharts and others.

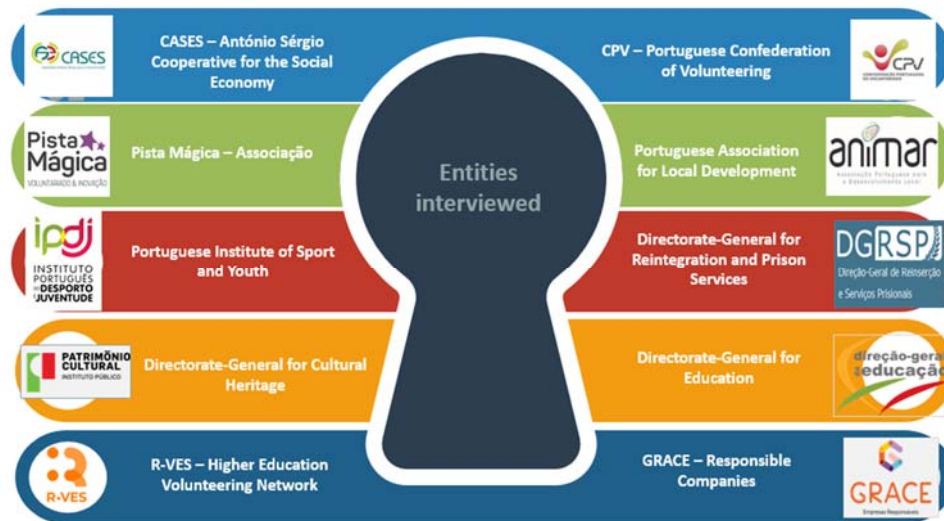
➤ **Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders**

The interviews aimed to gather exploratory and qualitative information on volunteering in Portugal through the direct consultation of relevant stakeholders, drawing on their critical insights into the sector, in particular its characteristics, areas of activity, volunteer profile, challenges, opportunities and recommendations.

Interviews of a more exploratory nature were carried out with a set of privileged interlocutors, selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience in the volunteering sector in Portugal, with the aim of deepening understanding of the subject of the study and the context in which it unfolds, and identifying specific concerns and/or knowledge needs.

Priority was given to in-depth interviews, conducted individually in person or online.

Figure 3. Entities interviewed



The interviews were conducted cross-sectionally, with a view to triangulating against other sources of information. The information gathered was analysed and systematised using content-coding techniques and organised according to the dimensions relevant to the Study.

#### ➤ Questionnaire survey of Volunteer-Promoting Organisations

The administration of a survey within this study aimed to gather a wide range of qualitative and quantitative information, thereby addressing existing information gaps and capturing relevant data on the organisations involved in volunteering activities and the Volunteering practices existing in Portugal, as well as about the trends and challenges that the sector faces.

Since there is no national database of all organisations and stakeholders with volunteering practices and involvement in volunteering activities, the OPV, Local Volunteer Banks (BLV) and Higher Education Institutions with volunteering practices surveyed were identified in advance from the databases of CASES, the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering, Pista Mágica and Animar and from their privileged knowledge of this sector.

The information was collected through an online questionnaire. The data analysis and processing operations were carried out with the aid of the IBM SPSS Statistics® statistical analysis software and MS Excel. In the case of open-ended questions, a grounded-theory coding exercise was undertaken – seeking to build categories and inter-category relationships – on the basis of the text of the responses, followed by their coding.

The following Table summarises the surveys sent out and the responses obtained.

Table 1. Surveys sent and received

	Surveys sent	Responses Received
OPV	376	113
BLV	198	44
Higher Education	178	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>175</b>

The tabulations of the results of the survey process form an Annex to the Report.

#### ➤ Case studies of Volunteer-Promoting Organisations or Community Initiatives

The Case Studies enabled the cross-referencing of views from a diverse set of organisations and stakeholders involved in volunteering and the gathering of qualitative evidence that would be difficult to capture through more standardised instruments, such as surveys. The Case Studies combined multiple information-gathering methods (documentary analysis and interviews) with input from multiple stakeholders, including officers and technical staff of the organisations involved in volunteering activities, volunteer managers/coordinators and volunteers.

The criteria adopted for the selection of Case Studies sought to ensure diversity and broad coverage of volunteering practices, including:

- Volunteer-Promoting Organisations and Community Initiatives.
- Various types of organisation: public, not-for-profit, corporate.
- Various volunteering areas: social, civic, educational, cultural, scientific, sporting, religious, health-related, development cooperation, leisure and spare time, environmental protection or other areas aimed at the common good.
- Evidence of the quality and relevance of the work carried out.

The final selection of Case Studies was undertaken jointly with CASES and the Monitoring Group.

Table 2. Identification of case studies conducted

Type	Name
Local Volunteer Bank (3 Case Studies)	Matosinhos Local Volunteer Bank
	Porto Local Volunteering Network
	Cascais – Local Bank and Youth Division
University Volunteering (1 Case Study)	University of Beira Interior
Corporate/Company Volunteering (1 Case Study)	EDP – Energias de Portugal, SA
Community Initiative (2 Case Studies)	SEIES – Sociedade de Estudos e Intervenção em Engenharia Social, Crl
	Azeitão Eco Consciente
OPV Volunteering (6 Case Studies)	Liga Portuguesa Contra o Cancro (LPCC) – Centro
	ZERO – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável
	Fundação Eugénio de Almeida
	SERVE The City
	Associação Coração Amarelo
	APROXIMAR, Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social, CRL

### III. GLOBAL TRENDS IN VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers and civil society organisations that promote volunteering play a crucial role in contemporary societies, particularly in responding to needs in certain areas of action, as a basis for responses to various emergencies, such as support for extreme climatic and weather events or during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the mere provision of services, volunteering is also an example of active participation in the shaping of today's societies and is fundamental to democratic regimes.

Nevertheless, and despite its great potential, the subject of volunteering has been less prominent in European debate in recent years. Little continues to be known about the characteristics of volunteers and of volunteering activities, as well as about the main changes, challenges and opportunities the sector has experienced over the last ten years and will face in the future<sup>1</sup>.

It should be noted that, notwithstanding the various theoretical perspectives, volunteering is constantly changing: new people become volunteers, new forms of activities emerge and new stakeholders are involved.

Of all the configurations that volunteering can take, there is a key dichotomous reading between two interlinked and interrelated sides: demand (from volunteers) and supply (from promoting organisations). The matching between these dimensions becomes the key mechanism for understanding the dynamics of volunteering.

For example, the number of potential volunteers can be explained, at the macro level, by institutional factors, as will be shown below. The quantity of volunteering opportunities can be explained by the volunteering infrastructure of each country. The greatest influence on the supply side is exerted by national institutional factors (for example, not-for-profit regimes, volunteering discourse and religion) or emergencies (for example, the COVID-19 pandemic).

Clearly, the size of the social economy sector has a direct link to voluntary participation, because the not-for-profit sector provides the base of organisational resources that promotes and sustains voluntary participation. According to some theoretical perspectives<sup>2</sup>, governments and systems that support not-for-profit organisations are associated with countries with high volunteering rates, while those that value them less are associated with low volunteering rates. At the same time, economic development increases volunteer participation, owing to an increase in the number of organisations carrying out volunteering, as more financial resources become available (demand or opportunities), as well as in the amount of individual capital, regarding time, money or other resources (supply or volunteer energy). It is natural to state that citizens on low incomes are less likely to volunteer owing to a lack of resources.

Another factor is religion. For example, historically Catholic countries generally show slightly lower volunteering rates than Protestant countries.

However, on examining some of the theoretical perspectives, it is understood that the relationship between demand and supply is mediated by complex and multidimensional mechanisms: "What makes a

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<sup>1</sup> The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) New trends in the development of volunteering in the European Union, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Damian, E. (2018). Formal Volunteering in Europe: Evidence Across Nations and Time. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 53(4), 385-409.

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person more or less willing and able to volunteer?” The answer covers three levels of analysis<sup>3</sup>:

- 1) Micro (individual): Volunteering capacity – individuals' willingness to volunteer and to have the necessary time, skills and experience.
- 2) Meso (organisational): Volunteering capacity refers to the attractiveness of organisations to potential recruits, their flexibility in creating volunteering opportunities and their success in retaining volunteers.
- 3) Macro (community/society level): volunteerability<sup>4</sup> is an expression of the willingness and receptiveness to volunteering and of the civic context provided for acting as a volunteer.

Within this concept of volunteerability, notably, volunteers do not necessarily make their choices according to whether they like the activity or the organisation, but according to their availability.

Nonetheless, the overall landscape of studies and assessments carried out in the field of volunteering is primarily focused on the volunteer (demand), their profile, the changes and trends in their activity and their weight within the populations studied. However, studies focusing on the organisations that promote and manage volunteering activities (supply) are scarce.

Following this rationale, this study seeks to analyse the supply side in Portugal, and it is therefore relevant to study the Meso (organisational) dimension – that is, the attractiveness of organisations for creating volunteering opportunities and the dynamics of attracting and retaining volunteers.

To this end, it is important to define the universe of volunteering practices, including the identification of the main stakeholders and interested parties, as well as the characterisation of the fields or areas of activity and the overall mapping of organisations involved in volunteering activities. It is also important to identify the trends and challenges in the sector, through consultation with the main stakeholders and interested parties in the Portuguese context.

Some global trends can be observed in the most important volunteering contexts.

➤ **Volunteering within the United Nations**

One of the main instruments that play a vital role in promoting volunteering at the international level is the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme. This is based on strategies for poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management, social integration and combating social exclusion and discrimination.

In 2024, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Programme mobilised a record number of 14,631 volunteers to support peace, development and human rights actions in 169 countries. This figure represents a 14% increase compared with 2023<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Meijs, L., Ten Hoorn, E., & Brudney, J. (2006). Improving societal use of human resources: From employability to volunteerability. *Voluntary Action*, 8(2), 36-54.

<sup>4</sup> Doosje, O. (2018). Why does no one want to repair kids' bikes? A research on the volunteer's decision for specific activities. Master Thesis, RSM Erasmus University.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Volunteers (UNV), 2024 Annual Report.

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Table 3. Volunteering within the United Nations



Region	2023				2024			
	Int'l	Nat'l	Total	%	Int'l	Nat'l	Total	%
Africa	2,713	2,600	5,299	41%	2,354	2,870	5,211	36%
Arab States	516	1,135	1,649	12.8%	483	1,763	2,243	15%
Asia and the Pacific	550	1,386	1,931	15%	590	1,522	2,107	14%
Europe and the CIS	437	789	1,224	9.5%	440	1,112	1,548	11%
Latin America and the Caribbean	486	2,278	2,762	21.5%	514	3,047	3,556	24%
North America	35	0	35	0.2%	1	0	1	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,694</b>	<b>8,187</b>	<b>12,840</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4,359</b>	<b>10,314</b>	<b>14,631</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percentage	36%	64%			30%	70%		

Source: Statistical overview of UN Volunteers 2023–2024.

The largest number of UN volunteers in 2024 came from sub-Saharan Africa (4,428), Latin America and the Caribbean (3,347), Asia and the Pacific (2,074), the Arab States region (2,030), Western Europe and other States (1,646) and Europe and Central Asia (1,106). This is an example of a context of growth in volunteering. The situation observed in the European Union in general, and in Portugal in particular, is different.

#### ➤ The European Union (EU) Context

In the recommendation “Improving the status and role of volunteers as a Parliamentary Assembly contribution to the 2001 International Year of Volunteers”, the Council of Europe regarded voluntary action as an important part of the social goods whose wealth and diversity each country seeks to preserve. Through this 2001 recommendation, the Council of Europe requested the Committee of Ministers to urge Member States to seek to “identify and remove, in their laws and practices, all obstacles that directly or indirectly prevent people from taking part in voluntary activities, and to reduce the tax burden that penalises voluntary activities” and “to give voluntary workers an appropriate legal status and social protection, while respecting their independence, and to eliminate financial obstacles to volunteering”.

Having due regard for the particularities of the situation in each Member State and all forms of volunteering, the expression “volunteering activities” refers to all types of volunteering activities, whether formal or informal.

At the same time, it is important to note the designation of a European Year of Volunteering in 2011 as the tenth anniversary of the 2001 Year of Volunteering, which was proclaimed by the United Nations but was also implemented in the EU and in the Member States.



Also worthy of note is the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV). This is a European network of 60 organisations<sup>6</sup> dedicated to the promotion and support of volunteers and volunteering at European, national or regional level. One of its key contributions is the production of national reports that enable a comparative analysis of volunteering contexts and ecosystems – a task useful for this work. However, it should be noted that many of these (such as the one for Portugal) are out of date.

<sup>6</sup> Portuguese entities present: Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering (CPV), António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy (CASES), Fundação Eugénio de Almeida (FEA), Pista Mágica – Associação.

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Another instrument for supporting and promoting volunteering is the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), funded by the EU, which offers placements in various sectors, such as social inclusion, the environment and culture. The programme covers travel, accommodation and food expenses, and provides a volunteering allowance. Volonteuropa is an international network that promotes volunteering, active citizenship and social justice in Europe. Volonteuropa works at various levels, from the local to the international, and across the public, private and third sectors and the social economy.

Notwithstanding the existence of these instruments, volunteering in Europe shows considerable variation, with trends in the level of volunteering over the last decade varying from one Member State to another.

### ➤ Scale of volunteering in Europe – Overview of the studies on volunteering

The differences in the understanding of volunteering are also reflected in the studies analysing the number of citizens who can be described as volunteers. The different results regarding volunteering figures – whether in national studies or in international comparative studies – are partly due to the different concepts of volunteering. It is therefore necessary to clarify whether formal and informal volunteering was included, or only formal volunteering. Another question is whether membership of an association is considered volunteering, or whether the assumption of specific responsibilities within an organisation is required for the activity to qualify as civic participation.

The Study carried out on behalf of the European Commission in 2010, “Volunteering in the European Union”, is one of the only existing documents comparing the specific realities of the Member States, although it would be extremely important to update it. While some EU Member States have long-standing volunteering traditions (such as Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), in other countries the volunteering sector is still emerging or is poorly developed (for example, in Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania).

**Table 4. Trends in the number of volunteers in the EU in 2010**

Trend	Countries
Increase	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain
Modest increase	Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia
Stable/fluctuating	Bulgaria, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Sweden
Decrease	Slovakia
Uncertain/No comparable information	Cyprus, Portugal, United Kingdom

Source: GHK (2010): Volunteering in the European Union. Study carried out on behalf of the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture). Published on 17 February 2010.

As already mentioned, volunteering is strongly influenced by the history, politics and culture of a community and of a country. The following Table illustrates that Cultural characteristics and historically dominant religion are key variables for Participation in volunteering activities.

**Table 5. Cultural characteristics and participation in volunteering activities**

	Cultural characteristics	Participation in volunteering activities (Eurostat 2015)
Croatia	Roman Catholic	9.7%
Finland	Protestant	34.1%
Hungary	Roman Catholic	6.9%
Spain	Roman Catholic	10.7%
Netherlands	Mixed	40.3%

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Source: Volunteering in the European Union – An Overview – Working paper no. 2 of the Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe (2010)

Political regime also influences volunteering practices. Post-communist societies exhibit a somewhat negative attitude towards volunteering. Consequently, in an attempt to regain control over their free time, most citizens simply refuse to participate in any kind of collective civic initiative.

➤ **Obstacles to a comparative view of volunteering in the EU**

Current figures on the volunteering behaviour of citizens demonstrate national differences.

In addition to the absence of comparative information updated to the same time period, the various sources available also present some issues. The “European Social Reality” survey (European Commission Eurobarometer) presents values that differ from those of the SHARE study (Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe), which analyses, among other things, the volunteering behaviour of people over 50 years of age. When comparing the two studies, it is important to remember that the Eurobarometer includes active membership of an organisation, whereas the SHARE study does not explicitly ask about membership but only includes volunteering activities in the month preceding the survey. In addition, the age of respondents is different: the Eurobarometer surveyed people over the age of 15, whereas the SHARE study focused on people over the age of 50.

The following table highlights the methodological differences between these two reference instruments in the field of volunteering.

**Table 6. Methodological differences between these two reference instruments in the field of volunteering**

	<b>Eurobarometer</b>	<b>Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)</b>
<b>Germany</b>	52 %	9-14 %
<b>Italy</b>	34 %	4-11 %
<b>Netherlands</b>	55 %	8-26 %
<b>Spain</b>	18 %	2-3 %
<b>Average of the countries covered</b>	34 %	20 %

Source: Volunteering in the European Union – An Overview – Working paper no. 2 of the Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe (2010)

These differences in the existing studies, with regard to procedure and underlying definitions, make it more difficult to produce a uniform and empirically accurate picture of the volunteering behaviour of Europeans.

Adding to the challenges is the absence of an updated comparative study at European level. In this regard, it should be mentioned that the national Reports of the Centre for European Volunteering (CEV) are heterogeneous in terms of reference dates, with some as much as 10 years apart.

➤ **Trends in volunteering in the EU**

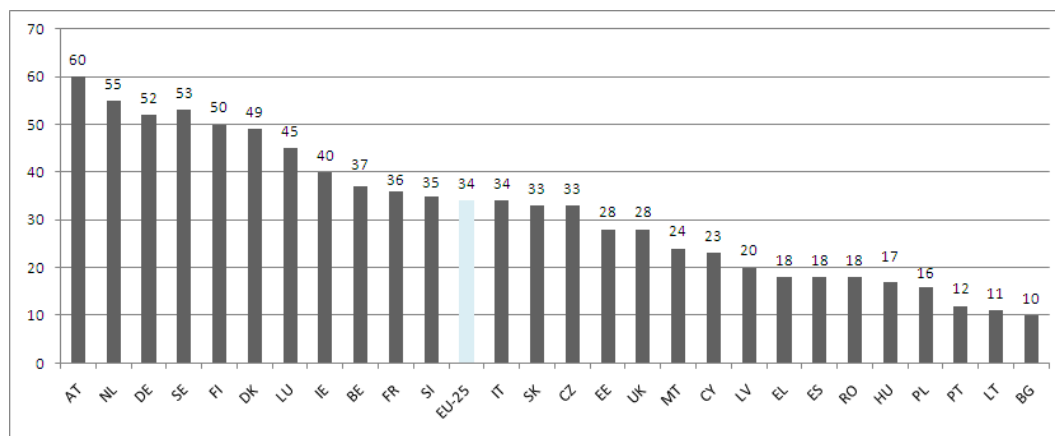
Notwithstanding the constraints set out above, some of the reference studies analysed conclude that the number of active volunteers in the EU has been increasing over the last ten years. Reasons cited include greater awareness of social and environmental concerns, public initiatives to promote volunteering and the growing number of volunteering organisations.

However, the comparison between the two periods shows the opposite. It should be noted that the figures collected over an interval of around 10 years reveal a significant decline in volunteering rates in the Member States. In 2015 (and 2018 in the Portuguese case), the comparative analysis of said

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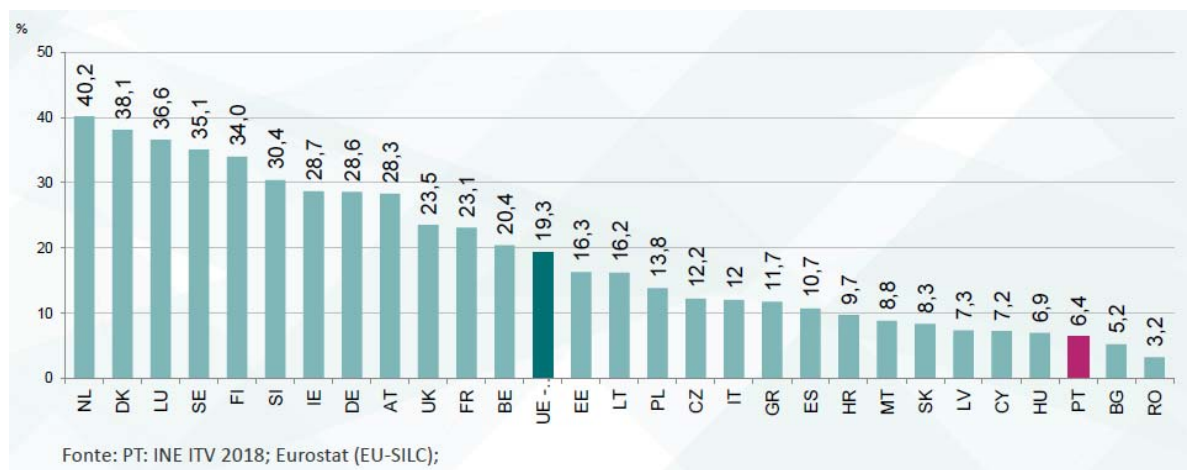
distributions makes it clear that volunteering rates underwent a substantial absolute decline. Although the countries with the highest levels of volunteering remained the same over the 10-year interval, the average and absolute rate values dropped significantly (by around 20 points).

**Figure 4. Level of active participation or voluntary work in the EU, 2006, according to the Eurobarometer survey (European Social Reality)**



Source: GHK Consulting on the basis of Eurobarometer survey data, 2009

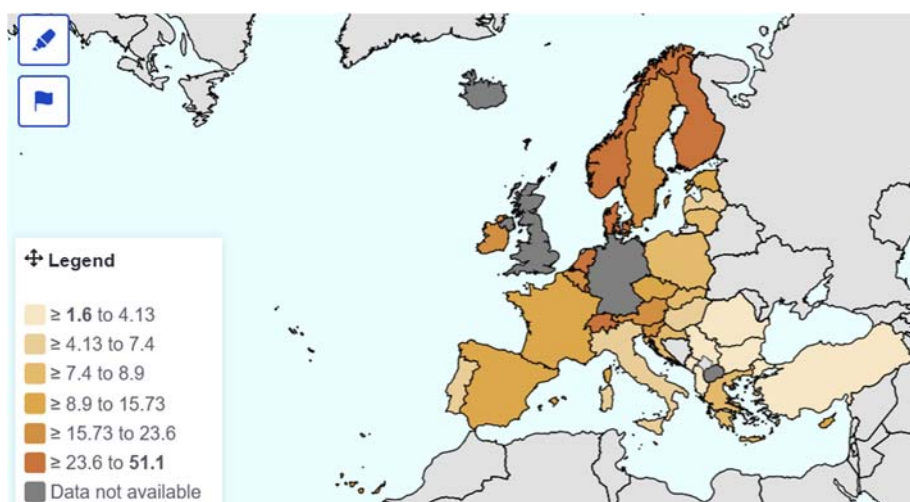
**Figure 5. Formal volunteering rate in EU countries (EU28) – EU2015/PT2018**



This trend is made even clearer by the most recent data released in 2022, showing that 12.3% of the EU adult population aged 16 or over took part in formal and informal voluntary activities. The basis for the collection of this information is the Time Use Survey (which gathers data on voluntary work, including organisational work and informal help to other households) and the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

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Figure 6. People who participate in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship

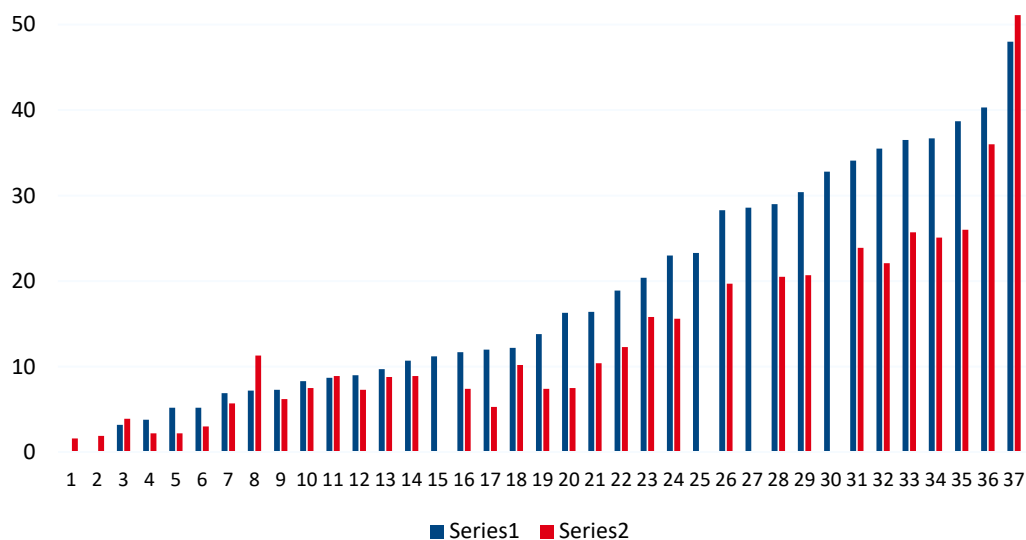


Source: Eurostat (2025)

This represents a decrease from the 18.9% recorded in 2015, with significant reductions in countries such as Sweden and Denmark, probably influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, Norway leads the European landscape together with these Nordic countries, joined by the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland. A clear geographical pattern can be seen among the countries with values above the European average (see the following figure).

Portugal is positioned as the country with the weakest volunteering dynamic among the group of Southern European countries, and only stands out against countries with political and cultural barriers to volunteering, such as Albania, Turkey, Romania and the countries of the Balkans.

Figure 7. People who participate in formal/informal voluntary activities or active citizenship (%)



Source: Eurostat (2025)

### ➤ Number and types of organisations working with volunteers

The analysis of the conclusions of the existing studies on the scale of volunteering supply points to the evidence that the sector in Europe is marked by structural heterogeneity and a diversity of organisational forms.

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The level of detail on the number and sector of volunteering organisations depends on the various registration models and on whether these organisations are required or encouraged to register. Even in countries that have such registers, it is difficult to provide accurate data on the number of active voluntary organisations, since, in many cases, the registers also include inactive organisations. In addition, some of the statistics include all non-governmental organisations, while others only include the types of organisations that make use of volunteers.

Although this work includes a comparative exercise based on the analysis of the national Reports of the Centre for European Volunteering (especially those updated to post-2018 dates), which enables a more up-to-date analysis of the volunteering supply landscape, the heterogeneity of the analyses and records they contain should be borne in mind.

The absence of a uniform system for defining volunteering organisations also weakens the analysis, as some figures include only registered organisations or those involving volunteers, while others include all non-governmental organisations in the country.

Even taking these caveats into account, the study Volunteering in the European Union carried out in 2010 can be considered the baseline for measuring the density of volunteering organisations (number of volunteering organisations compared with the country's population).

It should be noted that for Portugal, Romania and Latvia no data were available for inclusion in the analysis.

**Table 7. Density of volunteering organisations**

Country	Number of volunteering organisations	Year	Density of volunteering organisations
Austria	111,282 associations	2007	High
Belgium	16,091 not-for-profit institutions	2001	Low
Bulgaria	22,366 registered not-for-profit organisations	2005	Medium
Cyprus	3,227 societies	2009	Medium
Czech Republic	66,206 associations	2009	Medium
Denmark	81,900 volunteering organisations	2004	High
Estonia	26,363 NGOs	2008	High
Finland	127,000 associations	2007	High
France	1,100,000 associations		High
Germany	More than 515,000 not-for-profit organisations and foundations	2007	Medium
Greece	4,168 registered NGOs	2009	Low
Hungary	62,400 registered not-for-profit organisations	2007	Medium
Ireland	24,000 volunteering organisations	2006	Medium
Italy	35,200 volunteering organisations	2007	Low
Lithuania	20,822 NGOs	2007	Medium
Malta	300 registered in the Register of Volunteering Organisations	2009	Low
Netherlands	250,000 registered volunteering organisations	n/a	High
Poland	n/a	2007	Medium
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Slovakia	Around 20,000 third sector and social economy organisations	2002	Medium
Slovenia	Estimated at 270,000 – 362,000	2006	Medium
Spain	Estimated at 180,000 organisations involving volunteers	2002	Medium
Sweden	170,905 volunteering-sector organisations	n/a	High
United Kingdom	111,282 associations	2009	Medium

\***Low** (fewer than 100 people per organisation), **Medium** (between 101 and 500 people per organisation) and **High** (more than 501 people per organisation).

Source: GHK (2010): Volunteering in the European Union. Study carried out on behalf of the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture). Published on 17 February 2010.

## IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN PRACTICES

The comparative analysis of European practices draws on the most recent official data compiled by the CEV – Centre for European Volunteering and its Volunteering Infrastructure in Europe project. This constitutes the main basis for comparative work on the volunteering landscape in Europe. The concept of volunteering infrastructure should be understood as the entire system of action that enables volunteering and its development, including the policy framework, funding mechanisms and others. Even without up-to-date data on participation in volunteering activities, the reports represent integrated national analyses that examine aspects relevant to this study, such as those shown in the following figure.

Figure 8. Dimensions considered in the CEV Reports





This comparative exercise covers a set of 20 countries that had CEV reports dated after 2020, although some of the data contained therein is earlier.

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## ➤ Concept



In the first instance, the clear definition of the concepts of volunteering is a basic aspect of any effort to gather and harmonise information. The way in which each country defines it (or not) varies, and there is no single definition.

	CONCEPT
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> 	<p>At the beginning of the 21st century, the German Parliament's Commission of Enquiry on the Future of Civic Engagement established a commonly accepted definition of civic engagement/volunteering (Bürgerschaftliches Engagement).</p> <p>Volunteering activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are geared towards the common good and the benefit of others</li> <li>• are voluntary, without an employer-employee relationship and its legal framework</li> <li>• take place in the public sphere and are directed at groups outside the family circle</li> <li>• are not paid and are not-for-profit, although in certain cases a limited payment as a form of compensation may be acceptable</li> </ul>
<p><b>BULGARIA</b></p> 	<p>In Bulgaria, "Volunteering (or voluntary work) is any activity carried out outside formal or legal employment relationships, for the benefit of unrelated persons, organisations or institutions, done by one's own choice and without remuneration".</p> <p>Volunteering is mainly aimed at benefiting not-for-profit organisations or the community, and covers not only the social sector but also cultural, religious, sporting and political activities.</p>
<p><b>CYPRUS</b></p> 	<p>The concept of volunteering is not well established.</p>
<p><b>DENMARK</b></p> 	<p>In Denmark there is a long tradition of forming associations, with volunteering and involvement in local affairs being part of Danish culture and tradition. A volunteer is a person who carries out a voluntary activity in accordance with the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary or non-compulsory activities — carried out freely, without physical, legal coercion or financial pressure and without threats of economic or social sanctions (for example, loss of social benefits or exclusion from a social network) if the person decides to leave the work;</li> <li>• Unpaid — although this does not preclude the reimbursement of expenses, such as transport or telephone costs, or the payment of a token amount;</li> <li>• Carried out for the benefit of third parties who are not family members or relatives — thus distinguishing them from domestic activities or informal care of family members;</li> <li>• For the benefit of people other than the volunteer themselves and their family — which excludes, for example, participation in self-help groups or sports clubs from the scope of voluntary work;</li> <li>• Formally organised — usually within the context of an association, though not necessarily. Spontaneous acts or simple gestures of help are not considered voluntary work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SPAIN</b></p> 	<p>The Law 45/2015 defines volunteering as an activity of general interest, unpaid, carried out of one's own free will and through public or private organisations. It excludes one-off, family or neighbourly actions.</p>
<p><b>ESTONIA</b></p> 	<p>Volunteering in Estonia is defined as "the commitment to dedicate time, energy or skills, of one's own free will and without receiving remuneration".</p> <p>Helping family members is not considered a voluntary activity.</p>
<p><b>FINLAND</b></p> 	<p>Although there is no legal definition, parliament adopted the following definition in 2008:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering is not carried out for profit, that is, it is not paid.</li> <li>• It is carried out of one's own free will.</li> <li>• It benefits third parties outside the family and friendship circle.</li> <li>• It is open to everyone.</li> </ul>








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	CONCEPT
<b>FRANCE</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volontariat: formal volunteer service, paid or with benefits (civil, military, international, firefighter).</li> <li>• Bénévolat: unpaid volunteering, altruistic in nature and without formal legal status. It involves around 20 million people, according to 2019 data.</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b> 	<p>In Greece, there is no clear or widely accepted definition of volunteering. Promoting organisations and government departments use various definitions.</p>
<b>HUNGARY</b> 	<p>Law LXXXVIII/2005 defines volunteering as a voluntary activity, unpaid, outside the family circle and of public interest. In 2020 there was no “National Volunteering Centre”, but decentralised efforts can be observed. The role of the foundation Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány (ÖKA) stands out; it promotes and disseminates the idea of volunteering, serving as an information and resource centre in Hungary. It seeks to connect individuals with NGOs.</p>
<b>LUXEMBOURG</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volontariat: youth voluntary service regulated by law (1999 and 2007), with a contract, financial and social support. Areas: tourism, education, culture, etc.</li> <li>• Bénévolat: informal volunteering, unpaid, carried out of free choice, generally in associations (ASBL). It is not regulated by law but is guided by the Charte du Bénévolat.</li> </ul>
<b>IRELAND</b> 	<p>A volunteer is legally defined as a person who carries out work for a voluntary organisation without receiving remuneration, except for reasonable reimbursement of expenses.</p>
<b>ITALY</b> 	<p>The volunteer is defined under Italian legislation as someone who, of free choice, carries out activities for the benefit of the community and the common good, on a not-for-profit basis, out of solidarity.</p>
<b>KOSOVO</b> 	<p>Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and is recognised by 102 UN Member States. The volunteering infrastructure is limited, with only one relevant law: Law No. 03/L-145 on the Empowerment and Participation of Youth (2009). This law recognises youth volunteering as beneficial to society, unpaid, and organised by legal entities. Youth volunteering is recognised as professional experience by the local authorities and by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.</p>
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b> 	<p>Volunteering is defined as “free, not-for-profit activity, for the benefit of other individuals or organisations”. The term “volunteer” has two equivalents: dobrovolac (good will) and volonter (international term, used more by NGOs).</p>
<b>NORWAY</b> 	<p>Volunteering is deeply rooted in Norwegian society, with civil associations having played a historical role in building the country and consolidating the social-democratic state.</p> <p>The Law No. 88 of 29 June 2007 defines voluntary activity as not-for-profit, excluding activities organised by the government or cooperatives.</p> <p>The Report No. 27 to the Storting (1996–97) identifies six types of voluntary organisations, including associations with common purposes, foundations, not-for-profit cooperatives and religious organisations.</p>
<b>MALTA</b> 	<p>A volunteer is defined as someone who provides unpaid services of their own free will.</p>
<b>PORTUGAL</b> 	<p>Law No. 71/98 defines volunteering as the set of actions of social and community interest carried out selflessly by people, under projects, programmes and other forms of intervention serving individuals, families and the community, carried out on a not-for-profit basis by public or private entities.</p> <p>This law does not cover actions which, although selfless, are isolated and sporadic in nature or are motivated by family, friendship or good neighbourly reasons.</p> <p>The volunteer is the individual who freely, selflessly and responsibly undertakes, in accordance with their own aptitudes and in their free time, to carry out volunteering actions under a promoting organisation.</p>
<b>SWEDEN</b> 	<p>Sweden is widely recognised for its high levels of volunteering and for the strong link between volunteering and membership of civil organisations. Voluntary organisations are seen as pillars of democracy and social cohesion, heirs to the Swedish tradition of Folkrörelse — a mass movement based on democratic principles, participation and clear social ideology.</p> <p>The definition used is: “Time and effort given freely, without coercion and without remuneration, by individuals to voluntary or public organisations.”</p>
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>	<p>In Switzerland, volunteering is defined as unpaid and self-determined work outside the immediate family, carried out for a limited period, for the benefit of society or the environment. It includes formal activities for organisations and</p>












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CONCEPT	
	informal help to neighbours, covering a wide range of areas, such as sport, social welfare, the arts and community projects. It complements paid work, but does not replace it. Volunteering in Switzerland is quite popular, and the Swiss Society for the Common Good ( <a href="http://www.sgg-ssup.ch">www.sgg-ssup.ch</a> ) states that the Swiss should be described as a nation of volunteers.
	There is no legal definition of “volunteer” and there is an absence of responsible public institutions or official incentives. Volunteering is predominantly informal and strongly linked to charity and community help, values rooted in Turkish culture. Despite this tradition, formal volunteering is still poorly developed. After the Marmara Earthquake (1999), awareness of the importance of volunteering increased, but the lack of structure and legislation limited its development. Even so, organisations such as the Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG) and the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGV) have recorded some growth, as has youth volunteering.

## ➤ Overview

OVERVIEW					
	<p>A national study carried out in 2019 found that 28.8 million people volunteered — 39.7% of the population aged 14 or over. The engagement rate remained stable between 2014 and 2019. By contrast, Eurostat data record a markedly lower volunteering rate.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>28.6</td> <td>:</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	28.6	:
2015	2022				
28.6	:				
	<p>Volunteering is perceived as an “elite” activity, carried out by people with sufficient free time and financial stability to dedicate themselves to a cause. Barriers to volunteering include an unfavourable political environment and a lack of official data. There is a historically negative perception of volunteering (seen during the communist regime as forced labour in the name of the public good) that still particularly affects the older generations, making the image of volunteering unattractive to part of the population.</p> <p>According to a study carried out in 2020 on Society's Attitudes towards the Civic Sector, 8% of the population took part in voluntary activities. According to Eurostat data, the figures are lower, with a marked decline in 2022.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5.2</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	5.2	3.0
2015	2022				
5.2	3.0				
	<p>The voluntary sector in Cyprus operates in a challenging environment, with a lack of resources, limited funding and changing values regarding the traditional culture of volunteering. Even so, some growth has been recorded over the last 10 years, as indicated by Eurostat data.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>7.2</td> <td>11.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	7.2	11.3
2015	2022				
7.2	11.3				
	<p>The most recent study by the Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE), carried out in 2019, revealed that 39% of the Danish population had done some kind of voluntary work in the previous 12 months, corresponding to 2.264 million people aged between 16 and 85. This figure fell in 2022, according to Eurostat data.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>38.7</td> <td>26.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	38.7	26.0
2015	2022				
38.7	26.0				
	<p>Estimates range from 2.5 to 5 million volunteers. According to Eurostat data, there was a decrease from 10.7% in 2015 to 8.9% in 2022.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>10.7</td> <td>8.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	10.7	8.9
2015	2022				
10.7	8.9				
	<p>Data from a 2013 study entitled Participation in Voluntary Activities in Estonia indicated that 31% of the population aged 15 to 74 had been involved in voluntary activities in the previous 12 months. Eurostat data show lower values, with a decline recorded in 2022.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>16.4</td> <td>10.4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	16.4	10.4
2015	2022				
16.4	10.4				
	<p>A 2015 study indicated that 33% of Finns aged 15 to 79 had participated in voluntary activities in the previous four weeks. This is equivalent to 1.4 million people. The people interviewed observed that volunteering levels had remained relatively stable. Eurostat data show a significant decline in 2022.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>34.1</td> <td>23.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	34.1	23.9
2015	2022				
34.1	23.9				

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		OVERVIEW					
	<b>FRANCE</b>	In France, volunteering is widely valued by society. However, there is a decline in the proportion of the population engaged in volunteering activities in 2022.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>23.0</td> <td>15.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	23.0	15.6
2015	2022						
23.0	15.6						
	<b>GREECE</b>	Volunteering in Greece has grown in visibility and importance, especially during periods of crisis. First, the economic crisis led to the creation of numerous solidarity organisations. Later, the refugee crisis from 2015 onwards intensified volunteering, also bringing in a large number of foreign organisations. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and recurring forest fires have stimulated grassroots action and civic mobilisation. Eurostat records a slight decline in the proportion of the population in volunteering activities.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>11.7</td> <td>7.4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	11.7	7.4
2015	2022						
11.7	7.4						
	<b>HUNGARY</b>	In 2020 there were 12,279 organisations registered as host entities for volunteers. Studies have shown discrepancies in the data: between 5% and 40% of the adult population involved in volunteering, depending on the methodology. According to Eurostat, these figures stood at around 7% in 2015, with a slight decline recorded in 2022.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>6.9</td> <td>5.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	6.9	5.7
2015	2022						
6.9	5.7						
	<b>LUXEMBOURG</b>	According to the national CEV Report, 47% of the population participates in voluntary activities (formal or informal). However, this figure drops in Eurostat data, which records a decrease in 2022.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>36.7</td> <td>25.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	36.7	25.1
2015	2022						
36.7	25.1						
	<b>IRELAND</b>	In Ireland, the studies indicate that volunteering has been in decline since the 1990s (from 39% to 33%). The 2013 research reveals a rate of 29%, but according to Eurostat it fell by 10 percentage points in 2022.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>29.0</td> <td>20.5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	29.0	20.5
2015	2022						
29.0	20.5						
	<b>ITALY</b>	In 2015 there were around 5.5 million volunteers in Italy, a 67% increase since 2001. However, according to Eurostat, there is a decline to around half in the post-pandemic period.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>12.0</td> <td>5.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	12.0	5.3
2015	2022						
12.0	5.3						
	<b>KOSOVO</b>	In Kosovo, volunteering emerged after the 1998–99 war, with a strong presence of international NGOs. Civil society grew with international financial support, but volunteering was initially seen as something with short-term individual benefits. The Kosovo Civil Society Index (KCSF) is the main source of data on volunteering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2011, 14% of the population was involved in formal volunteering and 35.3% in informal activities.</li> <li>• In 2014, using a more restrictive methodology, only 3.1% carried out volunteering activities, but this figure jumped to 15% in 2018, indicating significant growth.</li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="2">No Eurostat data</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	No Eurostat data	
2015	2022						
No Eurostat data							
	<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b>	Eurostat data only include figures for 2015.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>11.2</td> <td>:</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	11.2	:
2015	2022						
11.2	:						
	<b>MALTA</b>	According to the national CEV report, in 2017, 23% of Maltese citizens participated in organised voluntary activities. However, Eurostat data point to much lower values. This figure remains stable over the 2015–2022 period.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8.7</td> <td>8.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	8.7	8.9
2015	2022						
8.7	8.9						
	<b>NORWAY</b>	Norway has around 5.3 million inhabitants, 80% of whom are members of at least one not-for-profit organisation. The 48% of adults who take part in voluntary work annually are equivalent to 115,000 full-time workers. In 2015, 15% of Norwegians aged over 16 provided unpaid care to elderly, sick or disabled people, dedicating an average of 5 hours per week.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>48.0</td> <td>51.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	48.0	51.1
2015	2022						
48.0	51.1						
	<b>PORTUGAL</b>	According to Eurostat data, a decline is recorded over the period analysed. Portugal registers the weakest volunteering dynamic among Southern European countries, ranking ahead only of countries with political and cultural barriers to volunteering, such as Albania, Turkey, Romania and the Balkan countries.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>9.0</td> <td>7.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	9.0	7.3
2015	2022						
9.0	7.3						

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OVERVIEW					
<p><b>SWEDEN</b></p> 	<p>In Sweden, volunteering has historical roots in the 18th century, maintaining strong stability and continuity. It is linked to political activism and social mobilisation — a legacy of workers' and peasants' struggles.</p> <p>In recent years there has been growth in volunteering in environmental, human rights and international development NGOs.</p> <p>Structurally, volunteering is seen as a leisure activity: more than half of voluntary organisations operate in the fields of sport, culture, recreational activities and hobbies, although there is public interest in volunteering linked to social welfare.</p> <p>The volunteering rate reported in the CEV report is 53% of the population (2014), contrasting with lower values collected by Eurostat, which show a clear post-COVID decline (22%).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>35.5</td> <td>22.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	35.5	22.1
2015	2022				
35.5	22.1				
<p><b>SWITZERLAND</b></p> 	<p>The most recent national data, from 2016, show a considerable increase in volunteering to 42.7% of the population since 2010. On average, the Swiss dedicate 2.4 hours per month to formal volunteering organisations and 4.7 hours to informal services. By contrast, Eurostat data report lower figures — 36.5% in 2015 and 25.7% in 2022.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>36.5</td> <td>25.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	36.5	25.7
2015	2022				
36.5	25.7				
<p><b>TURKEY</b></p> 	<p>Participation in volunteering in Turkey is low: only 1.7% of the population is involved in formal volunteering activities. Lack of promotion, weak infrastructure and distrust in organisations are significant barriers. Recent natural disasters have prompted temporary spikes in volunteering, but without continuity.</p> <p>The most common activities are helping neighbours and the poor, food distribution during Ramadan and Bayram, and support in natural disasters.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>:</td> <td>1.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2015	2022	:	1.9
2015	2022				
:	1.9				


## ➤ Profile of volunteers

In terms of the general profile of volunteering, most of the countries analysed show higher volunteering rates among people aged between 18 and 30, pointing to a global trend of youth volunteering. Nonetheless, this characteristic is more pronounced in countries with a weaker tradition and less favourable environment for carrying out volunteering activities.








Countries such as Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland show particularly higher age groups.

In all the countries analysed, people with higher levels of education have a higher volunteering rate compared with those with medium and low levels, and income also becomes an important variable in the pursuit of volunteering activities.










At gender level, there is more variation. In the Nordic countries there is a greater tendency towards balance between men and women, but at the global level, Eurostat data show a slight trend towards masculinisation, especially in Germany, Denmark, France and Ireland. In Portugal, the Eurostat data trend shows balance, with a female lean, this group having experienced a smaller decline than the men's group. However, the data gathered in this study reflect a markedly more female profile.

PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS													
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> 	<p>In Germany there are no significant statistical differences between men and women. Volunteering has increased across all age groups, particularly among those aged 65 and over, with the most engaged age group being those aged 30–49. People with higher education have a higher volunteering rate compared with those with medium and low levels. Migrants have a lower volunteering rate compared with people without a migrant background. Among migrants born in Germany and with German citizenship, the rate is relatively high.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>5</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>30.7</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>26.6</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022		5		M	30.7	-	F	26.6	-
	2015	2022											
	5												
M	30.7	-											
F	26.6	-											





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PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS										
<p><b>BULGARIA</b></p> 	<p>Young people represent the majority of volunteers in the country, since they do not share the negative view inherited from previous generations. Volunteering is dominated by people aged 15 to 30, with higher education and from stable backgrounds. The overwhelming majority (95%) work in NGOs and 5% in public institutions. In terms of gender, there is a relative balance.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>5.0</td> <td>2.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>5.5</td> <td>3.8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	5.0	2.3	F	5.5	3.8
	2015	2022								
M	5.0	2.3								
F	5.5	3.8								
<p><b>CYPRUS</b></p> 	<p>No data are available on the profile of volunteers in the national CEV report. However, although Cyprus has one of the lowest rates of formal volunteering in the EU, this is strongly correlated with higher education levels. Formal volunteering is more common among young people (16–24 years), while informal volunteering is more prevalent in the 25–64 age group. According to Eurostat, there is a considerable increase in men, surpassing the proportion of women in 2022.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>6.7</td> <td>11.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>7.6</td> <td>10.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	6.7	11.8	F	7.6	10.9
	2015	2022								
M	6.7	11.8								
F	7.6	10.9								
<p><b>DENMARK</b></p> 	<p>According to the national survey carried out in 2019, Danish volunteers dedicate an average of 15 hours per month to their voluntary activities. In terms of age groups, the 16-to-29 and the over-60 groups are the most active in volunteering. Men carry out more activities than women, although there is gender balance.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>40.7</td> <td>27.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>36.7</td> <td>24.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	40.7	27.5	F	36.7	24.6
	2015	2022								
M	40.7	27.5								
F	36.7	24.6								
<p><b>SPAIN</b></p> 	<p>As regards the age of volunteers, 35.5% were under 35 (meaning they are over-represented, as this group accounts for 26.5% of the population), while senior volunteering accounted for 29.2% of volunteers (under-represented, as they account for 36% of the population). There is a slight feminisation, but new studies show this phenomenon to be a structural issue, more than a trend.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>9.8</td> <td>8.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>11.7</td> <td>9.8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	9.8	8.0	F	11.7	9.8
	2015	2022								
M	9.8	8.0								
F	11.7	9.8								
<p><b>ESTONIA</b></p> 	<p>The average profile of the Estonian volunteer is of working age (46% of volunteers are aged 25 to 29), with secondary or vocational education (50%). Men have lower participation, but not to an unbalanced degree.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>15.1</td> <td>9.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>17.4</td> <td>11.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	15.1	9.0	F	17.4	11.6
	2015	2022								
M	15.1	9.0								
F	17.4	11.6								
<p><b>FINLAND</b></p> 	<p>The volunteering profile in Finland is very balanced in terms of gender. A 2015 study indicated that 69% of volunteers were involved in an organised form of volunteering, such as performing voluntary work for an association or voluntary organisation. The remainder engaged in voluntary activities in informal settings. It is also noted that the involvement of young people in voluntary activities is decreasing, and vocational or higher education is decisive in participation in volunteering. At the same time, people with higher incomes are more likely to participate in voluntary activities.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>35.8</td> <td>23.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>32.5</td> <td>24.1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	35.8	23.6	F	32.5	24.1
	2015	2022								
M	35.8	23.6								
F	32.5	24.1								
<p><b>FRANCE</b></p> 	<p>The most active volunteers are aged over 65, followed by adults aged 35–49 and young people aged 15–34. According to Eurostat data, there is a trend towards masculinisation.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>24.4</td> <td>16.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>10.0</td> <td>8.5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	24.4	16.2	F	10.0	8.5
	2015	2022								
M	24.4	16.2								
F	10.0	8.5								

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PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS										
 <p><b>GREECE</b></p>	<p>Greece shows a slight decline in the volunteering rate between the two periods. Although no data are available, the volunteering profile in Greece was largely associated with middle-class participation, but this has diversified in recent years. Today, active volunteers include a growing number of university students and people from migrant and refugee communities.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>10.8</td> <td>7.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>12.5</td> <td>7.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	10.8	7.2	F	12.5	7.7
	2015	2022								
M	10.8	7.2								
F	12.5	7.7								
 <p><b>HUNGARY</b></p>	<p>In Hungary, the most active volunteers are in the 30–40 age group. In 2018, those aged over 60 accounted for 27.4% of volunteers. Women are more visible in day-to-day activities, but men predominate in areas such as civil protection. Popular areas: health, environment, religion, sport and culture. Typical profile: married, with children, urban resident, middle income.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>6.3</td> <td>5.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>7.4</td> <td>5.8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	6.3	5.7	F	7.4	5.8
	2015	2022								
M	6.3	5.7								
F	7.4	5.8								
 <p><b>LUXEMBOURG</b></p>	<p>Volunteering in Luxembourg is mainly carried out by active age groups (16–24 and 55–64). There is gender balance, although men are more associated with organisation chairpersons and women are more involved in social and educational areas. The main sectors are culture, sport and social action.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>38.8</td> <td>26.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>34.6</td> <td>23.2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	38.8	26.9	F	34.6	23.2
	2015	2022								
M	38.8	26.9								
F	34.6	23.2								
 <p><b>IRELAND</b></p>	<p>In Ireland, volunteers are mostly middle-aged (45–54 years), with higher education, married or in a civil partnership. There is a trend towards the masculinisation of volunteering.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>30.7</td> <td>21.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>12.1</td> <td>5.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	30.7	21.1	F	12.1	5.3
	2015	2022								
M	30.7	21.1								
F	12.1	5.3								
 <p><b>ITALY</b></p>	<p>In 2013, 6.63 million people carried out voluntary activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.14 million in organisations.</li> <li>• 3 million informally.</li> </ul> <p>Volunteering is more common in the north of the country and the majority are over 35, with higher education. The average commitment is 19 hours per month.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>11.8</td> <td>5.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>12.1</td> <td>5.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	11.8	5.3	F	12.1	5.3
	2015	2022								
M	11.8	5.3								
F	12.1	5.3								
 <p><b>KOSOVO</b></p>	No data									
 <p><b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b></p>	<p>Almost half of volunteers are aged 15–29, with a residual share above 50. Half also have higher education. The main sectors of activity are culture, education, social assistance and sport. In terms of gender, there is a trend towards masculinisation.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>13.2</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>9.3</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	13.2	-	F	9.3	-
	2015	2022								
M	13.2	-								
F	9.3	-								
 <p><b>MALTA</b></p>	<p>The majority of volunteers are aged 25–49 and 50–64. In terms of gender, it is balanced.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>8.6</td> <td>9.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>8.9</td> <td>7.8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	8.6	9.9	F	8.9	7.8
	2015	2022								
M	8.6	9.9								
F	8.9	7.8								
 <p><b>NORWAY</b></p>	<p>Volunteering is most common among people aged 45–66 (42%) and 25–44 (41%). The most popular activity is volunteering in sports organisations (15%), followed by music, theatre and art (8%). People with children aged 7–19 are twice as likely to volunteer in sports organisations. In terms of gender, there is balance, albeit with a slightly higher proportion of men.</p>									

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PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS										
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>51.6</td> <td>53.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>44.4</td> <td>48.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	51.6	53.5	F	44.4	48.6
	2015	2022								
M	51.6	53.5								
F	44.4	48.6								
<p><b>PORTUGAL</b></p> 	<p>Eurostat data point to a relatively balanced profile, albeit with a female predominance; this group has experienced a smaller decline than men.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>8.9</td> <td>6.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>9.2</td> <td>8.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>However, the data from this study reflect a markedly more female profile. In terms of age, a relatively balanced distribution across the various age groups is observed, but it should be noted that students are the predominant group. Retired people are also important groups in many OPV. In terms of educational attainment, the higher qualification levels form the predominant group.</p>		2015	2022	M	8.9	6.4	F	9.2	8.0
	2015	2022								
M	8.9	6.4								
F	9.2	8.0								
<p><b>SWEDEN</b></p> 	<p>The volunteering profile has some particular characteristics. The typical profile centres on older people, with higher education and high incomes, and 85% of volunteers work in organisations of which they are members. Young people (18–25 years) are less inclined to volunteer. By contrast, women dedicate fewer hours than men — the opposite of the European pattern — reflecting greater gender equality. The estimated economic value of volunteering is equivalent to 350,000 full-time jobs, representing 4.1% of Swedish GDP.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>37.2</td> <td>24.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>33.7</td> <td>19.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	37.2	24.9	F	33.7	19.3
	2015	2022								
M	37.2	24.9								
F	33.7	19.3								
<p><b>SWITZERLAND</b></p> 	<p>According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (SFSO), sports associations are the most popular formal organisations through which men volunteer, while most women volunteer in social and charitable organisations. However, more women than men carry out informal volunteering, providing support to family and friends. A higher prevalence is observed among people aged 65–74 (14.6 hours/month). Volunteers generally have a higher level of education. German-speaking regions have higher rates than French- or Italian-speaking regions. Rural areas have more volunteering than urban centres. According to Eurostat data, there are more men than women in volunteering activities.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>39.3</td> <td>27.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>33.7</td> <td>24.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	39.3	27.2	F	33.7	24.3
	2015	2022								
M	39.3	27.2								
F	33.7	24.3								
<p><b>TURKEY</b></p> 	<p>In Turkey, people aged 18 to 30 are the age group most likely to participate in volunteering activities, and the level of education is decisive. Men volunteer more than women, though the gender gap is not significant.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2015</th> <th>2022</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>M</td> <td>2.3</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>1.6</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2015	2022	M	2.3		F	1.6	
	2015	2022								
M	2.3									
F	1.6									

## ➤ Legal Framework









The existence of a legal framework dedicated to the regulation and management of volunteering constitutes one of the basic aspects of the development of the sector's infrastructure in Europe. The majority of the countries analysed have specific legislation on volunteering, and those that do not have laws that indirectly affect and regulate the activities of NGOs and, consequently, volunteering activities. The latter is the case in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece and Kosovo. A curious fact is that some of the most dynamic countries in volunteering do not have specific national laws, as is the case of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK	
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> 	<p>There is no legal definition or national legal structure for volunteering in Germany. Political competence for volunteering policy lies with the Federal States (Bundesländer). At the national level, only voluntary services have any legal framework. These services entail a minimum commitment of 20 hours per week in activities of public interest. They are aimed at young people and adults at the stage of career guidance.</p>

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LEGAL FRAMEWORK	
	Since May 2019, it has been possible to take part on a part-time basis, making the service more accessible. After the end of compulsory military service in 2011, the Federal Voluntary Service (Bundesfreiwilligendienst) was created, replacing the former Civil Service (Zivildienst).
<b>BULGARIA</b> 	Bulgaria does not yet have specific legislation on volunteering. The Law on Non-Profit Legal Entities (2001) regulates NGOs through tax exemptions introduced in 2006 and 2007. Subsequently, amendments were made to the Corporate Income Tax Law (2006) and the Personal Income Tax Law (2007), introducing tax exemptions for not-for-profit organisations and for donations made to such entities.
<b>CYPRUS</b> 	The Constitution of Cyprus guarantees the right of Association. Law No. 61(I)/2006 establishes the Pan-Cyprian Coordinating Council of Volunteering as the supreme coordinating body. There are specific laws on the registration of NGOs, fundraising and tax benefits. A new draft law on “public utility status” is being developed.
<b>DENMARK</b> 	In Denmark there is a long tradition of creating associations, and freedom of association is such an important fundamental right that there has never been a specific law defining or regulating the associative sector and the organisations of the so-called “third sector”. On the contrary, freedom of association is guaranteed by article §78 of the Grundloven (Danish Constitution). In Denmark, there are two main laws aimed at supporting volunteering and voluntary organisations at local level: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lov om Social Service §18 (Social Services Act), and</li> <li>2. Folkeoplysningsloven (Danish Popular Education Act)</li> </ol>
<b>SPAIN</b> 	In Spain there is National and Regional Legislation. Law 45/2015 defines the rights and duties of volunteers, organisations and beneficiaries, and creates two important bodies: the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Volunteering and the National Volunteering Observatory. The national Law also recognises the skills acquired by volunteers. As regards regional Laws, there are 15 laws on volunteering (e.g. Andalusia, Catalonia, Madrid, the Basque Country, etc.).
<b>ESTONIA</b> 	There is no specific legal framework for volunteering in Estonia, but there are a number of laws that affect volunteering.
<b>FINLAND</b> 	There is no specific legal framework for volunteering in Finland. Various laws partially regulate volunteering.
<b>FRANCE</b> 	There is no specific law for bénévolat, only for volontariat. Informal volunteering continues to be considered a free and private activity, without the need for single legislation. Associations and NGOs are governed by the Law of 1901 on Associations, which ensures a legal balance between freedom of association and fiscal oversight. There are, however, risks that some activities may be classified as “disguised work”, requiring legal attention. The sector is mainly supervised by the Ministry of National Education and Youth.
<b>GREECE</b> 	Greece does not have an extensive, consolidated legal structure on volunteering, but Law 4873/2021 contains mechanisms to protect volunteering.
<b>HUNGARY</b> 	The Law LXXXVIII/2005 law was created with strong involvement of civil society, led by ÖKA. It allows tax exemption for expenses related to volunteering, and refugees and beneficiaries of social support can volunteer without losing benefits. In 2020 there were discussions about revising the law.
<b>LUXEMBOURG</b> 	The Volontariat is regulated by specific laws for young people up to 30 years old. They receive an allowance (up to 20% of the minimum wage), accommodation, food and social security. The Bénévolat has no legal regulation but is guided by the Charte du Bénévolat, which sets out ethical principles and good practices.
<b>IRELAND</b> 	There is no specific legislation for volunteering. The only relevant law is the “Good Samaritan” law.
<b>ITALY</b> 	The Law 266/1991 was the legal basis for volunteering. The 2017 reform introduced the Third Sector Code, recognising and supporting Volunteering Organisations, Social Promotion Associations, Social Enterprises, Philanthropic Entities, Associative Networks, among others.
<b>KOSOVO</b>	There is no comprehensive law on volunteering. However, volunteering is regulated by various scattered laws, such as the Constitution of Kosovo, the Law on Freedom of Association in NGOs and tax Laws (income tax, VAT, etc.).


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LEGAL FRAMEWORK	
	The government strategy 2019–2023 proposes the creation of a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for volunteering.
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b> 	The Law on Volunteering was adopted in 2007, establishing the foundations of long-term organised volunteering and the rights and duties of volunteers and organisations. Volunteering may be organised by: NGOs, public institutions, state bodies, religious communities and municipalities. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the main body in charge.
<b>MALTA</b> 	Regulated by the Voluntary Organisations Act (Act XXII of 2007). However, there is no specific legislation for individual volunteers.
<b>NORWAY</b> 	There is no comprehensive law on volunteering, but there is tax legislation that supports the sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law No. 14 of 1999 exempts NGOs from income and wealth taxes.</li> <li>• Donations to NGOs are tax-deductible.</li> <li>• The 2001 VAT reform exempts NGOs with revenues below €16,000/year from charging VAT.</li> </ul> The Law No. 88/2007 simplifies the registration of voluntary organisations.
<b>PORTUGAL</b> 	Portugal has had a basic legal framework for volunteering since 1998 (Law No. 71/98, of 3 November). Since some aspects of the framework needed further detail and regulation, almost a year later Decree-Law No. 389/99, of 30 September, was published.
<b>SWEDEN</b> 	There is no specific legislation on volunteering in Sweden. Nevertheless, the country guarantees freedom of association and autonomy to organisations. The 2008 Agreement between the State and the civic sector established the principles of cooperation, transparency and trust, but without direct legal effect. Individual volunteers are not entitled to specific social benefits.
<b>SWITZERLAND</b> 	There is no specific national legislation for volunteering. The only exception is the Youth Leave Law (Art. 329e OR), which allows workers under 30 to take one week off for unpaid social or cultural activities. However, the law is little known and rarely applied.
<b>TURKEY</b> 	Turkey has no national law on volunteering – one of the main structural obstacles. There is a single regulation in existence: “Regulation on Voluntary Participation in Municipal Services” (2005). Even so, there are important Laws such as the Law on Associations (2004) and the Law on Foundations (2008) – which facilitate the registration of NGOs, albeit with restrictions. The 11th Development Plan (2019) included, for the first time, volunteering as a national policy, with a focus on young people (15–30 years).

## ➤ Organisations Involved

The profile of organisations involved in volunteering is an important dimension in this comparative analysis. NGOs, not-for-profit organisations and civil society associations are the main bodies for the organisation and capacity-building of volunteering activities and where volunteer registration and activities are formalised.

Some countries have centralised national organisations for the management of volunteering, such as Norway, Denmark, Spain, Hungary and Malta. Countries that do not have this type of umbrella entity show strong associative dynamics, national sectoral agencies, mid-level structures (federations, confederations) and upper-level structures (national coordinating councils). In France and Luxembourg, there is a broad set of national networks and federations.

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED	
<b>GERMANY</b> 	In Germany, there is no centralised national volunteering centre, but rather various associations representing different types of infrastructure at federal level. There are four main types of organisations that involve volunteering and that make up the not-for-profit sector in Germany: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associations (Vereine and Verbände);</li> </ul>




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	ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public utility organisations (gemeinnützige Organisationen), including welfare associations;</li> <li>Community economic enterprises (gemeinwirtschaftliche Unternehmen);</li> <li>Non-profit organisations (Organisationen ohne Erwerbszweck).</li> </ul> <p>Nevertheless, it is possible to observe some key entities in the sector, such as BAGFA – the National Association of Volunteering Agencies (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen), which coordinates the volunteering agencies.</p> <p>Germany's volunteering infrastructure includes approximately:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 413 volunteering agencies (Freiwilligenagenturen)</li> <li>➤ 450 seniors' offices (Seniorenbüros), brought together by the BaS network;</li> <li>➤ 347 self-help contact points (Selbsthilfekontaktstellen)</li> <li>➤ 530 Multigenerational Houses (Mehrgenerationenhäuser), which function as social centres for elderly people, families and children.</li> </ul> <p>There is a National Volunteering Strategy published by the German government, and in 2020 the German Foundation for Civic Engagement and Volunteering (DSEE) was created on the initiative of three federal ministries. It has an annual budget of around 60 million euros.</p> <p>Each federal state has departments dedicated to promoting volunteering, generally linked to the prime minister's office or to specific ministries.</p>
<b>BULGARIA</b> 	<p>Bulgaria does not have a centralised national body for volunteering management. However, the country has more than 16,000 registered NGOs (2019 data). The main areas of activity are: education (34.4%), social services (29.4%), regional development (20%), youth (16.8%), volunteering (16.1%).</p> <p>Notably, 84% of NGOs engage volunteers.</p>
<b>CYPRUS</b> 	<p>The sector comprises organisations with individual or collective members, mid-level structures (federations, confederations) and upper-level structures (national coordinating councils).</p> <p>There are 6 District Volunteering Coordinating Councils (DVCCs), 83 pan-Cypriot NGOs operating at national level and 333 local NGOs (members of the DVCCs).</p>
<b>DENMARK</b> 	<p>The Centre for Voluntary Social Work (Center for Frivilligt Socialt Arbejde) — also known as the Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE) — is the independent national centre dedicated to development, capacity-building and knowledge production in the social volunteering sector. In 2008, this body was replaced by the National Council for Volunteering (Frivilligrådet), a government institution funded by the State Budget.</p>
<b>SPAIN</b> 	<p>In Spain, the Plataforma del Voluntariado de España (PVE) coordinates 80 organisations. In 2020, the PVE launched the White Paper on Volunteering Organisations.</p> <p>Notably, some universities promote volunteering with ECTS credits.</p>
<b>ESTONIA</b> 	<p>Estonia has a considerably high number of registered not-for-profit organisations. In 2014 there were 29,530 not-for-profit organisations, including 801 foundations and 579 religious organisations.</p> <p>Most associations are managed by volunteers. According to 2014 data, only 30.3% of NGOs had paid workers and 32% of NGOs did not involve volunteers.</p> <p>The Local Volunteering Centres and the Estonian Volunteer Network stand out.</p>
<b>FINLAND</b> 	<p>There are no exact figures available on the number of voluntary organisations, but information is available on the number of the main type of voluntary organisations, such as associations. There is a high density of voluntary organisations in Finland.</p> <p>In 2016 there were 143,000 registered associations and more than 30,000 unregistered voluntary associations, citizens' groups and networks.</p>
<b>FRANCE</b> 	<p>In France, the main national stakeholders and networks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>France Bénévolat: the main national volunteering centre, with 250 local units.</li> <li>Tous Bénévoles: digital platform for volunteer matching and promotion.</li> <li>Passerelles et Compétences: connects qualified volunteers with NGOs.</li> <li>Le Mouvement Associatif: federation representing 700 federations and 600,000 local organisations.</li> <li>Benenova: encourages short-term volunteering.</li> <li>HCVA (Haut Conseil à la Vie Associative): advisory body that advises the government on sector policies.</li> </ul>
<b>GREECE</b> 	<p>At national level, there is no recognised centralised council or network coordinating volunteering. The Federation of Non-Governmental Voluntary Organisations (O.E.M.K.O.E.) exists, but since 2021 its activity has been minimal or non-existent.</p> <p>Volunteering and civil society activities in Greece can be divided into two main categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal not-for-profit organisations (including NGOs, philanthropic foundations and not-for-profit institutions).</li> <li>Informal, community-based citizen-led initiatives.</li> </ul>

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	ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
	Some limited coordination occurs through thematic or regional networks, such as THESSDIKTIO: an informal regional network of NGOs that promotes collaboration between local and regional organisations and joint volunteering initiatives.
<b>HUNGARY</b> 	<p>ÖKA coordinated a national network of volunteering centres across all 19 counties. The Ónindító programme (2009–2011) supported the development of volunteering centres and points, but by 2020, many centres had closed for lack of funding.</p>
<b>LUXEMBOURG</b> 	<p>In Luxembourg there are various centralised bodies for the promotion and regulation of volunteering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service National de la Jeunesse: promotes volontariat and supports young people.</li> <li>• Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration: responsible for bénévolat.</li> <li>• Conseil Supérieur du Bénévolat: advisory body with 30 members.</li> <li>• Agence du Bénévolat: promotes volunteering, offers support and manages the opportunities portal.</li> <li>• Maison des Associations: promotes social cohesion and interculturalism.</li> </ul>
<b>IRELAND</b> 	<p>In Ireland, there are more than 267,000 not-for-profit institutions with volunteers, concentrated mainly in the culture, sport and recreational activities sectors. Most organisations have between 3 and 9 volunteers, a sign of sector consolidation. The Volunteering Service Centres (VSCs) collect data from more than 44,000 organisations, revealing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% operate only at municipal level.</li> <li>• 55% operate in the social welfare and health sectors.</li> <li>• 66% of the representatives are men</li> </ul>
<b>ITALY</b> 	<p>In 2018, there were 359,574 not-for-profit organisations, with a strong presence in the north and in the culture and sport sectors. In 2021, the Single National Register of the Third Sector was launched to consolidate data and facilitate access to support.</p>
<b>KOSOVO</b> 	<p>There is no centralised network of volunteering organisations. In 2018, around 50% of active NGOs involved volunteers (down from 59% in 2016).</p>
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b> 	<p>The country does not have a dedicated state agency for volunteering. NGOs play a central role in its implementation.</p>
<b>MALTA</b> 	<p>Malta has centralised state bodies for the management of volunteering. The Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations oversees registration, compliance and policies, and the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) represents 1,600 organisations and promotes training, networking and institutional support.</p>
<b>NORWAY</b> 	<p>The Frivillighet Norge is the main coordinating organisation, with more than 300 members and 50,000 teams and associations. Other influential organisations include the Norwegian Red Cross (43,000 volunteers in 380 local associations), Friends of the Earth Norway (28,000 members) and Norges Vel (founded in 1809, Norway's oldest NGO).</p>
<b>PORTUGAL</b> 	<p>A formal infrastructure for supporting volunteering has existed since 1999, with the creation of the National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering (CNPV). It was composed of representatives of public organisations, various ministries, the Regional Governments and private non-governmental organisations. With its abolition in 2017, its functions were transferred to CASES – António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy, which thus became the entity responsible for driving, supporting, qualifying and publicising volunteering in Portugal. In 2007, the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering (CPV) was established; it arose from the need felt by organisations for an entity that would represent them and defend the rights and interests of volunteers and their organisations in Portugal. In addition, the sector encompasses a markedly heterogeneous set of organisations with a relevant role in the sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associative Movement</li> <li>• Local development organisations</li> <li>• Santas Casas da Misericórdia</li> <li>• Non-governmental development organisations</li> <li>• Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS)</li> <li>• Private sector – Corporate Volunteering</li> <li>• Public sector</li> </ul>

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	ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
	At public level, the Local Volunteer Banks (BLV) stand out – local structures mainly managed by municipalities, which contribute to the promotion, organisation and deepening of volunteering.
<p><b>SWEDEN</b></p> 	<p>The sector is highly institutionalised and historically based on democratic associations. There are 30 million memberships of civil organisations in a population of 9 million.</p> <p>The sector maintains close cooperation with the government, particularly in culture, leisure, housing and social development.</p> <p>Some relevant public Agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ungdomsstyrelsen (Youth)</li> <li>• Socialstyrelsen (Health and Welfare)</li> <li>• Tillväxtverket (Economic Growth)</li> </ul>
<p><b>SWITZERLAND</b></p> 	<p>Various national and regional organisations are active in coordinating volunteering: Benevol Schweiz, Groupe Romand de Promotion du Bénévolat and Conferenza del Volontariato Sociale.</p> <p>In 2012, the Réseau Suisse Bénévolat (RSB) was created, a national network that promotes good-practice exchanges between organisations.</p> <p>Other active organisations include: Swiss Red Cross, Caritas, Greenpeace, Amnesty International, ICVolunteers, and Terre des Hommes.</p>
<p><b>TURKEY</b></p> 	<p>The sector is hierarchical and centralised but with low trust between volunteers and organisations. Few are able to sustain their volunteering programmes without external help.</p> <p>AFAD (the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority, established in 2009) is one of the few examples of effective volunteer coordination, especially following the Izmir earthquake (2020).</p> <p>Companies such as Turkcell, Koç, Sabancı, Boyner and Sutex promote corporate volunteering, with a focus on gender equality and social support.</p>


## ➤ Funding

Another dimension of the comparative analysis lies in the organised public and private funding resources available to volunteer-promoting entities. Most volunteering infrastructure depends on public or private funding for the sustainability of its activities.

Among the 20 countries analysed, there is no overall model. There are cases where permanent public funding predominates, and others where this funding is only occasional, linked to pilot programmes of limited duration. Others adopt centralised state funding models (Denmark, Spain), funding from social gaming structures, as in the case of Finland, and still others where municipal responsibility predominates, as in the case of Germany.

Another particular case of some interest is the Italian case. Firstly, the voluntary service centres are supported by the Single National Fund, which in turn is financed by the mandatory annual contributions calculated by the banking-origin foundations, or by the allocation to Social Economy bodies of the use of unused public buildings, including assets confiscated from organised crime. In the Swiss case, private funding predominates, and in the Swedish case there is less dependence on public resources, but a high dependence on the membership fees paid to OPV by their members.

In the least robust cases, the use of European programme funding is the only source of funding for the sector, as in the case of Bulgaria, Greece and North Macedonia.

	FUNDING
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> 	<p>There is no consolidated picture of the total amount invested by the public sector (federal, state and local level) in volunteering infrastructure, but it is estimated that 75% of funding comes from public sources.</p> <p>Municipalities and regional agencies are the main bodies responsible for the sustainable promotion of volunteering agencies and centres.</p> <p>The Multigenerational Houses (Mehrgenerationenhäuser) programme funds around 500 facilities with 40,000 euros per year each, from the federal government. Other types of infrastructure receive much less financial support.</p> <p>There is also complementarity between European and Private funding, mainly from Urban Development Promotion Programmes and the Rural Development Programme, especially LEADER.</p> <p>However, EU funding is not significant for the volunteering infrastructure in Germany.</p>

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	FUNDING
	Other sources include corporate volunteering with private partners, as well as funds and donations from private foundations.
<b>BULGARIA</b> 	There is no sustainable state funding and organisations depend on one-off projects. The European Solidarity Corps is one of the few sources of long-term funding.
<b>CYPRUS</b> 	Several ministries offer financial support programmes for NGOs to achieve specific objectives in their area of competence. European Union funds and international funds are also important, as is the role of corporate volunteering.
<b>DENMARK</b> 	In Denmark, local and national funding is available, although funding is mainly provided through government subsidies
<b>SPAIN</b> 	In Spain, two-thirds of funding comes from the State and the rest from the private sector. There is some lack of transparency regarding funding by the autonomous communities. Only Andalusia and the Basque Country present plans with detailed budgets.
<b>ESTONIA</b> 	The National Foundation for Civil Society was established in 2008 and is funded by the State budget. Cases of regular public funding to volunteer-promoting entities can be observed.
<b>FINLAND</b> 	In Finland, national and local funding is available. However, the central and important contribution comes from the gaming organisation Veikkaus, which holds the monopoly on the Finnish gaming market. This monopoly situation is the backbone of the Finnish voluntary sector, as it guarantees a sustainable form of funding for the sector.
<b>FRANCE</b> 	There are various main sources, but with less dependence on the State, such as contributions from organisation members, donations and association membership fees, crowdfunding and fundraising events, and partnerships with companies. The FDVA Fund (Fonds pour le Développement de la Vie Associative): allocates public resources to the training and development of volunteering.
<b>GREECE</b> 	The Greek government does not have a structured system of continuous funding to encourage volunteering. Financial support depends mainly on short-term European programmes, supplemented by funds from private foundations and corporate donations. In practical terms, philanthropic foundations remain the main domestic source of funding for voluntary projects. Recent legislative reforms have introduced possibilities for public funding, but usually in the form of contract grants, without guarantees of long-term continuity. In general, funding is one-off and project-based, which hampers organisational planning and sustainability. The THALIS II report (2020), which analysed the main sources of funding for civil society organisations, showed a sectoral diversity but highlighted that European and international programmes predominate. A recent example of major importance is the EEAGRANTS Fund, which offered support to promote civic participation and strengthen the sector's organisational infrastructure.
<b>HUNGARY</b> 	In Hungary, the main sources of funding are European Funds and the National Cooperation Fund. It should be noted that in 2018 the government distributed 4.25 million euros to NGOs, and there has been an increase in cooperation with companies, especially in corporate volunteering programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic did not bring significant additional funding.
<b>LUXEMBOURG</b> 	In Luxembourg, public funding is available in the form of State subsidies for volunteering expenses and support for OPV. In the private context, individual donations and partnerships with companies predominate.
<b>IRELAND</b> 	The main source of funding for volunteering in Ireland comes from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, through an annual budget of around €3.5 million.
<b>ITALY</b> 	Volunteering is supported by a series of mechanisms provided for in national legislation, largely through donations. Firstly, the voluntary service centres are supported by the Single National Fund, which in turn is financed by the mandatory annual contributions from banking-origin foundations.

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	FUNDING
	<p>At the same time, Italian legislation has established specific forms of stable support for Social Economy organisations. The 5x1000 is a method that allows taxpayers to donate a percentage equal to 5 per thousand of their tax to entities that carry out socially relevant activities.</p> <p>Another interesting aspect is access to credit and social loans to fund the institutional activities of Social Economy bodies, and the allocation of the use of unused public buildings, including assets confiscated from organised crime. In this case, there are also forms of tax incentive for entities wishing to submit projects for the recovery of such assets (social bonuses).</p>
<b>KOSOVO</b> 	<p>The main sources of funding for OPV are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign donors (38.1% in 2018).</li> <li>• State institutions (26.6%).</li> </ul> <p>Foreign funding has been decreasing, while state funding has been increasing.</p>
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b> 	<p>In North Macedonia, there are no specific funding mechanisms directly aimed at promoting and supporting volunteering initiatives and structures. National funding earmarked for volunteering is lacking and funding opportunities for volunteering programmes are limited. Most initiatives are funded by international donors or private foundations with offices in North Macedonia, or by European programmes open to the region.</p>
<b>MALTA</b> 	<p>Private funding predominates in Malta, accounting for more than 40%, but there is a notable absence of stable, continuous funding mechanisms for volunteering. The services provided by OPV also raise around 20%, and the remainder is public funding and EU funds.</p> <p>Specific funds include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary Organisations Fund</li> <li>• National Lotteries Good Causes Fund</li> <li>• Civil Society Fund</li> <li>• Malta Community Chest Fund</li> </ul>
<b>NORWAY</b> 	<p>The importance of private households in the funding of volunteering in Norway is significant, exceeding 40%, on a par with government funding. The remainder comes from the private sector.</p>
<b>PORTUGAL</b> 	<p>According to the present study and the results of the OPV survey, the absence of a specific budget is the most frequent response (34.9%), with these being integrated into the organisation's wider activities, and only 13% report having specific programmes for the funding of volunteering activities. Public support, own revenue, individual donations, member fees and fundraising activities are also of some importance. Some OPV mention that the allocation of personal income tax to the Organisation is another way of obtaining funding. Patronage and specific funding programmes are less prominent. The importance of programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps and EEAGRANTS for the funding of volunteering projects should also be mentioned.</p>
<b>SWEDEN</b> 	<p>Sweden shows less dependence on public resources and greater dependence on membership fees than any other country in Europe. However, more recent organisations make greater use of public funding and private donations. More than two-thirds of funding comes from member fees/dues and the OPV own activities, one-third from public funds and around 10% from private and corporate donations.</p>
<b>SWITZERLAND</b> 	<p>Corporate volunteering has grown significantly and constitutes one of the strong sources of funding. Credit Suisse has partnered with 70 NGOs, offering up to 4 days of voluntary work per employee.</p>
<b>TURKEY</b> 	<p>Public funding is scarce and selective, favouring religious or government-aligned organisations.</p>

### ➤ Quality Standards and Awards










The existence of standards and systems for motivating and recognising quality in volunteering is a regular feature of initiatives to promote volunteering.

It is interesting to note that the countries with the most dynamic volunteering (the Nordic countries) are those with the fewest systems for motivating and recognising voluntary initiatives.

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QUALITY STANDARDS AND AWARDS	
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> 	<p>There is a growing number of training programmes in volunteer management, such as those offered by the Akademie für Ehrenamtlichkeit e.V. In turn, BAGFA – Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen has developed a quality label for volunteering agencies, awarded by an independent group of experts. In 2021, 43 agencies held this label. The Multigenerational Houses use a rigorous self-assessment instrument, mandatory for maintaining funding. Each house must conduct regular reviews of its performance.</p>
<p><b>BULGARIA</b></p> 	<p>In Bulgaria, the “The Heroes” Award was created in 2017 by the TimeHeroes platform. This award recognises individuals and organisations that have made an exemplary contribution to the development of the culture of volunteering in the country. Between 2017 and 2020, almost 60 individuals, organisations, informal groups, journalists and companies received the award. On the other hand, created in 2010 by the Astika Foundation, the “Volunteer of the Year” competition is a registered trademark. Any Bulgarian or foreign citizen aged 15 or over who has volunteered in the country in the previous 12 months may be nominated.</p>
<p><b>CYPRUS</b></p> 	<p>There is no code of ethics or awards system, but there are Volunteer Management Handbooks and a Volunteering Portal: <a href="http://www.ethelontis.net">www.ethelontis.net</a>. Funded by EEAGRANTS, this portal was created to modernise and improve volunteer registration. The portal offers a matching function between volunteers and the OPV that register their volunteering needs.</p>
<p><b>DENMARK</b></p> 	<p>There are no centralised, standardised award systems, nor quality standard systems applicable to the voluntary sector in Denmark.</p>
<p><b>SPAIN</b></p> 	<p>The creation of quality and award instruments in the sector is under development. Of particular note is ICONG (Instituto para la Calidad de las ONG), which promotes the “ONG con Calidad” label.</p>
<p><b>ESTONIA</b></p> 	<p>A Code of Good Practice on volunteering has been drawn up, describing the principles of good relations between organisations and volunteers. In 2015, the “Volunteer Friend” quality standard was created, which recognises professionalism and the high level of volunteer involvement in Estonian NGOs.</p>
<p><b>FINLAND</b></p> 	<p>There are no universal ethical codes or quality standards systems applicable to the voluntary sector in Finland.</p>
<p><b>FRANCE</b></p> 	<p>There is no national code of ethics, but each organisation may adopt its own “Volunteer Charter”.</p>
<p><b>GREECE</b></p> 	<p>Currently, there are no specific ethical standards or principles in Greece that regulate volunteering. Some legal frameworks and public registers have introduced basic obligations for organisations working with volunteers — for example, a clear definition of roles, absence of remuneration and safe working conditions. Several organisations highlight that the absence of solid regulation creates the risk that the State will transfer essential public responsibilities (such as social services) to civil society, without guaranteeing the necessary support and resources. Another mechanism is the adoption of European Standards. Many Greek organisations seek to obtain the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) Quality Label, which has become a practical benchmark for good practice and transparency in organised volunteering. The THALIS assessment system can also be considered a recognised quality tool.</p>
<p><b>HUNGARY</b></p> 	<p>There is no formal national quality standard. ÖKA has developed an internal quality system for volunteering centres.</p>
<p><b>LUXEMBOURG</b></p> 	<p>The Volunteering Charter establishes specific guidelines equivalent to a code of ethics to be followed by OPV and volunteers.</p>
<p><b>IRELAND</b></p> 	<p>Development of a national quality standard based on the British model Investing in Volunteers (IIV).</p>

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QUALITY STANDARDS AND AWARDS	
 <b>ITALY</b>	Social Economy entities are scrutinised through the single national register, a public database that allows access to the main data on these organisations. Beyond the system of legal obligations for volunteer-promoting entities, there is no information on awards or motivation systems for quality in volunteering.
 <b>KOSOVO</b>	Law No. 03/L-145 defines the terms of volunteering but provides no system for its promotion and recognition.
 <b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b>	There are no codes or special provisions in North Macedonia to ensure ethical and quality standards for volunteering.
 <b>MALTA</b>	There are no specific tools available in Malta to ensure ethical and quality standards in volunteering. In turn, volunteers working in specific sectors (health, environment, culture, etc.) are generally required to observe the general codes of ethics and quality standards applicable in those sectors.
 <b>NORWAY</b>	There is no official code of ethics or awards system.
 <b>PORTUGAL</b>	<p>One of the conclusive findings of this study indicates that, according to the OPV, the most important key factor for the development of volunteering infrastructure in Portugal is the recognition of volunteers and of the volunteering activities. Several practices stand out, conducted by entities such as CASES, CPV, IPDJ and R-VES, as well as some OPV aimed at recognising and distinguishing OPV and volunteers. Some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASES Volunteer Municipality Award</li> <li>• CASES Volunteer Academy Quality Label</li> <li>• CPV Portuguese Capital of Volunteering</li> <li>• CPV Portuguese Volunteering Trophy</li> <li>• IPDJ Regional Awards for Good Practice in Youth Volunteering</li> <li>• R-VES Ser+ Award</li> <li>• Cascais Municipal Council Volunteer School Award</li> <li>• Cascais Municipal Council Volunteering Festival / Voluntary Work Recognition Ceremony</li> <li>• Montepio Associação Mutualista Youth Volunteering Award</li> <li>• UBI Volunteering – Award of certificates to volunteers – UBI</li> </ul>
 <b>SWEDEN</b>	There is a National Validation Commission (Valideringsdelegationen) to improve the quality and recognition of voluntary activities, especially among young people. Some quality standards are decided locally by municipalities.
 <b>SWITZERLAND</b>	In 2001, the Dossier Bénévolat was created, a national certificate (available in three languages) that officially recognises voluntary work and serves as a tool for personal and professional development.
 <b>TURKEY</b>	Although there is no set of national standards for the quality of volunteering, some umbrella organisations have created their own standards, such as TEDMER (Turkey Ethical Values Centre), which works on establishing inter-institutional codes and standards.

➤ **Systematic Research**


Most of the countries analysed do not present a regular research landscape on volunteering. Such regular work is mainly observed in countries such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain.

Countries such as Bulgaria, Cyprus and Kosovo show a weak dynamic of regular study on volunteering, which constitutes a barrier not only to the development and recognition of volunteering but also to the definition of strategic objectives for its long-term sustainability and development.

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SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH	
<p><b>GERMANY</b></p> 	<p>Germany has an extensive research tradition on volunteering and civil society. Various universities, private institutes and research centres study topics such as trends and developments in volunteering, as well as its social impact.</p> <p>Main surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freiwilligensurvey (FWS) – National Volunteering Survey, funded by the government since 1999, focused on individual volunteering.</li> <li>• ZiviZ-Survey – Study on civil society organisations, including associations, foundations, cooperatives and not-for-profit companies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>BULGARIA</b></p> 	<p>Since the Bulgarian government neither conducts nor funds systematic studies on the sector, there is a shortage of official data. Nevertheless, the Bulgarian Centre for Non-Profit Law (BCNL) carries out regular research on the Social Economy and NGOs.</p> <p>One of the most recent studies, published in 2020, analysed society's attitudes towards the Social Economy, including questions on volunteering.</p> <p>The main results indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an increase in the percentage of people who have taken part in voluntary activities: 9% in 2020, compared with 6.4% in 2015 and 3.8% in 2018</li> <li>• growing perception that the sector contributes positively to society and protects people's rights, especially after the COVID-19 crisis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CYPRUS</b></p> 	<p>There is a shortage of systematic studies on volunteering in Cyprus, which limits the strategic development of the sector. Unlike in other countries, the sector has not been the subject of any substantial empirical or theoretical exploration. This lack of research data constitutes a barrier to the development and recognition of volunteering, as well as to the definition of strategic objectives for its long-term sustainability and development.</p>
<p><b>DENMARK</b></p> 	<p>Since 2010, volunteering and its structure have been monitored through the Frivilligrapporten – a report published every two years by the Danish Institute for Volunteering.</p>
<p><b>SPAIN</b></p> 	<p>In Spain, some progress has been made in the production of studies. The Plataforma de Voluntariado de España (PVE) created the Volunteering Observatory in 2007, producing studies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Así somos” (2018)</li> <li>• “La acción voluntaria” (2017)</li> <li>• “Voluntariado universitario” (2020)</li> </ul> <p>However, challenges remain, linked to the lack of primary data, difficulties in defining and measuring volunteering, dispersion of sources and weak collaboration from volunteer-promoting organisations.</p>
<p><b>ESTONIA</b></p> 	<p>Some national studies on volunteering activities have existed since 2009. A second study was carried out in 2013 and an update was planned for 2020. The team was unable to access it at the time of the present Report.</p>
<p><b>FINLAND</b></p> 	<p>Studies based on volunteering are not abundant. Only a few doctoral studies and academic works; the need for more research is acknowledged.</p> <p>In 2015 a Working Group was set up to coordinate the general conditions of volunteering. This was an important step in analysing the overall landscape of volunteering. There is minimal research on volunteering in Finland.</p>
<p><b>FRANCE</b></p> 	<p>Reliable studies on volunteering exist in France, but they are not carried out systematically. There are institutes that conduct studies in the field of volunteering, such as Recherches et Solidarités. Universities are also active in research related to volunteering.</p>
<p><b>GREECE</b></p> 	<p>Greece does not yet have a national structure for systematic research on volunteering. There is no national observatory or statistical mechanism dedicated to the topic, and the available data generally come from the Eurobarometer and Eurostat reports. Law 4873/2021 introduced obligations, but the data collected have not yet been systematised or publicly disseminated.</p> <p>In addition, informal volunteering, widely practised in the country, remains poorly quantified, meaning that there are no comprehensive national data.</p> <p>Even so, important initiatives can be identified, such as the THALIS project, a mapping and evaluation service of 700 NGOs carried out by the University of the Peloponnese.</p> <p>The project, which runs in cycles (2012–2015, 2018–2020), seeks to improve the development and credibility of NGOs, promoting quality standards and rebuilding public trust in civil society.</p>
<p><b>HUNGARY</b></p> 	<p>Hungary was a pioneer in applying the ILO Manual for measuring voluntary work. Data have been collected regularly since 2011. Some studies show regional variations: for example, Budapest has a lower volunteering rate (11.3%) compared with other cities (up to 34.4%).</p>
<p><b>LUXEMBOURG</b></p> 	<p>There is little research on volunteering, stemming from the absence of up-to-date and comprehensive data. The lack of legal recognition hampers effective public policies.</p>

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SYSTEMATIC RESEARCH	
	
<b>IRELAND</b> 	There is no systematic research, but a proposal is under way to adopt the ILO Manual for the Measurement of Voluntary Work.
<b>ITALY</b> 	No data in the CEV report, although it is clear that there are studies and research centres carrying out projects with some regularity.
<b>KOSOVO</b> 	In Kosovo there are no official statistics on volunteering and there is no functional system for recording volunteers, volunteer hours or demographic data, but the KCSF (Kosovo Civil Society Foundation) has been conducting regular studies since 2011. Although these are not official statistics, as no official surveys have yet been carried out, it does not specifically address volunteering but civil society in general Despite various attempts by several organisations to create a system to register volunteers and their work, assessing voluntary engagement in civil society remains difficult. There is no functional system with comprehensive data on the number of volunteers, the number of volunteering hours, the types of voluntary work or the demographic profile of volunteers.
<b>NORTH MACEDONIA</b> 	In North Macedonia, there is a notable absence of regular and systematic research on volunteering, although it is mentioned in some studies on the non-governmental sector, civic activism or philanthropy. The existing research reveals that informal volunteering predominates and that the level of awareness of community engagement is markedly low.
<b>MALTA</b> 	Data related to volunteering are systematically measured by the National Statistics Institute under the National Survey on Income and Living Conditions, carried out annually, but it is difficult to find recent and complete versions of this survey online. There are currently no data available on the social and economic impact of volunteering in Malta.
<b>NORWAY</b> 	The Statistics Norway conducts regular studies on volunteering, but not on an annual basis. The Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary Sector also publishes relevant studies, funded by ministries. Even so, there is a perceived need for greater consistency in annual data collection.
<b>PORTUGAL</b> 	There is no systematic research system on volunteering in Portugal, and the existing studies are one-off initiatives. The first known study on volunteering in Portugal dates from 2001 and was published by the National Commission for the International Year of Volunteers – “Profile of Volunteering in Portugal”, by the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. Under EYV2011, two studies were carried out in Portugal: the first was a follow-up to the 2001 study (Characterisation of Volunteering in Portugal) and the second concerned the activity and functioning of the Local Volunteer Banks in Portugal. The economic impact of volunteering was measured by a preparatory study carried out by the Employment and Vocational Training Observatory, dating from 2008. More recently, the Survey on Volunteer Work (ITV) carried out by CASES in partnership with INE stands out. This survey is one of the main official statistical sources on volunteering in Portugal, enabling comparison with other countries. In addition, there are various studies, such as those promoted by the Fundação Eugénio de Almeida, Animar and the Diagnosis of NGOs in Portugal (2015–2024), a report by the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, which includes data and recommendations for the sector. Other studies on volunteering in Portugal are published by the CEV – Centre for European Volunteering
<b>SWEDEN</b> 	Sweden carries out some studies on a periodic basis, with Ersta Sköndal University College and the Stockholm Institute of Education standing out as leading centres in volunteering research.
<b>SWITZERLAND</b> 	The Federal Statistical Office (SFSO) regularly publishes data on volunteering.
<b>TURKEY</b> 	Institutions such as TÜSEV and SRKAM promote studies on the Social Economy, but there is little funding for regular studies. Cooperation between universities and NGOs is growing, but is considered still insufficient.

## V. OVERVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING IN PORTUGAL

### V.1. Framework for Volunteering in the Portuguese Context

Portugal has had a basic legal framework for volunteering since 1998 (Law No. 71/98, of 3 November). Since some aspects of the framework needed further detail and regulation, almost a year later Decree-Law No. 389/99, of 30 September, was published.

In accordance with the basic legal regime of Portuguese volunteering (Law No. 71/98, Article 4), the organisations legally authorised to recruit and coordinate volunteers are the public entities of the central, regional or local administration, or other public or private legal persons, as well as socially recognised organisations that fulfil the conditions for integrating volunteers and coordinating their activities. The sector therefore covers a very heterogeneous set of organisations. The interlocutors consulted consider this to be an outdated Law that does not reflect current practices, highlighting the need for revision and clarification of dimensions such as the concept of volunteering, areas of activity and dimensions of volunteering and the conditions for the practice of volunteering.

In Portugal, volunteering is also shaped by the country's cultural and religious heritage. The Church was the first institution to provide voluntary assistance inspired by the Christian principle of charity. The last decade of the 19th century marks a turning point in volunteering with the institutionalisation of Social Work. According to the Portuguese National Report of the Centre for European Volunteering, up to the 21st century there was no formal support infrastructure for volunteering, until the creation of the National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering (CNPV) in 1999, a Portuguese public body integrated within the Ministry of Labour and Solidarity. It comprised representatives of public organisations, various ministries, the Regional Governments and private non-governmental organisations, encompassing a wide range of volunteering activities.

**Figure 9. Mission and Composition of the National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering (CNPV)**



The CNPV was dissolved in 2017 through Decree-Law No. 39/2017. Its functions were transferred to CASES – António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy, which thereby became the entity responsible for promoting, supporting, qualifying and raising awareness of volunteering in Portugal.

Figure 10. Purpose and support measures of CASES – António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy



In addition, the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering (CPV) was established in 2007, in response to the need among organisations for a representative body to defend the rights and interests of volunteers and their organisations in Portugal. The CPV currently brings together 48 volunteering and volunteer-promoting organisations — including individual associations, federations and confederations — with diverse objectives and spheres of activity, of local or national scope.

Figure 11. Purpose and objectives of the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering (CPV)



Overall, the entities consulted take a positive view of the work of both CASES and the CPV, recognising their contribution to the professionalisation of the sector and to collaborative work among various relevant stakeholders. In this regard, examples worth mentioning include the awareness-raising activities for volunteers and OPV, and the Training and Awareness-Raising Frameworks developed by CASES, as well as the creation of Working Groups<sup>7</sup> with confederated and invited external entities promoted by the CPV.

<sup>7</sup> Working Group 1 – Training and dissemination of good practices/Quality in volunteer management; Working Group 2 – Monitoring of knowledge and practices related to Volunteering; Working Group 3 – CPV Youth; Working Group 4 – Local Volunteering Agenda/Dynamisation of Local Volunteering.

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Even so, the information gathered indicates that there is a need to deepen collaborative work, the exchange of practices and experience, and advocacy.

**V.2. Volunteers**➤ **Statistical data**

As in other countries, no recent data on the number of volunteers in Portugal are available; the most recent figures date from 2018.

The dynamics of volunteering in Portugal declined between the two periods of volunteer data collection conducted by CASES and INE (2012 and 2018); this change, however, must be read in light of a shift in the methodology employed.

The 2012 Survey on Volunteer Work (ITV) was a pilot survey, carried out as an annex to the Employment Survey for the 3rd quarter of 2012. The ITV was based on a methodology that included informal volunteering, that is, volunteering activities on behalf of individuals with a family relationship, that is, support provided to family members – which was not the case in 2018.

As a result, the 2012 volunteering rate stood at 11.5% — that is, approximately 1,040,000 residents aged 15 and over took part in at least one formal and/or informal volunteering activity. Six years later, a clear decline is evident across all indicators. In 2012, volunteering was predominantly undertaken by women (though with meaningful male participation), holders of higher education qualifications, aged between 25 and 44, resident in northern Portugal, and engaged primarily in social action.

Six years on, the change in volunteer profile is visible across several dimensions. In 2018, a change in profile can be seen, with the highest rate in the youth age group (15–24), suggesting a rejuvenation of volunteering, or an increase in youth volunteering resulting from certain public policies, with a leading role for the IPDJ and for the development of volunteering in higher education. At the same time, the volunteering rate of those aged 65 or over fell from 7.3% to 4.2%.

**Table 8. Number of Volunteers and Total volunteering rate (formal + informal) in 2012 and 2018, Portugal**

	2012		2018	
	Number of Volunteers	Total volunteering rate (formal + informal) (%)	Number of Volunteers	Total volunteering rate (formal + informal) (%)
Total	1,038,464	11.5	694,454	7.8
<b>Sex</b>				
Men	442,838	10.3	312,200	7.6
Women	595,626	12.7	382,253	8.1
<b>Age</b>				
15-24	130,346	11.6	122,557	11.3
25-44	406,466	13.1	225,902	8.6
45-64	357,216	12.7	242,280	8.3
65+	144,436	7.3	103,714	4.6
<b>Marital status</b>				

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	2012		2018	
	Number of Volunteers	Total volunteering rate (formal + informal) (%)	Number of Volunteers	Total volunteering rate (formal + informal) (%)
Single	320,116	11.7	258,281	9.1
Married	590,110	11.9	337,915	7.3
Widowed	56,947	7.5	37,107	5.1
Divorced or separated but still legally married	71,291	12.8	61,150	9.2
<b>Level of education</b>				
Up to Basic – 3rd cycle	520,568	8.6	256,502	4.9
None	30,991	3.5	10,286	1.7
Basic – 1st Cycle	173,811	7.8	61,956	3.2
Basic – 2nd Cycle	99,131	9.0	48,320	5.3
Basic – 3rd Cycle	216,635	11.8	135,940	7.6
Secondary and Post-secondary	236,577	14.7	187,581	9.7
Higher	281,319	21.3	250,372	15.1
<b>Employment status</b>				
Employed	597,673	12.8	431,748	8.8
Unemployed	114,267	13.1	37,171	10.5
Inactive	326,524	9.4	225,535	6.3

Source: INE – Survey on Volunteer Work, 2012/2018

The 2018 data also show a greater gender balance in volunteering. There is a relative increase in male volunteers compared with 2012.

One of the characteristics that remains during this period is the importance of the level of education, which is decisive in the choice to volunteer. It is at the highest levels (higher education) that the greatest share of volunteers in Portugal is recorded, and at the lowest levels the smallest share.

The distribution of volunteer work by marital status is somewhat homogeneous, but it is among single and divorced or separated people that the highest uptake is recorded.

Also of note, most volunteer work was carried out within social economy entities, and that, from a territorial perspective, there are no marked differences, this variable being more homogeneous, although lower volunteering is recorded in the Algarve and Madeira.

Lastly, the volunteering rate observed was very similar for the employed and unemployed population, being lower, however, among inactive individuals. In 2018, an increase in the unemployed population is observed, and this became the group that volunteers the most.

Although there are no recent data, and the exact number of regular volunteers in Portugal is not known, estimates suggest there are more than one and a half million. The 48 entities that make up the Portuguese Confederation of Volunteering alone represent around seven hundred thousand volunteers.

**Final Report**➤ **Profile of volunteers based on the OPV survey**

Although the Questionnaire administered is not representative of the OPV, let alone of the volunteers existing in Portugal, the data obtained allow a view of their profile to be formed.

The OPV surveyed indicate a total of 26,900 volunteers, the majority of whom are women (74.4%). In terms of age, a relatively balanced distribution across the various age groups considered can be observed; nevertheless, notably, that almost 16% of the volunteers were over 65 years old.

**Figure 12. Volunteers (excluding Governing Officers) active in the Organisation (or approximate estimate) in 2024**

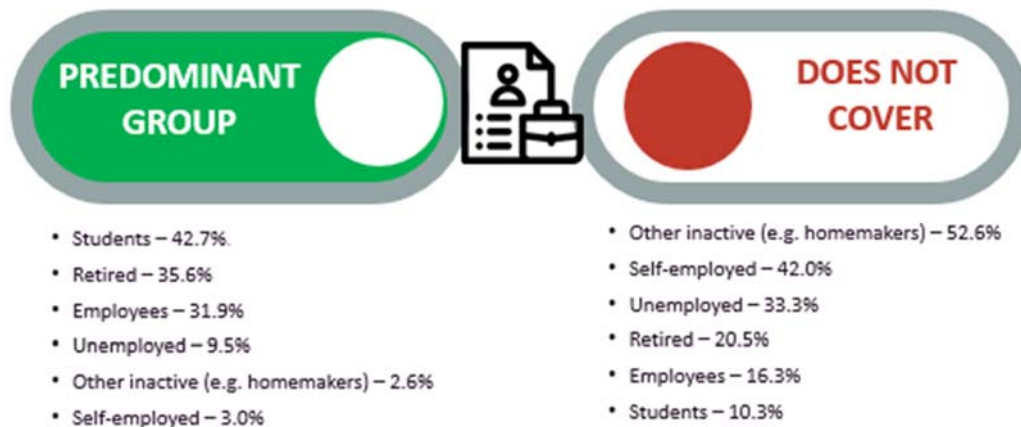


Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

In the profile of beneficiaries regarding their employment status, it stands out that students are the predominant group in 42% of the OPV surveyed, with only 10% reporting that they do not include students. Retired people and employees are also important groups in many OPV. Conversely, volunteers classified as “other inactive” and “self-employed” are the groups most often reported by the OPV surveyed as not being included.

**Figure 13. Active volunteers by employment status**

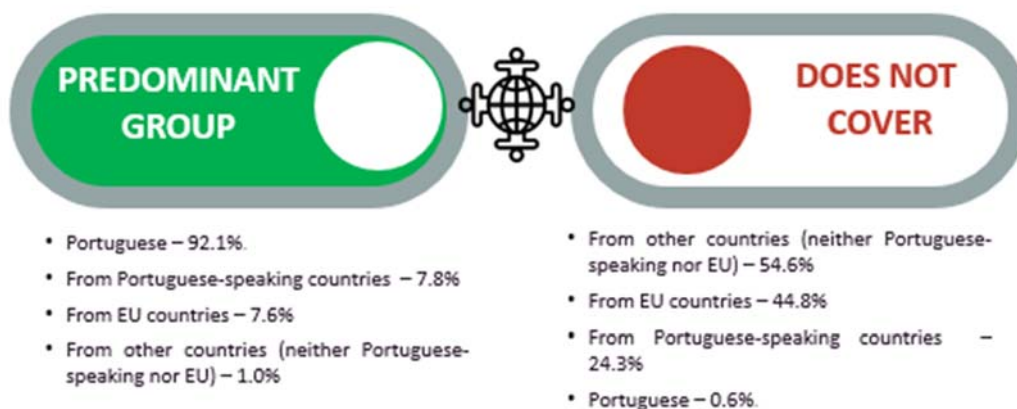
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Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

In terms of nationality, a great preponderance of Portuguese is observed, and notably, that almost one-quarter of the OPV surveyed report not including volunteers from Portuguese-speaking countries, a figure that rises to 44.8% if the origin is an EU country and to 54.6% if it is of another nationality.

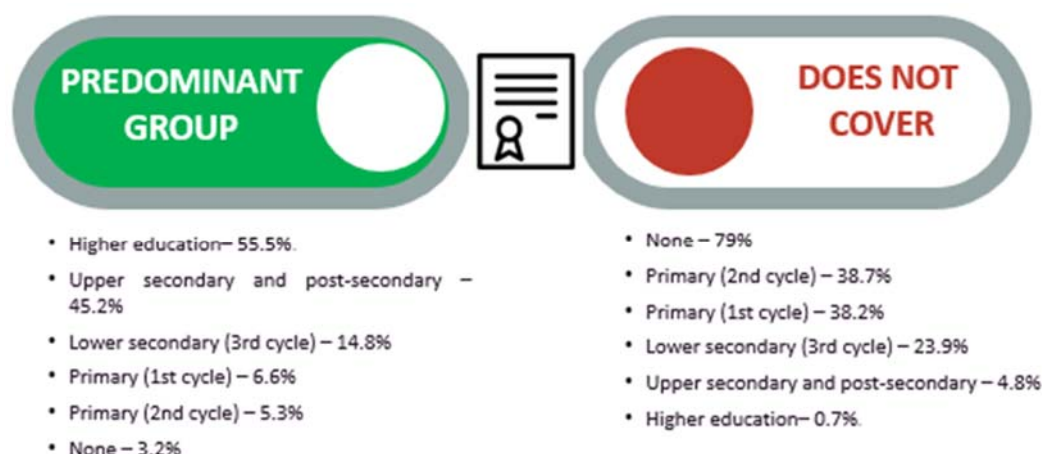
Figure 14. Active volunteers by nationality



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

Finally, in terms of educational attainment, it is noted that the higher qualification levels form the predominant group in a larger percentage of OPV, and it should also be mentioned that 79% of the OPV report not including people without a complete level of qualification.

Figure 15. Active volunteers, by level of educational attainment



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

In summary, and based on the questionnaire data, the typical volunteer, considering the OPV surveyed, is mostly a woman, with high qualification levels, distributed among students, retired people or employees. The age distribution is balanced, but a relevant presence of people over the age of 65 stands out. Volunteers of Portuguese nationality predominate, since many OPV do not include foreign volunteers. In addition, most OPV do not involve people without full qualifications, reinforcing the predominance of participants with higher education.

It should be noted, in parallel, that some of the entities consulted pointed to a perception of youth volunteering as usually linked to causes and with greater limitations regarding time and commitment, with a preference for activities with lower demands in terms of regularity or duration. There are, however, other OPV that report a growing interest in skills-based volunteering, which can add something to young people in professional terms.

### V.3. Volunteer-promoting organisations and volunteering activities

#### ➤ Profile of volunteer-promoting organisations

Volunteering in Portugal is marked by the high heterogeneity of the organisations that work with volunteers and promote volunteering activities. The following table summarises the profile of the main entities usually related to volunteering activities.

Table 9. Profile of the main volunteer-promoting entities

Entity profile	Role in the sector
Associative Movement	There are various forms of associations in Portugal, such as associations of volunteer firefighters, consumer protection, education, students, families, immigrants, young people, women, parents, people with disabilities, environment, sport, leisure, local development and cultural activities. Volunteering plays a central role in the activity of these organisations
Local development organisations	Local development organisations were created after accession to the European Union. They work in training, adult education, research and development, environmental protection, citizenship, gender equality, social and territorial cohesion, active ageing, ecology and environment, community health and healthy eating, short supply chains and family farming, human rights, citizenship education, participation and citizenship, community

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Entity profile	Role in the sector
	development, governance and participatory democracy, etc. They play a relevant role in the sector.
Santas Casas da Misericórdia	The first Santa Casa da Misericórdia was established in 1498, as a charitable institution dedicated to improving social and health problems. Today, they focus on providing healthcare, education and cultural opportunities to the most disadvantaged. There are around 400 Santas Casas da Misericórdia in Portugal, brought together in an organisation that represents their interests, the União das Misericórdias. Volunteering plays a key role in their activity.
Non-governmental development organisations	These are private not-for-profit structures. They work mainly in the fields of development cooperation, development education, humanitarian aid and emergency aid. Naturally, some are decisive in the sector.
Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS)	These institutions are not-for-profit, private-initiative organisations that seek to provide an organised response to the moral duty of solidarity and justice among individuals, managed by the State or by a municipal political body. Most IPSS in Portugal are Santas Casas da Misericórdia, parishes and social centres, mutual benefit associations and social solidarity associations. They constitute one of the main vehicles of volunteering supply and have been promoted and led, to a large extent, by volunteers.
Cooperatives	There are various types of cooperatives – agricultural, credit, housing and construction, consumer/marketing, services, culture, education, fisheries, crafts, worker production and, increasingly, cooperatives focused on social solidarity. The role of these cooperatives in community well-being is unquestionable: they create structures that enable the collective mobilisation of time and resources for social causes, facilitate the participation of citizens in community initiatives and help to strengthen social cohesion, solidarity and socio-economic justice.
Private sector – Corporate/Company Volunteering	Corporate involvement in volunteering is currently diverse. There are multiple examples of corporate mobilisation in favour of numerous social causes, support for natural disasters, aid for disadvantaged people and the provision of human and material resources. Corporate volunteering is, in most cases, one of the instruments that companies use in the exercise of their corporate responsibility. They support various activities, such as time banks, support for specific initiatives or matching individual, group projects, financial and material contributions and donations, Volunteering Days, among others. The main stakeholders are mostly large companies, but there is a growing interest, even from smaller companies. GRACE, an association that brings together a set of responsible companies committed to the principles of sustainability in their various dimensions and to the exercise of active corporate citizenship, and which strongly promotes volunteering, had 100 members in 2012 and now has around 370 member companies.
University Sector	HEIs have been increasingly recognising that volunteering represents a remarkable example of civic participation and a learning platform for a range of transversal skills that are crucial when entering the labour market; therefore, it becomes essential that higher education institutions organise themselves and incorporate it into their culture, valuing and promoting it, since volunteering, in itself, contributes to the creation of an educational environment appropriate to the aims of higher education institutions (Article 8(1)(b) of the RJIES). The Higher Education Volunteering Network, known as R-VES, has been formally established since October 2019, with 18 HEIs and currently has 25 public and private HEIs.
Public sector	The government's involvement in the promotion of volunteering is reflected in the legal framework laid down for volunteering and also in the powers assigned to CASES in the pursuit of volunteering policies. CASES is consulted on new legislation and invited to support the development of specific projects. Also at public level, the Local Volunteer Banks (BLV) are local structures generally (though not exclusively) managed by municipalities, which contribute to the promotion, organisation and deepening of volunteering. The BLV were created on the recommendation of the National Commission for the International Year of Volunteers (2001) and have been a reality since 2002. From 2008 onwards, the creation of these structures (under this or other designations) may be

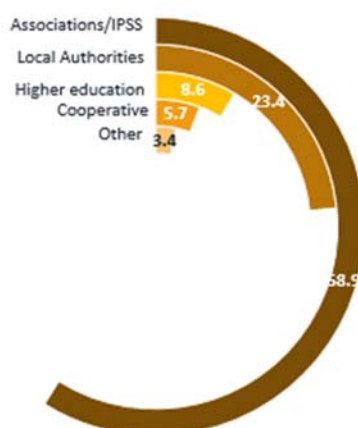
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Entity profile	Role in the sector
	<p>formalised through a Protocol with the National Council for the Promotion of Volunteering and, subsequently, with CASES. It should be noted that the absence of such a protocol does not prevent the existence and functioning of these structures.</p> <p>In addition, the public sector includes a relevant set of entities with a decisive role in supporting and/or promoting volunteering activities, among others: the IPDJ – Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth; the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage, the Directorate-General for Reintegration and Prison Services, the Directorate-General for Education, the APA – Portuguese Environment Agency and the ANPC – National Emergency and Civil Protection Authority.</p>

Source: Adapted from VEV (2012), Volunteering infrastructure in Europe – chapter 23 Portugal.

The responses to the questionnaire administered to a set of OPV registered with CASES, although not representative of the OPV universe, allow an overall view of the profile of the OPV and of the volunteering activities they carry out. The results show that most of these entities are associative in nature and/or correspond to Private Social Solidarity Institutions (IPSS), accounting for around 60% of the total. Despite this predominance, there is also significant involvement of local authorities and higher education institutions in the development of volunteering activities.

Figure 16. Type of Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (OPV)



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

In the case of local authorities, their involvement in volunteering mainly occurs as promoters of Local Volunteer Banks (BLV), which are local structures that facilitate volunteering and which, acting in a

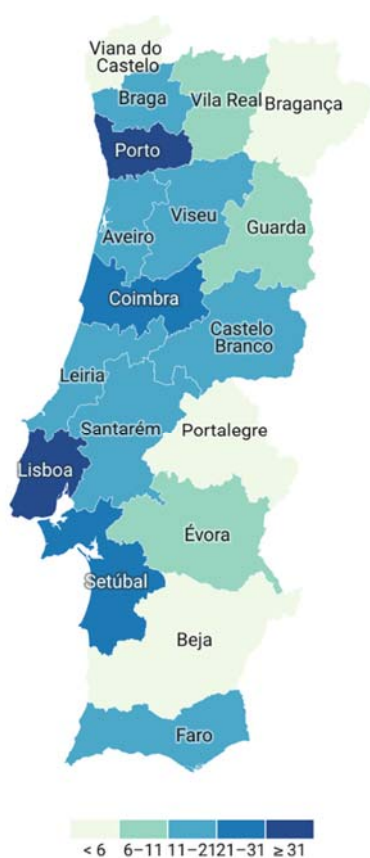
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subsidiary capacity and benefiting from the proximity and knowledge of the characteristics of each community, contribute to the promotion, organisation and deepening of volunteering.

The triangulation of the information gathered indicates that there are significantly different realities among the BLV, with varying levels of activity and involvement in the promotion of volunteering; political recognition and the allocation of human resources are essential for them to effectively fulfil their mission.

The territorial intervention of the OPV shows a strong concentration in the coastal districts, particularly in Lisbon, Porto and Braga, but also in districts such as Aveiro, Coimbra, Setúbal and Faro. In contrast, the “interior” and southern districts, such as Bragança, Vila Real, Portalegre, Évora and Beja, register the lowest volumes of intervention by the OPV. A clear pattern can therefore be observed of greater activity in the coastal and urban areas, associated with higher population and institutional density and intervention needs, while the northern, central and Alentejo “interior” shows lower levels.

**Figure 17. Territorial scope of the volunteering activities undertaken by the OPV**

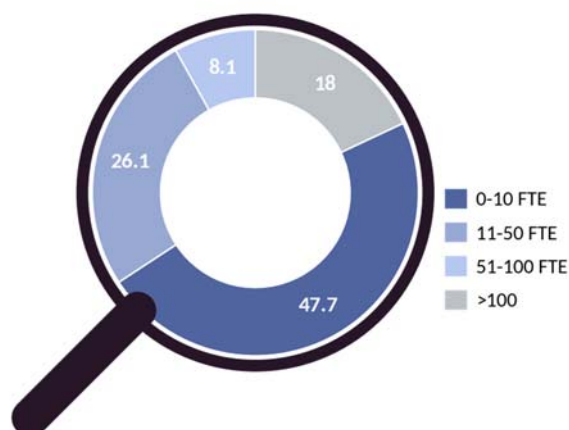


Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

As regards organisational size, measured by the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) workers, there is significant heterogeneity among the OPV. In the specific case of Associations and IPSS, almost half of the organisations have a small structure, with 0 to 10 paid workers, while around 26% have a staff of more than fifty workers. These data reveal the coexistence of small-scale organisations with others of substantial size, reflecting different operational capacities and levels of professionalisation.

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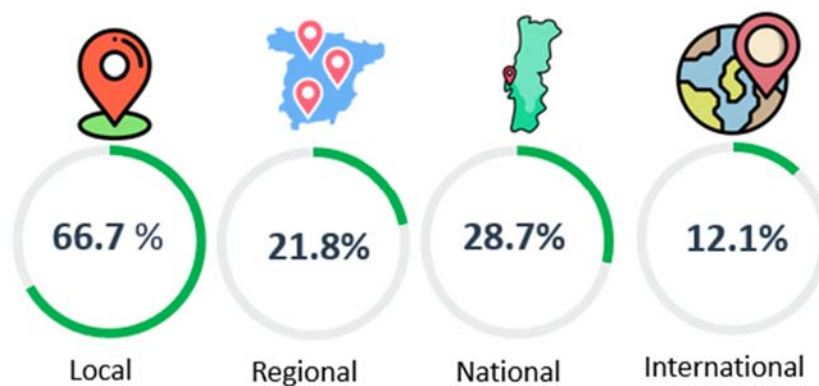
Figure 18. Number of paid full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in OPV Associations and IPSS (%)



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

With regard to the territorial coverage of volunteering activities, most of the OPV (around two-thirds) carry out their intervention predominantly at local level. However, it is also worth noting that more than a quarter of the organisations have national activity and that 12.1% also operate in an international context. These results show a diverse distribution of scales of intervention, with a predominance of the local level but with a significant presence of organisations with wider reach.

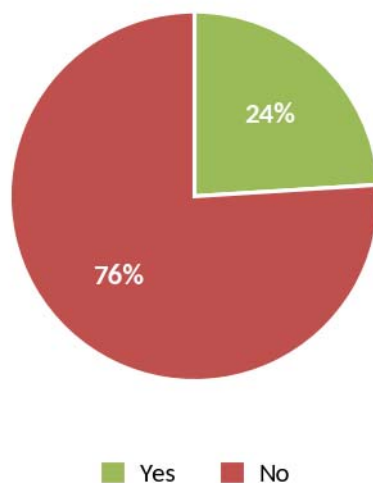
Figure 19. Territorial scope of the volunteering activities



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

In addition, the OPV with national activity tend, more frequently, to have branches, subsidiaries or other forms of territorial representation. In fact, although most organisations (76.1%) do not have decentralised structures, around 23.9% report having this type of representation (Table 14). It is also worth mentioning that these organisations with wider territorial presence have, on average, a larger size in number of workers, suggesting a correlation between organisational scale and the geographical breadth of intervention.

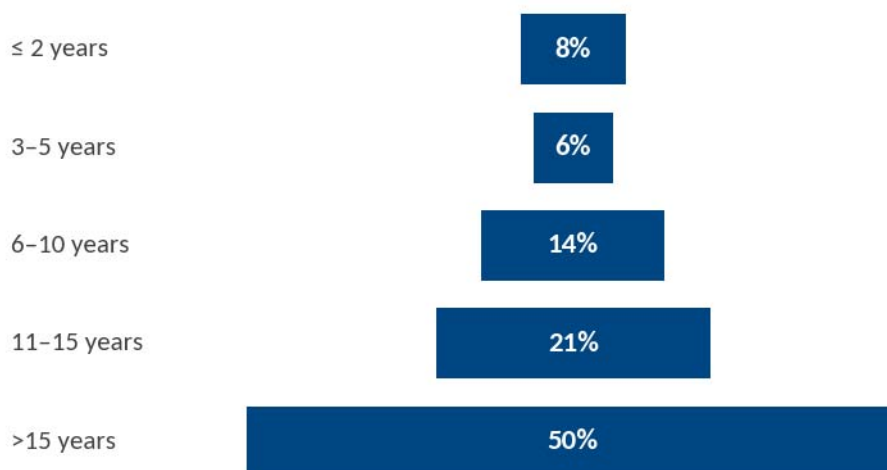
Figure 20. Existence of branches/subsidiaries/representations



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The data show that most OPV have a long history in the development of volunteering activities. Half (50%) have more than 15 years of experience, demonstrating maturity and consolidation of practices in this area. Only a small proportion has a shorter track record: 6% have between 3 and 5 years of activity, and 8% have up to 2 years. Overall, the sector is characterised by experienced organisations, with strong stability and continuity in voluntary work.

Figure 21. Years of experience the Organisation has in developing volunteering activities



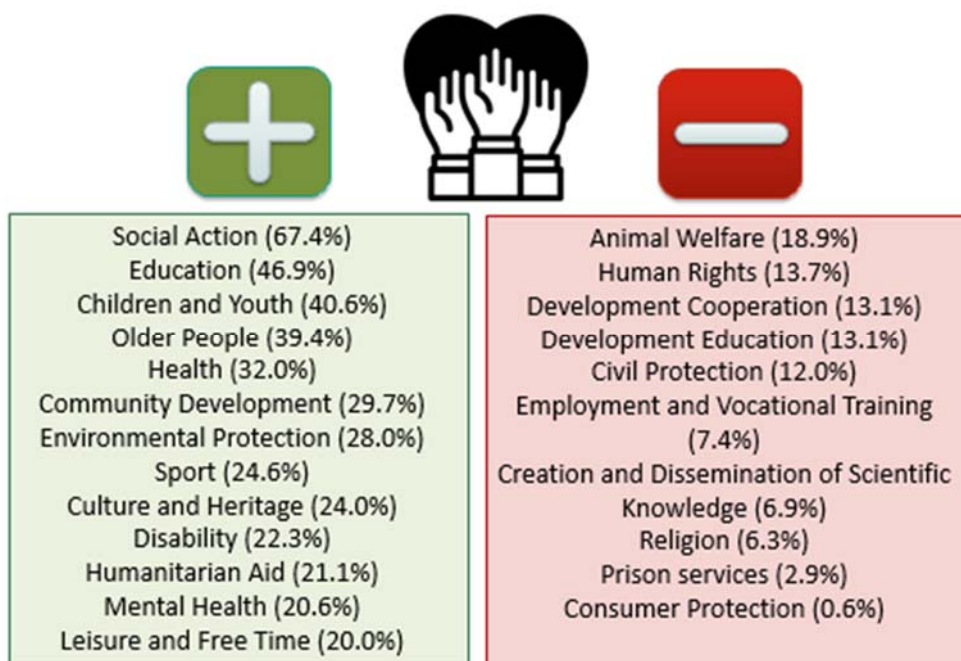
Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

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## ➤ Volunteering activities carried out

The range of thematic areas covered by volunteering activities is markedly diverse, albeit with a concentration in the areas of social action, education and Children and Youth. Initiatives targeting the Elderly, Health and Community Development also stand out. More specific or specialised areas, such as Consumer Protection, Religion or the Prison context, are less prominent. The diversity of areas highlights the breadth of voluntary work in Portugal.

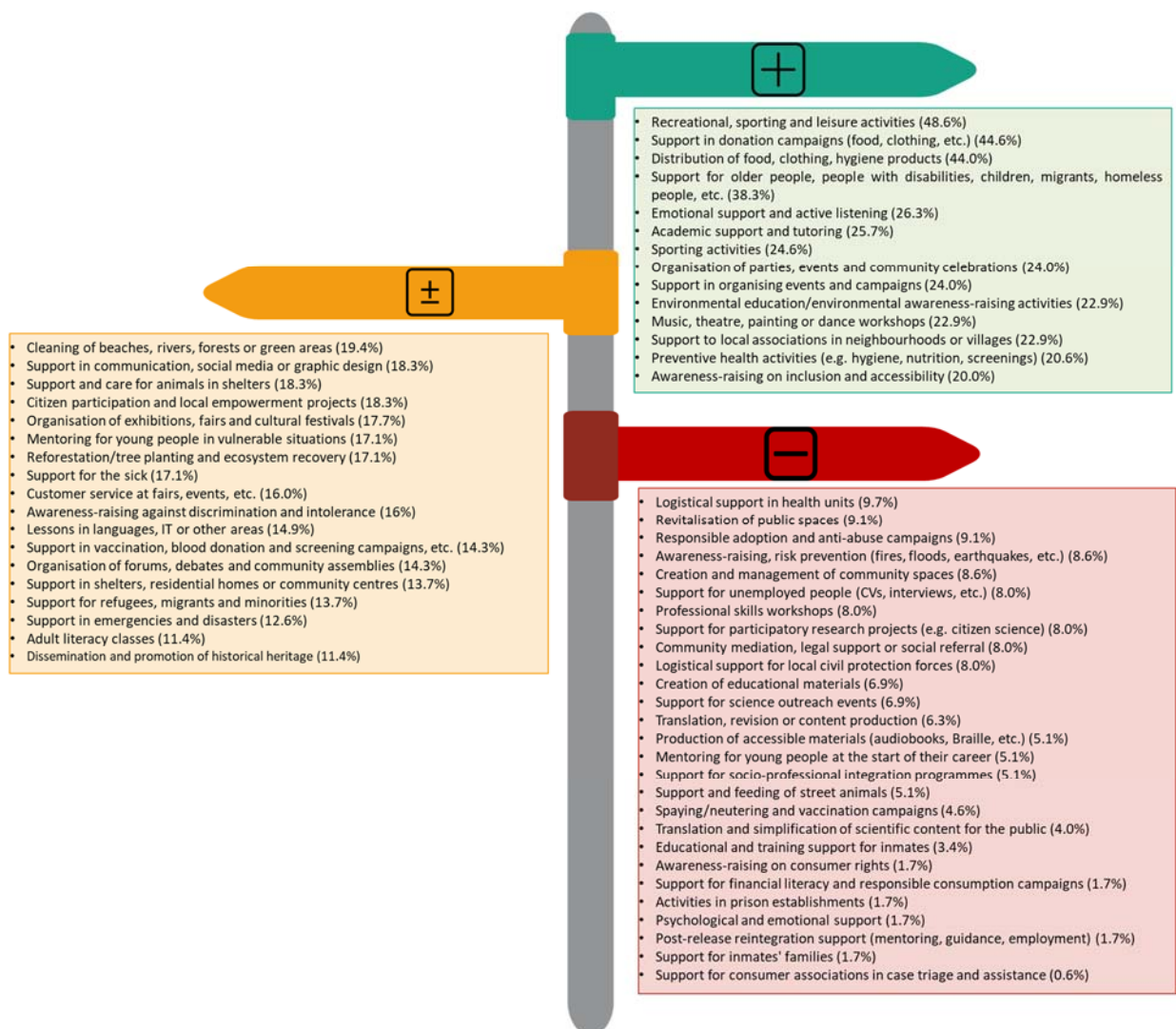
Figure 22. Area(s) in which the organisation's volunteering activities are carried out



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The activities undertaken by volunteers are markedly diverse, notably the distribution of food, clothing or hygiene kits, support for donation campaigns (food, clothing, toys, etc.), recreational, sporting and leisure activities, support for elderly people, active ageing, people with disabilities, children, migrants or homeless people, tutoring and educational support, environmental education/environmental awareness-raising activities, emotional support and active listening, support in organising events and campaigns, and support for local associations in neighbourhoods or villages. Volunteering activities in the prison context and in the area of consumer protection are those with the least prominence in the OPV surveyed. Volunteering also takes on technical and administrative functions, showing that contributions go far beyond traditional social support.

Figure 23. Activities carried out by volunteers

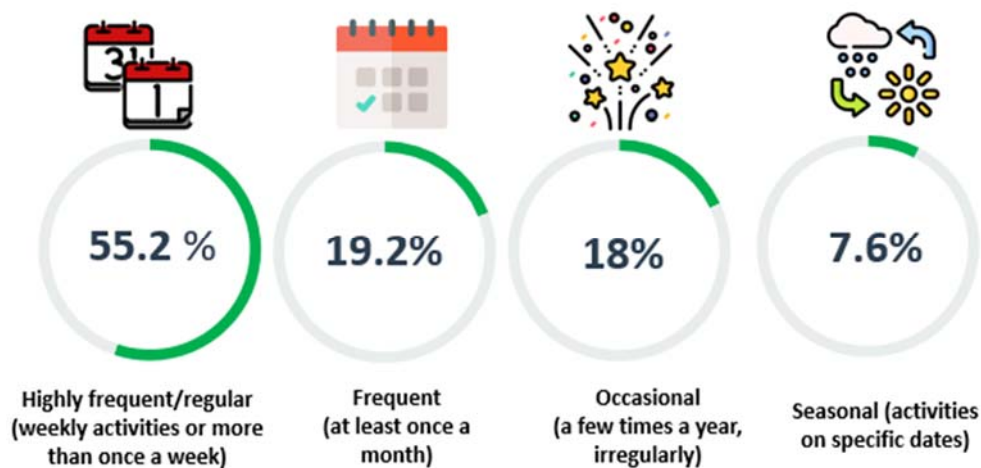


Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

Most OPV carry out volunteering activities very frequently or regularly, mainly with weekly or more intensive actions, accounting for 55.2% of responses. Around one-fifth carry out monthly activities and 18% promote occasional activities throughout the year. Seasonal initiatives, linked to specific moments, are less common (7.6%). These data show that volunteering tends to be a continuous, regular practice in most OPV.

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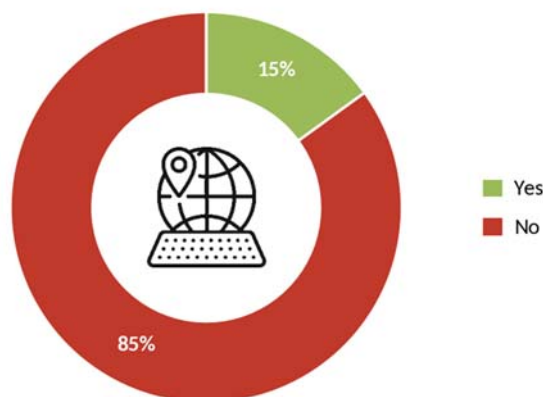
Figure 24. Regularity of the volunteering activities



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The practice of online volunteering is still a minority among the OPV, with only 15.1% reporting developing activities in this format. These are mainly related to cross-cutting or administrative support activities, such as communication, publicity, document translation, data analysis, social media management, and capacity-building/training activities online or more technical activities, often associated with skills-based volunteering. These results suggest that remote volunteering is not yet widely established, despite its potential to broaden participation and reduce access barriers.

Figure 25. Development of online volunteering activities

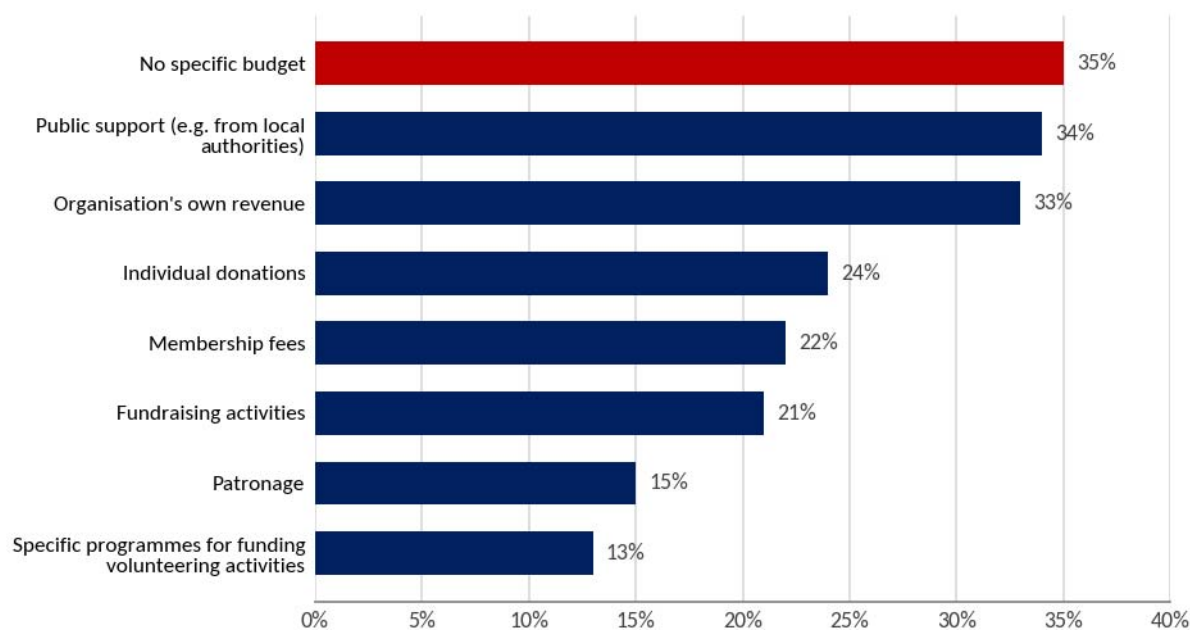


Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

Organisations draw on multiple sources to fund volunteering. The absence of a specific budget is the most frequent response (34.9%), with these being integrated into the organisation's wider activities, and only 13% report having specific programmes for the funding of volunteering activities. Public support, own revenue, individual donations, association membership fees and fundraising activities are also of some importance. Some OPV mention that the allocation of personal income tax to the Organisation is another way of obtaining funding. Patronage and specific funding programmes are less prominent.

Figure 26. Forms of funding of the volunteering activities

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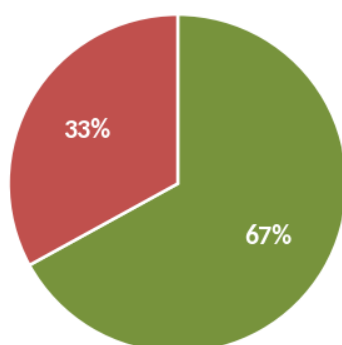
Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

### ➤ Recruitment of Volunteers

The publicising of the volunteering activities and the recruitment of volunteers are key elements for the continuity of the organisations' activities and in many cases for their very sustainability, and also contribute to a greater connection with the community and to reinforcing impacts.

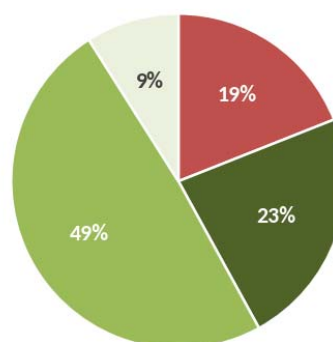
In this respect, the vast majority of the OPV surveyed (two-thirds) report designing products on the volunteering activities, mainly through the publication of posts on social media and on the organisation's and partners' websites, and the preparation of brochures and flyers. The staging of awareness-raising events for the practice of volunteering and/or campaigns to recruit volunteers is also a practice used by most OPV, albeit mainly on an occasional basis.

**Figure 27. Creation of materials on volunteering activities**



■ Yes ■ No

**Figure 28. Organisation of awareness-raising events to promote volunteering and/or campaigns to recruit volunteers**



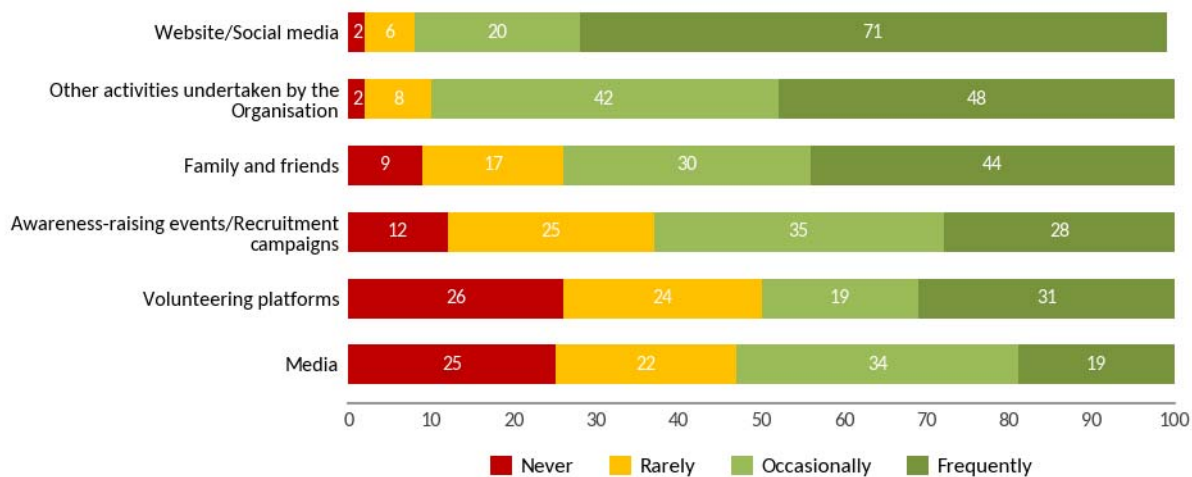
■ No ■ Yes, frequently ■ Yes, occasionally ■ Yes, rarely

Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

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The main means used for publicising volunteering activities are the other activities undertaken by the Organisation and the website/social media. Conversely, media outlets and volunteering platforms are the least used means.

**Figure 29. Means of publicising volunteering activities (%)**



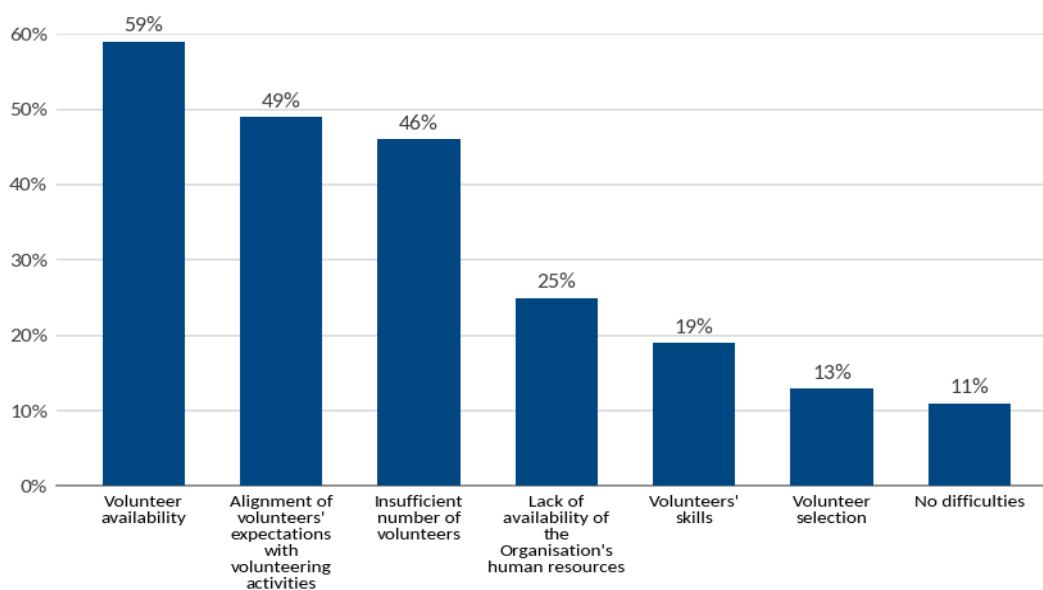
Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

It should be noted in this regard that, in the Case Studies, the recruitment dimension was not mentioned as a critical dimension for the organisations consulted, with many cases where the pool of volunteers is much greater than the supply of volunteering activities offered, which generally leads to a passive stance on recruitment, partly out of fear of subsequently being unable to respond to the volume and expectations of volunteers.

The questionnaire data are in line with this and indicate that the OPV's recruitment difficulties are mainly related to the availability of volunteers to carry out volunteering activities and to matching volunteers' expectations with the needs of the volunteering activities. The information gathered indicates that difficulty in long-term commitment (especially on the part of young people), incompatibility with working/personal life, mismatch of profile and lack of time are some of the main constraints on the recruitment of volunteers.

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Figure 30. Main difficulties experienced in the recruitment of volunteers (N=166)

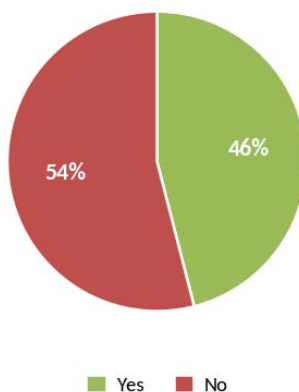


Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The insufficient number of volunteers is also cited as a difficulty by almost half of the organisations surveyed (46%). In addition, 46% of the OPV surveyed report the existence of specific roles/positions for which it is particularly difficult to recruit volunteers.

Figure 31. Existence of specific roles/positions for which it is particularly difficult to recruit volunteers

Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).



The triangulation of the information gathered indicates that recruitment difficulties arise mainly in one-off activities that require a considerable number of volunteers, in roles requiring specific technical knowledge or with target groups with special needs, or in inland or more isolated geographical areas (such as, for example, prisons), or in management and administrative roles.

Table 10. Specific roles/positions for which it is particularly difficult to recruit volunteers

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Roles/positions	Examples
Roles requiring technical or specialised training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of healthcare</li> <li>• Legal support</li> <li>• Volunteer teachers / tutoring / educational activities</li> <li>• Specific training</li> <li>• Energy advice</li> <li>• Specialised support requiring a professional licence</li> <li>• ICT, computing workshops</li> <li>• Dementia support (Memory Café)</li> <li>• Visits to hospital wards (gynaecology/oncology)</li> </ul>
Management and administrative roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of hospital volunteering service</li> <li>• Governing bodies / Management positions / Officers</li> <li>• Team coordination</li> <li>• Volunteer management</li> <li>• Representation of the project at events</li> <li>• Administrative management / communication / social media</li> <li>• Administrative functions</li> <li>• Communication and administrative management</li> <li>• Data management / volunteering database</li> </ul>
Activities with specific groups (e.g. people with disabilities, elderly, isolated or highly dependent people, vulnerable groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to isolated elderly people</li> <li>• Support and assistance for elderly people</li> <li>• Hand-feeding / activities for people with Alzheimer's</li> <li>• Support for adults with disabilities on outings and activities</li> <li>• Taking users in wheelchairs for walks</li> <li>• Volunteers for day centres</li> <li>• Contact with vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Volunteers in rural communities</li> <li>• Work with people with illnesses</li> <li>• Tasks involving high physical effort</li> </ul>
Roles with demanding or incompatible schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daytime positions</li> <li>• Projects during weekly working hours</li> <li>• Night collection (food waste)</li> <li>• Holiday camps / summer activities</li> </ul>

Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

With regard to the number of volunteers, the OPV surveyed are divided between those that consider it adequate (52.8%) and those that consider it insufficient (46.5%) in relation to the organisation's needs. In the assessment of volunteer turnover, there is also a division between OPV that report zero or low turnover (46.3%) and those that point to moderate or high turnover (53.7%).

Figure 32. Adequacy of the number of active volunteers in relation to needs

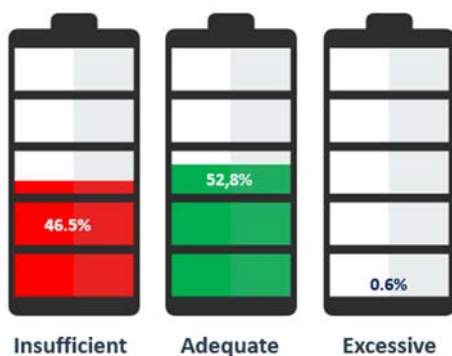
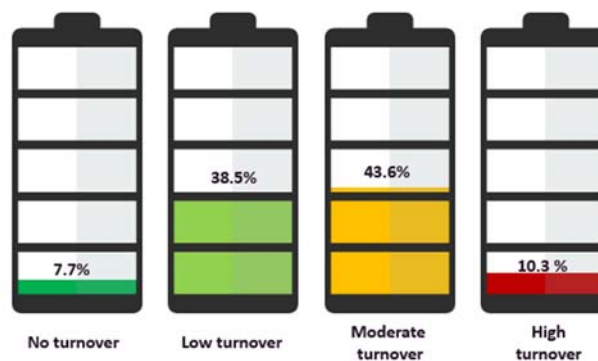


Figure 33. Volunteer turnover

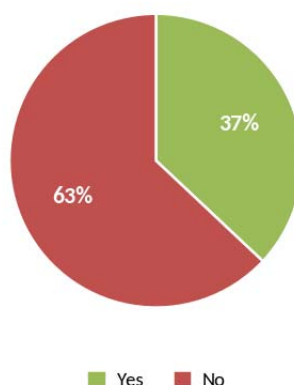


Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

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Some interlocutors consulted, such as Local Volunteer Banks, indicated that the major current challenges are not so much the recruitment of new volunteers but rather the availability of volunteering opportunities from the OPV, in particular more “innovative” offers and skills-based volunteering, which match the profile of interests and availability of volunteers. They also note that many OPV have weaknesses in welcoming and integrating volunteers, which is reflected in retention levels and consequently in turnover. In this regard, it should be noted that almost two-thirds of the OPV surveyed mention that they do not have specific measures to increase volunteer retention.

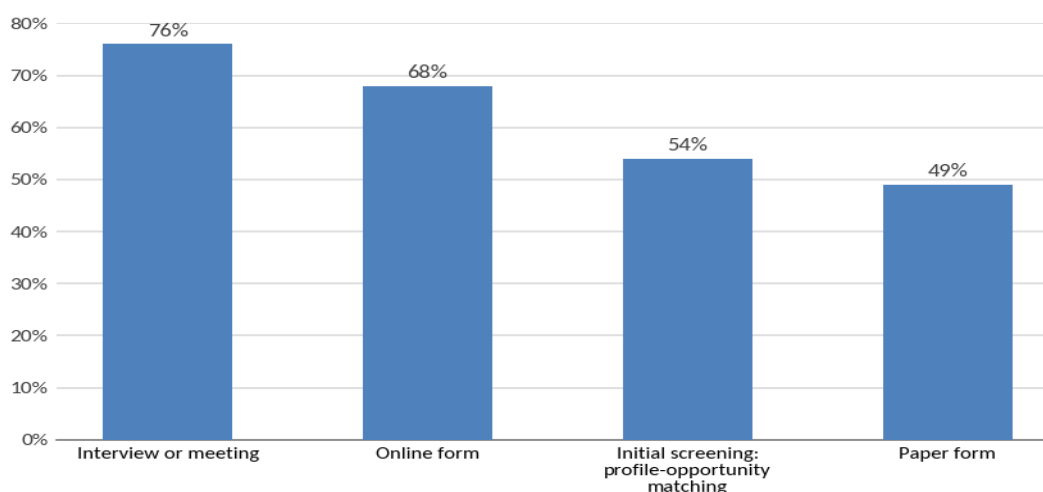
**Figure 34. Adoption of specific measures to increase volunteer retention**



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

Most of the OPV surveyed have specific mechanisms and procedures for the registration and selection of volunteers, which include an interview/meeting, the completion of online and/or paper forms, and in some cases an initial screening process.

**Figure 35. Specific mechanisms and procedures for volunteer registration and selection (online registration forms, meetings, interviews, etc.) (N=168)**



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

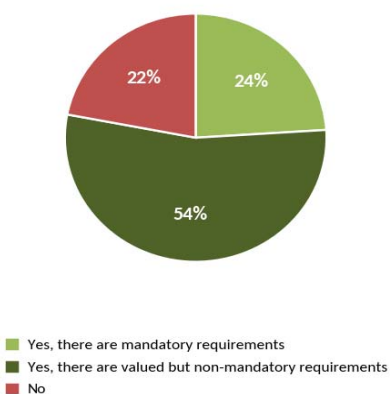
### ➤ Training and capacity-building of Volunteers

According to the questionnaire results, the capacity-building/skills dimension of volunteers is not a critical dimension for most OPV, insofar as 84% consider that, at the time of registration, volunteers have the skills necessary to carry out the volunteering activities. The absence of mandatory requirements or

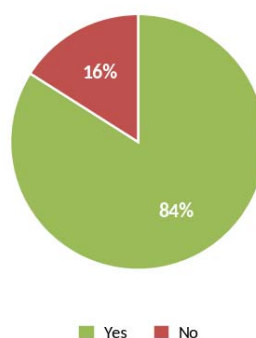
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generic requirements (e.g. minimum age, nationality, soft skills, respect for others, responsibility, etc.) facilitates this alignment. This view was also shared by the interlocutors consulted in the interviews and case studies, with it being mentioned that, in many cases, the registration of volunteers arises from prior knowledge of the OPV and its volunteering activities. It should be noted that there is also, on the part of the BLV and some OPV, a concern to carry out the matching between the profile of the candidate and the volunteering activity to be carried out.

**Figure 36. Need for specific qualifications, skills or requirements to carry out volunteering activities**



**Figure 37. Possession at the time of registration of the skills required to carry out volunteering activities**



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The following Table summarises the specific skills or requirements for carrying out volunteering activities most valued by the OPV surveyed.

**Table 11. Main specific requirements for carrying out volunteering activities**

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Roles/positions	Examples
<b>Formal requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum age (14, 17, 18 years; upper limit of 30 in some programmes)</li> <li>• Criminal record check (particularly for work with children)</li> <li>• Portuguese nationality or in-depth knowledge of Portuguese culture</li> <li>• Minimum compulsory schooling / basic education or higher education</li> <li>• Being Catholic (in religious organisations)</li> <li>• Holding a higher education or technical qualification (in specific contexts)</li> </ul>
<b>Mandatory or valued training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding initial training in volunteering</li> <li>• Specific training (civil protection, health, victim support, ICT, pedagogy, mental health)</li> <li>• Having technical capacity-building and mentoring for volunteering</li> <li>• Having training in conflict management, mental health, expectation management, child protection, etc.</li> <li>• Academic training in social, legal, psychological, education, health, etc. fields</li> <li>• Pedagogical training</li> <li>• Hospital training</li> <li>• Knowledge of management and law</li> <li>• Professional licence (e.g. psychology)</li> <li>• ICT knowledge</li> <li>• Civil protection training</li> </ul>
<b>Previous experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous volunteering experience</li> <li>• Experience with the target group (elderly people, children, people with disabilities, crime victims, etc.)</li> <li>• Experience in civil protection, rescue, mountain rescue, etc.</li> <li>• Educational experience (teachers or educators)</li> <li>• Handling people with disabilities</li> <li>• Financial data analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Social and relational skills (soft skills)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Effective communication</li> <li>• Listening skills</li> <li>• Assertiveness</li> <li>• Team spirit</li> <li>• Tolerance, cooperation, flexibility</li> <li>• Good presentation and friendliness</li> <li>• Responsibility and commitment</li> <li>• Ability to adapt and learn</li> <li>• Ability to maintain discretion and confidentiality</li> <li>• Sensitivity to vulnerable contexts and groups</li> <li>• Sensitivity to the animal cause / liking animals</li> <li>• Respect for rules and for other people</li> <li>• Non-discrimination</li> </ul>
<b>Availability (hours, duration, commitment)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time availability (e.g. 4 hours/week for 6 months; activities during working hours, night hours, etc.)</li> <li>• Attendance and punctuality</li> <li>• Ability to keep to agreed schedules</li> <li>• Availability to spend time with users</li> <li>• Flexible availability</li> <li>• Commitment to the mission and to continuity</li> </ul>
<b>Fit with the role profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate psychological profile</li> <li>• Appropriate physical condition/physical robustness</li> <li>• Ability to handle emotionally demanding environments</li> <li>• Versatility</li> <li>• Autonomy and initiative</li> </ul>

Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

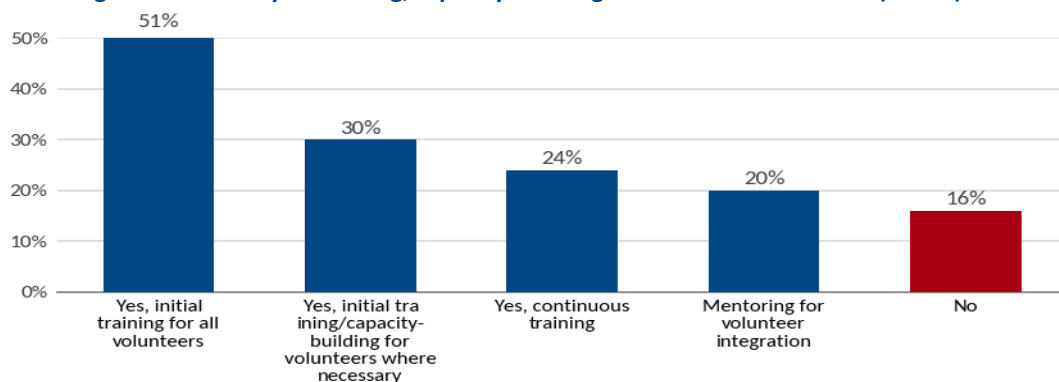
Although qualification/capacity-building is not considered critical, the interlocutors are unanimous in recognising the importance of initial training for all volunteers, so that they acquire general skills enabling

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them to understand the specificity of the activities and to be aware of the law regulating their exercise, the commitment to be made, respect for the organisations' rules of operation, and other matters. The importance of this training/capacity-building of volunteers is recognised by Law 71/98, which mentions the right and duty to have access to and take part in initial and continuous training programmes, aimed at improving their voluntary work.<sup>8</sup>

The delivery of training/capacity-building activities for volunteers is a practice covering most OPV (85%), with initial training activities usually delivered for all volunteers, or in situations where they consider there is such a need. Continuous training and mentoring for the integration of volunteers is a practice adopted by around one-quarter of organisations. It should be noted that the information gathered in the case studies indicates that training practices are highly differentiated among the OPV; for example, initial training has different hours and content depending on the entity.

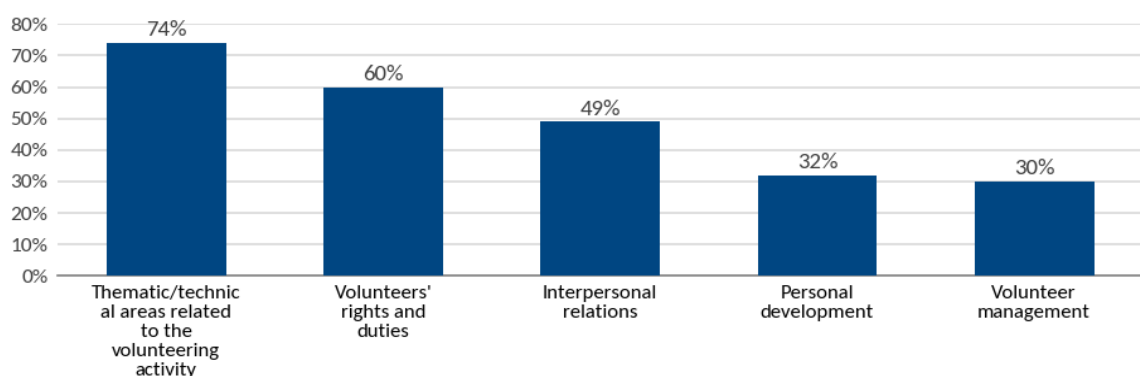
**Figure 38. Delivery of training/capacity-building activities for volunteers (n=168)**



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The main thematic areas covered in the training/capacity-building activities relate to the volunteering activity to be carried out and the rights and duties of volunteers. Interpersonal skills and other social and relational skills are also a relevant dimension for many OPV.

**Figure 39. Main thematic areas of the training/capacity-building activities (N=144)**



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

In general, the entities consider that all volunteers should have a simple initial training focused on the legal framework and the rights and duties of the volunteer, and then, depending on the activities to be carried out, more specific training related to the volunteering activities to be carried out should be

<sup>8</sup> Law 71/98 – Article 7, paragraph 1(a); Article 8, paragraph (d)

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provided. For some activities, given their simplicity, a brief briefing or meeting with volunteers may be sufficient.

Given the characteristics of many OPV (particularly in size, human resources and management capacity), some interlocutors consider that the BLV or other similar structures could ensure this initial training, as is the case, for example, in Matosinhos, Cascais and Porto.

It should be noted that almost half of the entities surveyed identify training needs aimed at improving volunteering activities. The capacity-building needs identified reveal a broad picture, with four major structural areas standing out: communication, personal and relational skills, volunteering management, and specific technical skills associated with the type of volunteering to be carried out and/or its target group.

**Table 12. Main training needs identified aimed at improving volunteering activities**

Training Area	Examples
<b>Communication, personal and relational skills (soft skills)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear and empathetic communication</li> <li>● Active listening</li> <li>● Assertiveness and the ability to work as part of a team;</li> <li>● Positive relationship with beneficiaries, the community and technical teams</li> <li>● Emotional management</li> <li>● Resilience and the ability to handle demanding situations</li> <li>● Self-awareness</li> <li>● Stress management and emotional balance</li> </ul>
<b>Volunteer Management and Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Team management and leadership</li> <li>● Volunteer retention and motivation</li> <li>● Planning and organisation of activities</li> <li>● Monitoring and evaluation of the intervention</li> <li>● Internal communication</li> </ul>
<b>Specific Technical Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● First aid</li> <li>● Mental health and psychological first aid</li> <li>● Intervention with specific populations (children, elderly people, people with disabilities, survivors of violence, animals, etc.)</li> <li>● Operational skills related to civil protection</li> <li>● School support</li> <li>● Cultural activities</li> <li>● Logistical support.</li> </ul>
<b>Legal Framework, Ethics, Deontology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rules, rights and duties of the volunteer</li> <li>● Confidentiality and discretion</li> <li>● Rights and responsibilities</li> <li>● Legal framework of the activities</li> </ul>

Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

These skills emerge as fundamental to promoting emotional stability and strengthening well-being in the exercise of volunteering, and reflect a growing professionalisation of the sector and the challenge of managing diverse teams, often in high-turnover contexts.





Also noteworthy is that some interlocutors consulted referred to the need for capacity-building not only for volunteers but also for the OPV themselves and for other civil society organisations, in order to make the sector more professionalised and to offer more innovative volunteering opportunities suited to a “new” profile of volunteers, especially younger ones.

In relation to training and capacity-building in the field of volunteering, also noteworthy, some HEIs, in addition to their volunteering programmes, mention these activities as a diploma supplement, and others

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are beginning to incorporate or plan to incorporate into their study plans curricular units related to this sector. The following Table presents examples of these pioneering experiences on the part of HEIs.

**Table 13. Examples of integration of volunteering into the curriculum of HEIs**

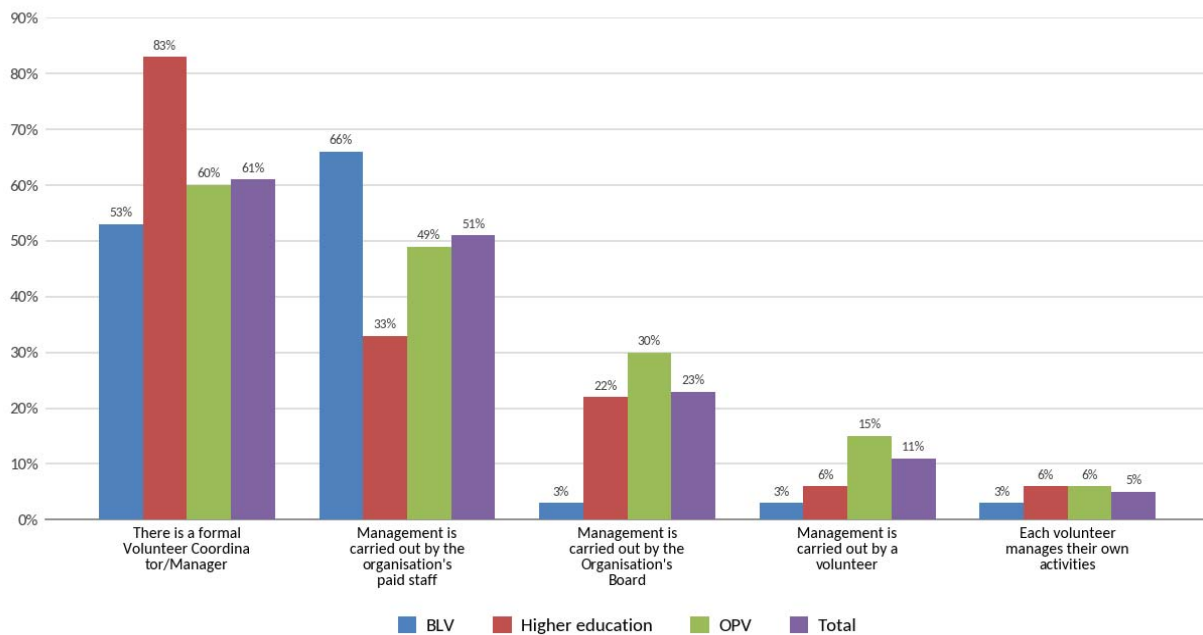
Entity	Offer
	<p>At the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon, <b>Curricular Volunteering</b> is a curricular unit of the Cultural, Social and Ethical Training (FCSE) optional group, included in the Faculty's training offer since 2016/17.</p> <p>Equivalent to 3 ECTS</p> <p>1st cycle students enrolled in SCIENCES in one of the academic years following that of their first enrolment</p>
	<p>Curricular Volunteering is a free option and an innovative experience at NOVA FCSH. It promotes sensitivity to issues of solidarity and social justice, contributing to the personal and civic growth of undergraduate students. It is a way of complementing all the academic knowledge acquired at the faculty.</p> <p>Volunteering corresponds to a curricular unit worth 6 ECTS, included in the study plan as a free option</p> <p>It is intended for all 2nd and 3rd year students, as a free option available to enrolled students from all departments of the institution.</p>
	<p>The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Coimbra (FMUC) has had, since 2023/2024, an optional curricular unit called "<b>Humanisation in Health</b>"</p> <p>This curricular unit includes 20 hours of volunteering under an agreement between the Liga Portuguesa Contra o Cancro – Núcleo Regional do Centro – and the Faculty. This optional curricular unit is intended for undergraduate students and is equivalent to 2 ECTS.</p> <p><b>The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Coimbra has the curricular unit "Principles and Practices of Volunteering"</b></p> <p>This curricular unit is intended for master's students and is equivalent to 2 ECTS</p>
	<p>ISCTE, in its transversal offer for Master's programmes, has a Curricular Unit on "Social Responsibility and Volunteering"</p> <p>This curricular unit is equivalent to 2 ECTS</p>

### ➤ Management and organisation of volunteering

Volunteer management makes it possible not only to enhance the support and monitoring of volunteers, but also contributes to greater retention and effectiveness of their activities. The survey data indicate that almost two-thirds of the OPV surveyed formally have a Volunteer Coordination/Management function. Where such management does not exist, it is usually carried out by paid technical staff of the organisation. However, in the view of some of the interlocutors consulted, particularly those working with several OPV, many of these organisations face structural problems of management and human resources, with a weak capacity for the correct welcoming and integration of volunteers, and even in OPV where there is a management function or person responsible for volunteering, this person often does not have adequate assignment and/or training – this being a critical dimension for the sector, which they consider should be the subject of increasing professionalisation.

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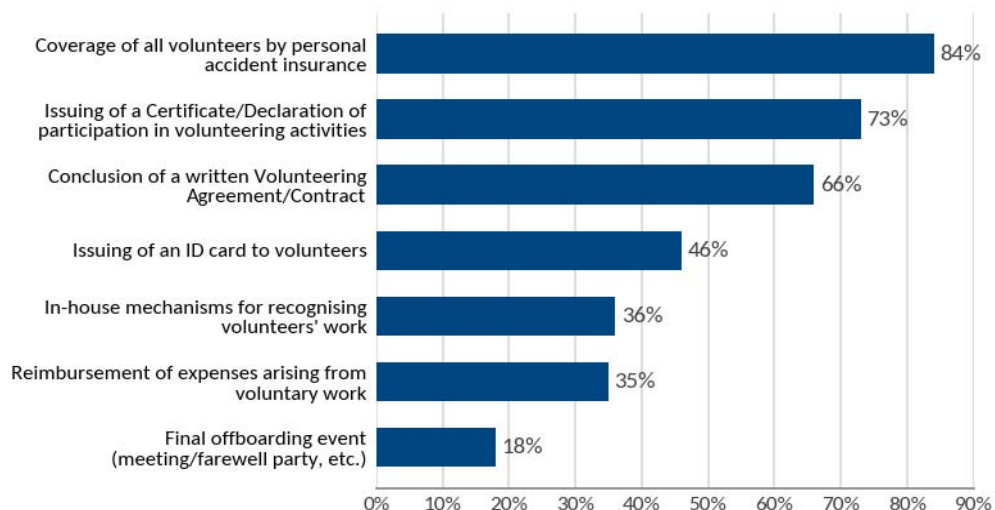
Figure 40. How volunteer management is carried out (n=163)



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

Among the practices adopted by most OPV, the existence of personal accident insurance, the granting of a Certificate/Declaration of participation in volunteering activities to volunteers and the signing of a written Volunteering Agreement/Contract stand out. These are practices adopted by most OPV. Also noteworthy is that around one-third of the OPV report the reimbursement of expenses arising from the exercise of voluntary work.

Figure 41. Management and organisational actions implemented (n=165)



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The existence of the Organisation's own mechanisms for recognising the work of volunteers is reported by only one-third of organisations, but this is considered a critical dimension for the retention and attraction of volunteers (and is also considered to be the key factor for the development of the volunteering infrastructure itself, as will be seen below). In this area, some practices conducted by entities such as CASES, CPV, IPDJ and R-VES, as well as some OPV, stand out, which aim to recognise and

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distinguish OPV and individual volunteers for their work. The following Table presents some examples of these awards and distinctions.

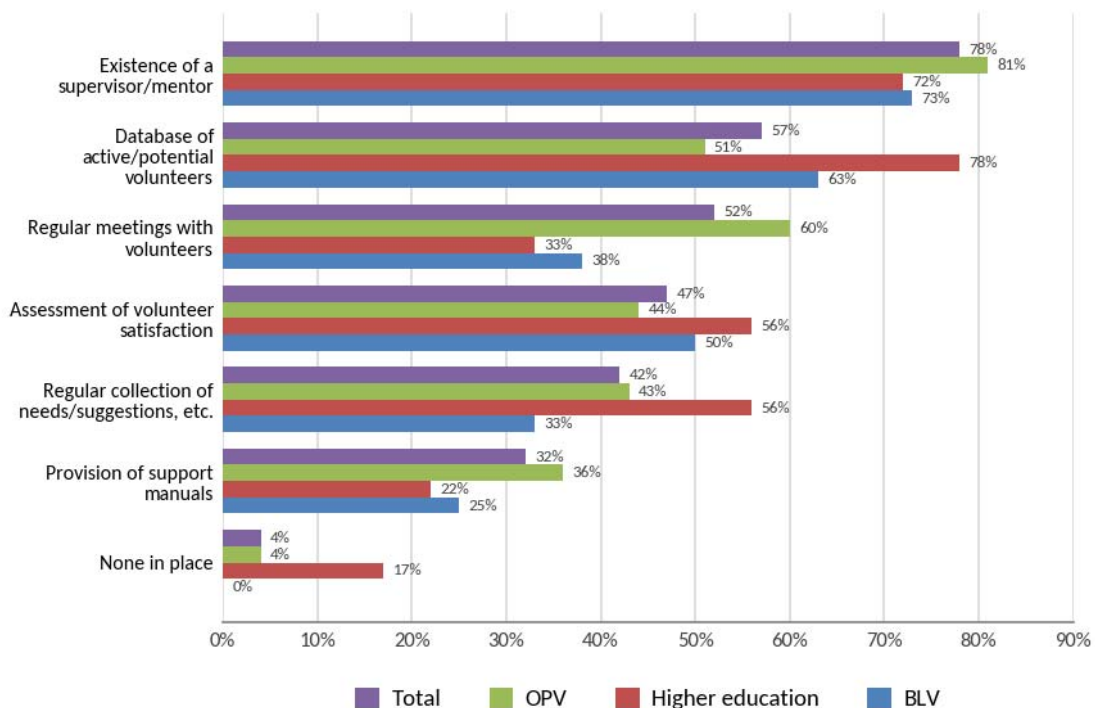
Table 14. Examples of awards and distinctions for OPV and volunteers

Distinction	Description	Promoting entity
 <b>Volunteer Municipality Award</b>	The Volunteer Municipality Award consists of the public distinction of Local Authorities for the work undertaken to promote the practice of Volunteering.	CASES
 <b>Quality Label   Volunteer Academy</b>	The Volunteer Academy Quality Label consists of the distinction of higher education institutions for their work in promoting the practice of Volunteering.	CASES
 <b>Portuguese Capital of Volunteering</b>	This is an initiative whose purpose is the <b>promotion and valuing of volunteering in Portugal</b> , through the selection of a Portuguese Municipality as the “Portuguese Capital of Volunteering”. The first edition took place in 2023	CPV
 <b>Portuguese Volunteering Trophy</b>	Its purpose is to recognise volunteers associated with volunteering projects and/or activities of recognised value to communities or to the country. Has been held since 2009	CPV
 <b>Join4Change® Volunteering Quality Label</b>	System for recognising the quality of the governance practices of Civil Society Organisations in the field of volunteering. Civil Society Organisations, Companies or Public Entities that implement volunteering projects or activities may apply for the Label.	CPV
 <b>Regional Awards for Good Practice in Youth Volunteering</b>	These Awards aim to: Recognise the organisation and/or promotion of volunteering activities under the Agora Nós and Youth Volunteering for Nature and Forests Programmes as practices with community impact, and as decisive for the acquisition by young volunteers, through the application of non-formal and/or informal education methodologies, of personal and social skills and habits of civic participation; Strengthen the dissemination of youth volunteering organisation models.	IPDJ
 <b>Ser+ R-VES Award</b>	Its purpose is to encourage the practice of volunteering, research and training in volunteering, and the recognition of the work of the Higher Education community, seeking to distinguish, annually, the three best applicant projects carried out by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in one of the following categories: Volunteering Activity; Research in Volunteering; Training in Volunteering.	R-VES
 <b>Volunteer School Award</b>	The Volunteer School Award is established as an annual, continuing project, and is decisive in engaging, training and providing hands-on experience for young people in the field of volunteering as an expression of civic participation.	Cascais Municipal Council
 <b>Volunteering Festival Voluntary Work Recognition Ceremony</b>	Annual event that celebrates volunteers and school outcomes, with activities and tributes highlighting the importance of volunteering in the community.	Cascais Municipal Council
 <b>Montepio Youth Volunteering Award</b>	The Montepio Youth Volunteering Award has the following main objectives: To stimulate the creation of innovative youth volunteering projects; To promote entrepreneurship for the benefit of volunteering; To stimulate knowledge of, and training in, volunteering; To improve the quality of life of communities; To enhance work between public, private and civil society entities.	Montepio Mutual Association
 <b>UBI Volunteering Award Award of certificates to volunteers</b>	Event recognising the work of the volunteer	UBI

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In the dimension of support and monitoring, most entities have formal mechanisms for supporting and monitoring volunteers, with the existence of a person in charge or a mentor being the most cross-cutting. Higher Education institutions tend to have more organised volunteer management, as evidenced by the high use of databases and practices focused on communication and participation, such as holding regular meetings, assessing satisfaction and gathering needs and suggestions. The other OPV only stand out in holding regular meetings with volunteers.

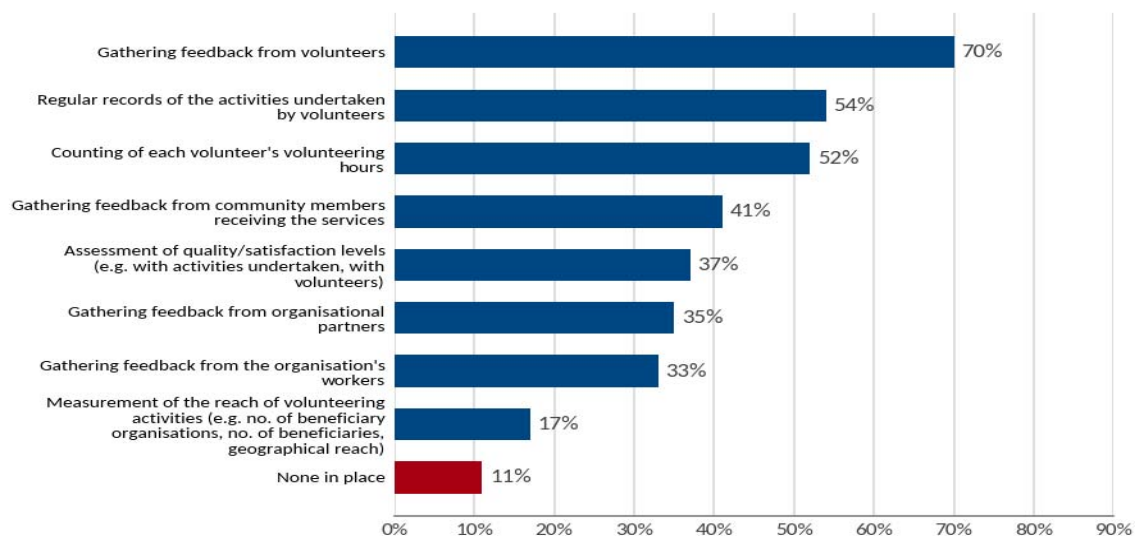
Figure 42. Specific mechanisms for supporting and monitoring volunteers (n=165)



The tools/mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of volunteering activities, in addition to feedback from the volunteers themselves, mainly include the regular recording of the volunteering activities and the counting of volunteering hours. Dimensions more closely related to the assessment of results/impacts, such as obtaining feedback from community members who receive the services and from the organisation's workers, and evaluating quality/satisfaction levels, are less common practices among the OPV surveyed.

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Figure 43. Tools/mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of volunteering activities (n=163)



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

The triangulation of the information gathered thus reveals some weaknesses in the monitoring and support of volunteers, which is considered insufficient and may generate a set of problems that simultaneously affect volunteers, organisations and beneficiaries.

Figure 44. Main consequences of insufficient support and monitoring of volunteers

#### Demotivation and/or emotional overload of volunteers

Without feedback or guidance, volunteers do not perceive the impact of their work or their contribution, fail to form bonds, feel demotivated and tend towards dropout. A lack of support, particularly in emotionally demanding areas, can lead to inadequate emotional management, feelings of helplessness, psychological burnout and frustration

**Consequence:** Drop-out and high turnover rates, and the constant need to recruit and train new volunteers.

#### Risk of inadequate or unsafe conduct, or low-quality service delivery

Volunteers without support may intervene inappropriately, fail to comply with ethical, legal and organisational rules, make technical errors, and put themselves or others at risk

**Consequence:** compromised physical, emotional and legal safety of all those involved.

#### Misalignment with the organisation's mission

Without systematic support, misinterpretations of objectives, actions misaligned with internal procedures, and contradictory messages to beneficiaries and the community can easily emerge.

**Consequence:** institutional incoherence and erosion of the organisation's credibility.



#### Conflictual relationships with internal teams and among volunteers

Without guidance, tensions may arise between volunteers and professionals, perceptions of role encroachment, communication breakdowns, and friction over boundaries and responsibilities.

**Consequence:** a deteriorated working environment and a breakdown of cooperation between teams.

#### Loss of development opportunities for volunteers and organisations

Without monitoring and follow-up, there is no constructive feedback, no identification of areas for improvement, and no development of new skills

**Consequence:** reduced personal and organisational growth and lower retention, as volunteering ceases to be a rewarding experience.

#### Inability to measure outcomes and impact

Without support, it becomes difficult to record and monitor activities, measure outcomes and evaluate impact.

**Consequence:** the organisation loses the ability to communicate its impact to partners, funders and the community, and to justify the relevance of its intervention.



## V.4. Trends and Future Prospects

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## ➤ Future prospects


The trends and future prospects were assessed by the OPV surveyed and through the case studies. This triangulation clearly shows a trend of stability and growth in the number of active volunteers over the two reference periods requested. Over the last 5 years, stability has predominated, but organisations perceive a resumption of growth, possibly due to greater public visibility of volunteering, digitalisation and new forms of participation. The prospect of decline is smaller in the case of the outlook for the next 3 years, where only 8% of OPV report it.

A similar trend is observed regarding the amount of time that volunteers dedicate per month/week to volunteering activities, having shown a stabilisation and indeed constituting a major problem identified by the OPV – the availability of, and commitment to, regular volunteering.


Lastly, in the case of the evolution of the OPV's volunteering activities/projects, a clear prospect of growth is observed, which had already been noted over the last 5 years. Organisations plan to expand projects, which requires better management, recruitment and retention practices.

Figure 45. Trend and future prospects for the volunteering activities/projects of the OPV


	Number of active volunteers	Time dedicated to volunteering	Volunteering activities and projects
2020-2025			
2025-2028			



Decrease



Stability



Increase

Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

## ➤ Challenges and Prospects for the Future

## Improving recruitment

The profile of importance given by the OPV to improving the recruitment of volunteers has been analysed, with some central levels of recognition standing out. On the one hand, the most valued actions are reaching out to new groups/communities and improving the online presence online of the organisation, there being a recognition of the need to diversify volunteer profiles. In the case studies, a strong emphasis on inclusive volunteering can be noted, which currently constitutes a priority challenge for most of these OPV.

However, overall, organisations acknowledge the importance of the active and digital attraction of volunteers, but do not yet fully value virtual volunteering, despite its international relevance.

The importance of the “digital gateway” for attracting new volunteers is also noted in the case studies. It should be noted that in this context, reference situations were observed in which recruitment is passive

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– that is, no initiatives to search for new volunteers are taken, because the concern of these OPV is to respond to the scale of registrations in their respective volunteer pools. This is mainly the case in the local volunteering networks and pools of some of the municipalities studied.

**Figure 46. Most valued actions to improve recruitment**



Another aspect valued in the entities' recruitment, albeit on a smaller scale, is the organisation of specific activities for short-term volunteers, as a response to the trend of more flexible volunteering.

### **Main problems for volunteering activities identified by the organisations**

In the triangulation of the OPV questionnaires and the case studies, it is clear that the most critical aspects centre on the availability of the volunteers themselves, with a trend of lack of commitment (lateness/absenteeism) and some problems of matching being cited as the main pain point of the organisations. This is reported as being associated with a lack of willingness or interest on the part of volunteers in following rules and procedures.

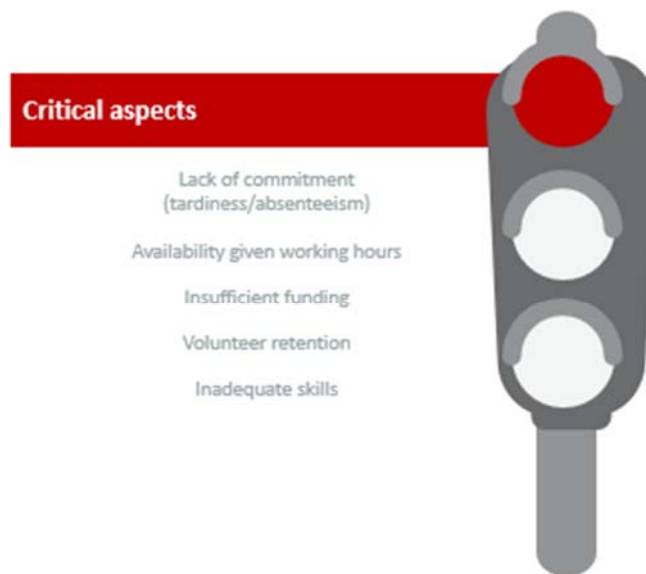
At the same time, availability in relation to schedules is identified as a difficulty, associated with the various factors of contemporary life that restrict the time available.

Although less visible in the case studies, insufficient funding is identified as a strong barrier to the growth and quality of volunteering activities. This is a structural weakness, particularly coupled with the lack of paid human resources to support the integration, work and supervision of volunteers (volunteer managers with reasonable assignment). This factor is decisive in the light of the good practices identified in the case studies. It should be noted that these focused on OPV that have dedicated teams for volunteer management.

Another aspect considered critical is the ability to retain volunteers over time, which is considered an important challenge cutting across all sectors.

Although less identified, problems of matching and inadequate skills reveal a need for better training and matching. This difficulty is identified by a reasonable number of OPV targeted by case studies.

Figure 47. Critical aspects for volunteering activities



### Integration, organisation and retention

In the assessment of the importance of factors for improving the integration, organisation and retention of volunteers, it is clear that organisations are moving towards more professionalised volunteer management, with expectations of improved quality in their interventions. The most valued actions include assessing the impact of volunteering — a sign of maturity and focus on quality. Such evaluation is not yet conducted systematically, owing to a lack of resources and expertise, and remains one of the most desired practices among the reference entities covered by case studies.

At the same time, another highly valued action is the assessment of the work of volunteers, which reinforces the professionalisation of the sector.

Equally important, two other decisive aspects are highlighted. On the one hand, the improvement of integration and support mechanisms is considered essential for retention, as is the use of technology to promote new ways of communicating with volunteers and monitoring them (online meetings, online training, activity logging, etc.).

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Figure 48. Most valued actions to improve integration, organisation and retention



## Main barriers faced by potential and current volunteers (OPV view)

When asked to identify the main obstacles faced by potential and current volunteers, these fall outside the direct control of the organisations – namely, volunteers' time and schedules and the challenges of reconciling them. The lack of time they refer to constitutes another important challenge.

Figure 49. Perception of the main barriers that volunteers face



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

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Almost half of the OPV identify the lack of information on volunteering opportunities and possibilities. The lack of support and monitoring by the OPV is another aspect, although not a majority view.

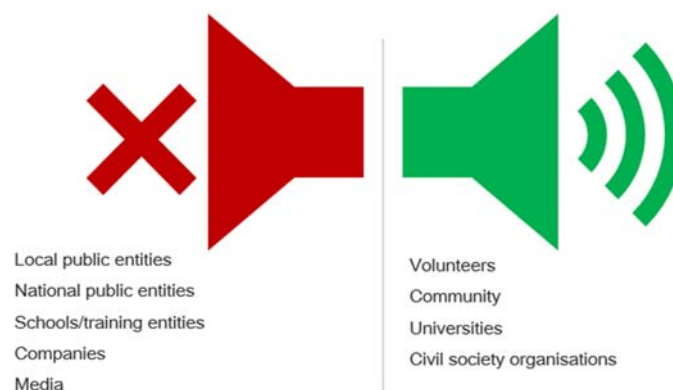
Interestingly, the extensive analysis of the questionnaire shows that 20% of the OPV recognise that the lack of formal recognition of the volunteering activities undertaken by volunteers constitutes an obstacle to their participation. It should be noted, however, that within the case studies this factor stands out significantly (for example, through skills validation). At the same time, this lack of recognition is also observed among people who carry out voluntary work on an informal basis. This fact is corroborated by the identification of the factors that most contribute to the development of volunteering in Portugal.

Other obstacles are also identified, such as the low offer of activities aligned with interests, or even the non-existence of volunteers' areas of interest, which arise from unmanaged expectations, slow processes and problems of matching between interests and opportunities.

### Public recognition of volunteering

A dimension of analysis considered important by the stakeholders in this study is the importance given to volunteering and its public recognition. The results indicate that the volunteer is the main driver of its importance, along with the community and, to a lesser extent, the universities that develop volunteering programmes, as well as NGOs.

**Figure 50. Public recognition of volunteering (groups that most value volunteering), according to the organisations**



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

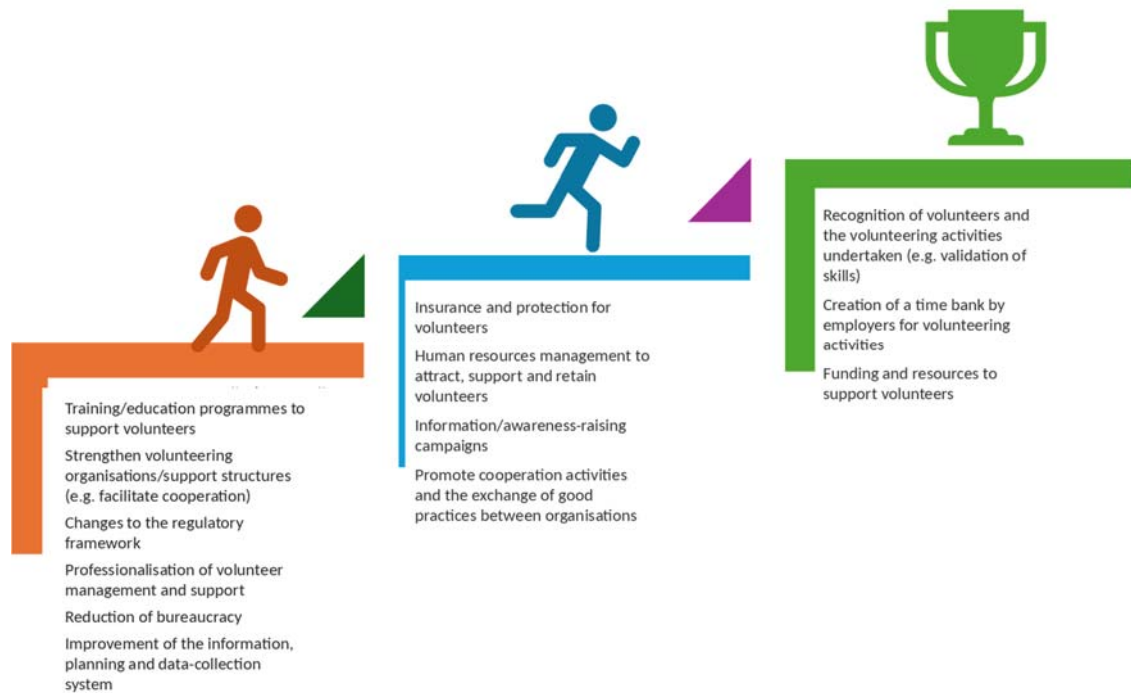
In the triangulation with the case studies, it is clear that there is a lack of institutional recognition, especially at the level of media and central government. Interestingly, the media has the lowest levels of OPV assessment of the importance attributed to volunteering in Portugal.

### Key factors for the development of volunteering in Portugal

In the analysis of the factors that contribute most to the development of volunteering in Portugal, three levels of perceived importance can be identified. At the first level, the recognition of volunteers and of the volunteering activities is the most voted aspect, alongside the creation of time banks by employers (the development of corporate volunteering) and funding and resources to support volunteers. It is essential to create formal recognition mechanisms, to improve conditions and to provide greater support from employers — a growing international trend.

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Figure 51. Factors contributing most to the development of volunteering in Portugal



Source: Questionnaire to Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (2025).

A second level of factors concerns aspects of the managerial dimension of volunteering, such as insurance and protection, the existence of human resources within the OPV assigned to carry out volunteer management, and the need for greater information and awareness-raising on volunteering. This is corroborated in the case studies.

# VI. CONCLUDING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## VI.1. Concluding Summary

### ➤ Volunteering Trends (Evolution and Prospects)

According to the most recent Eurostat data, released in 2022, 12.3% of the EU adult population aged 16 or over took part in formal and informal volunteering activities. This represents a decline from the 18.9% recorded in 2015, with significant reductions in countries such as Sweden and Denmark — likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Norway leads the European landscape alongside these Nordic countries, together with the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

Portugal registers the weakest volunteering dynamic among Southern European countries, ranking ahead only of countries with political and cultural barriers to volunteering (such as Albania, Turkey, Romania and the Balkan countries).

Triangulating the information and evidence gathered from the Volunteer-Promoting Organisations (OPV) through the questionnaire, case studies and interviews, it becomes possible to identify key trends and prospects for volunteering in Portugal.

Overall, volunteering has remained stable in intensity; however, organisations perceive a dynamic of growth — likely driven by greater public visibility of volunteering, digitalisation and new forms of participation.

The OPV nevertheless report a shift in the volunteer profile: a growing tendency — particularly among younger people — to favour cause-based activities with lower demands regarding commitment to regularity and continuity. This has a visible impact on volunteer turnover in most of the Organisations surveyed.

Overall, there is a perception that volunteering is undertaken mainly by highly educated individuals, with a clear female predominance.

Organisations also plan to expand their projects over the next three years — a goal that calls for improved volunteer management, recruitment and retention practices.

### ➤ Characteristics of the Volunteer-Promoting Organisations and of the volunteering activities

The Volunteer-Promoting Organisations are markedly heterogeneous in size, geographical scope, volunteer coverage, and thematic specialisation. The data nonetheless point to a clear prevalence of third-sector entities (IPSS), operating at local level in the fields of social action and education, with an established track record in volunteering.

It can be noted that, although not yet cross-cutting, volunteer management is becoming professionalised, with an emphasis on management, integration and support, and evaluation, although obstacles persist, such as the presence of human resources assigned to volunteer management within the OPV.

In recent years, the information indicates a growing diversification of the themes covered by volunteering and of the profile of activities undertaken by volunteers, with an increase in skills-based volunteering and in online volunteering and a growing focus on inclusive volunteering. Digital transformation has become essential for recruitment and ongoing monitoring.

**Final Report****➤ Current and Future Challenges**

In view of the changes in the profile of volunteers and in our society, the information gathered indicates that there is a need for the current Volunteer-Promoting Organisations and other Civil Society Organisations to rethink volunteering and the volunteering activities offered.

More than half of the organisations identify challenges linked to recruitment, given that the most valued actions are reaching out to new groups/communities, with a recognition that volunteer profiles need to be diversified. The questionnaire data indicate that most OPV face difficulties mainly related to the availability of volunteers to carry out the volunteering activities, to aligning volunteers' expectations with the needs of the volunteering activities and to the insufficient number of new volunteers.

They also consider the strengthening of the “digital gateway” to attract new volunteers. Improving the online presence and the organisation's website and developing specific activities for short-term volunteering are also responses to the trend towards greater flexibility.

Organisations recognise the importance of the active and digital attraction of volunteers, but do not yet fully value virtual volunteering, despite its international relevance.

Despite recruitment difficulties, only one-third of the organisations surveyed report the adoption of specific practices and measures to increase volunteer retention, which leads to a greater need to attract new volunteers.

The delivery of training/capacity-building activities is a practice covering most of the organisations surveyed (85%), with initial training activities usually delivered for all volunteers or in situations where they consider there is such a need. However, continuous training and mentoring for the integration of volunteers is a practice adopted by only one-quarter of the organisations.

**➤ Main problems identified by the organisations**

In the case studies, two main elements emerge as key factors for the development of volunteering in Portugal:

- ✓ the existence of human resources with reasonable assignment to volunteer management in organisations
- ✓ the political and institutional recognition of volunteering (by municipalities, central government and leaders of civil society organisations).

In this regard, the existence of a structural weakness is acknowledged unanimously: the lack of human resources with adequate assignment to support the integration, work and supervision of volunteers, such as volunteer managers.

The OPV also identify further critical issues: volunteers' lack of commitment (tardiness, absenteeism, turnover, and early drop-out), availability constraints relating to working-hour compatibility, and insufficient funding to maintain and develop volunteering activities. This last factor constitutes a major obstacle to the growth and quality of the sector in Portugal.

It is also clear that the organisations are moving towards more professionalised volunteer management, and some OPV demonstrate maturity and a focus on quality. This is evident from the high importance attached to assessing the results and impacts of volunteers' work, even though there is a notable lack of mechanisms to measure the real impact of the actions.

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The absence of formal recognition of volunteers represents another weakness of the sector. There is a clear need to create formal recognition mechanisms, alongside greater employer support — in line with a growing international trend to enable employees to engage in volunteering activities.

➤ **Public recognition of volunteering**

According to the OPV, the groups that most value volunteering are the volunteers themselves, communities at large, and universities. Conversely, there is a clear perception of insufficient institutional recognition — particularly from the media and national public entities — which limits the sector's growth and attractiveness.

## VI.2. Recommendations

### STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE STATE

State mobilisation in the volunteering sector	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
The legislation on volunteering in Portugal dates from 1998. Almost 30 years later, the current legislation does not reflect the current reality of Volunteering in Portugal. It is urgent to revise the foundations of the legal framework for Volunteering and the Decree-Law that regulates it.	Adaptation of the Volunteering Law (Law No. 71/98) to current volunteering practices, including the recognition of activities carried out on an informal basis.
The State has not played a central role in the development of volunteering; it is essential that it assume a more active role in fostering greater civic participation and active, solidarity-based citizenship. A clear absence of a national strategy for the volunteering sector persists.	Creation of a National Strategy for Volunteering with concrete targets up to 2030.
	Integration of volunteering as a cross-cutting instrument across different policies and strategies, in areas such as health, education, youth, culture and sport, environment and civil protection, for example by incorporating this topic into sectoral strategic documents.
Insufficient funding is identified as a major barrier to the growth and quality of volunteering activities.	Promotion of the involvement of members of government in volunteering initiatives.
	Creation of specific funding lines for organisations that promote volunteering, intended to support the costs of recruitment, management, monitoring and recognition of volunteers, including, for example, human resources assigned to management, insurance, criminal record checks and other mandatory documents, and other expenses inherent to the volunteering activities.
The capacity-building of volunteers is a central element for the qualification of the volunteering sector, and it is necessary to strengthen the existing offer.	Inclusion of training for volunteering as part of the public training offer.
The lack of formal recognition of the	Creation of formal mechanisms for validating skills acquired through volunteering (e.g. a Volunteering Passport or certification of informal skills).

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State mobilisation in the volunteering sector	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
volunteering activities undertaken by volunteers and of the validation of the skills acquired constitutes an obstacle to their participation.	

Mainstreaming of volunteering in public organisations	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
Need to strengthen the volunteering culture in Public Administration practices.	Establishment of a volunteering time bank in Public Administration bodies.
	Promotion of incentives for the development of volunteering activities by people receiving unemployment benefit or other state social support.
	Recognition of volunteering as professional experience in public and private recruitment procedures.

Reinforcement of the role of Local Authorities in the promotion and management of volunteering	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
Municipalities should take a more active role in promoting greater civic participation and active, solidarity-based citizenship.	Promotion of volunteering as a clear competence of municipalities, ensuring the resources necessary for a local volunteering strategy.
	Integration of volunteering into the planning instruments of the Social Network Programme (ISS, I.P.) within the municipal Social Networks.
	Funding for small local volunteering initiatives.
	Definition of systems for awarding and recognising local volunteering practices.

Strategy for citizenship and volunteering education in the school context	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
There is a need to value volunteering as a component of civic education and active citizenship. Volunteering should be integrated into the basic and secondary education curriculum as a way of strengthening active citizenship and promoting civic engagement from an early age.	Specialised training and awareness-raising in the area for teachers and volunteering managers, involving teacher training centres.
	Promotion of the organisation of volunteering activities in schools and the involvement of children and young people in volunteering activities in schools.
	Creation of specific programmes that integrate volunteering into the school curricula.
	Support for initiatives that promote meetings between young people and seniors in joint projects, valuing the sharing of experiences, knowledge and skills between generations.
	Creation of volunteering clubs in schools.
Valuing of volunteering under the Students' Profile on Leaving Compulsory Education.	

## CAPACITY-BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE OPV ACTION FRAMEWORK

Promoting the professional management of volunteering	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
Lack of dedicated teams for volunteer management	Existence of qualified volunteer managers with adequate assignment.
	Establishment of procedures for the integration, mentoring and monitoring of volunteers, for example based on existing good practices/guides and models.

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Accumulation of functions and lack of time for monitoring.	
Absence of specific training in volunteer management.	Promotion of, or facilitation of access to, training/capacity-building activities for both technical staff and volunteers.
Ensuring the strategic steering/monitoring of interventions.	Implementation of registration procedures and monitoring indicators for volunteering activities.

Improving the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
Turnover and early abandonment. Lack of time and availability. Difficulty in reconciling volunteering with professional or academic life. Need for volunteers for some specific roles/areas.	Creation of flexible volunteering models (short-term, micro-volunteering, remote volunteering, skills-based), enabling the attraction of new groups and creating conditions for the practice of volunteering to be accessible to everyone.
	Reconsideration of the role of volunteers within organisations and the roles/activities they can perform, responding to the new volunteer profile, attracting new audiences and creating conditions for the practice of volunteering to be accessible to everyone.
	Implementation of strategies for recognising volunteers (certificates, events, awards, etc.).

Development of Corporate Volunteering	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
Very heterogeneous valuing of volunteering by employers, it not being a common practice in most of the business fabric.	Dissemination among employers of a culture of responsible citizenship, encouraging the development of volunteering programmes and enabling their workers to practise volunteering.
	Implementation of recognition systems for companies that develop internal volunteering programmes and offer volunteering opportunities to their employees.
Absence of specialised information on corporate volunteering in Portugal.	Conducting a specific Study on corporate volunteering practices.

Promoting Social Impact and Evaluation	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
Insufficient means for measuring results and lack of mechanisms for measuring the real impact of the actions.	Establishment of evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of volunteering programmes, ensuring the continuous improvement of the initiatives.

## CONSOLIDATING THE VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE

Creation of a National Volunteering Network	
Challenges	Specific recommendations
The absence of a national council or representative volunteering network limits coordination between sectors and regions.	Creation of a National Volunteering Network to enable cooperation between OPV, local authorities and public bodies in collaboration, exchange of good practices and advocacy for policies and funding priorities.
Need for a centralised repository on volunteering opportunities in Portugal.	Provision of a Volunteering Portal that makes available information on existing volunteering opportunities and initiatives.

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Need for collective learning spaces and opportunities for sharing experiences.	Promotion of collective learning events, exchange of experiences and inter-organisational exchange of good practices.
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**Strategy for citizenship and volunteering education in the university context**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Specific recommendations</b>
There is an urgent need to strengthen the importance and practices of volunteering within Higher Education Institutions.	Integration of volunteering into university curricula – creation of curricular units.
	Inclusion of volunteering in the student status of higher education, with credits or curricular equivalence.

**Fostering Systematic Research on Volunteering in Portugal**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Specific recommendations</b>
The absence of standardised and longitudinal research weakens evidence-based policies and hinders the real visibility of the sector's impact. The country needs institutional coordination between government, universities and civil society to generate reliable data, support informed decisions and guide the development of the volunteering infrastructure.	Production of knowledge about the sector in order to be able to design public policies.
	Carrying out analyses and studies on the contribution of volunteering to the social, environmental and economic development of Portugal.

**Recognition/Building of public trust in volunteering**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Specific recommendations</b>
The data collected point to problematic levels of recognition of volunteering, particularly in bodies such as public organisations and the media. Regaining public trust is fundamental to increasing participation and ensuring the sustainability of volunteering initiatives.	Dissemination of positive narratives about the impact of volunteering and promotion of inspiring examples of active citizenship, as well as the deconstruction of myths and false perceptions associated with the sector.
	Promotion of awareness-raising campaigns under the International Year of Volunteering (2026).
	Investment in activities and events to publicise and recognise volunteering by the Portuguese media.



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## PORTUGUESE LEGISLATION

- Ordinance No. 389/2018, DR, SERIES II — No. 146 — 31/07/2018
- Regulation on the Volunteering Support Measure

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- Council of Ministers Resolution No. 62/2010, of 25 August – Establishes the European Year of Voluntary Activities Promoting Active Citizenship in Portugal in 2011 (AEV-2011) and determines the national implementation of the activities associated with it.
- Decree-Law No. 389/99, of 30 September – Regulates Law No. 71/98, of 3 November, which established the basis for the legal framework of volunteering.
- Law No. 71/98, of 3 November – Establishes the basis for the legal framework of volunteering