

Bulgaria

[РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ]

RESEARCH PARTNER CENTRE

БЪЛГАРСКИ ЦЕНТЪР ЗА НЕСТОПАНСКО ПРАВО (БЦНП)

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COUNTRY FACT SHEET

■ **Population** 2008 (estimate): 7,606,551 inhabitants
2001 (census): 7,932,984

■ **Area** 110,910 sq. km.

■ **Population density** 68.9 inhabitants per sq. km.

■ **System of government** Parliamentary republic

Its basic law is the Constitution, founded on the principles of separation of powers among a legislative, executive and judicial branch of government. Bulgaria has the following institutions of state: National Assembly, Council of Ministers, President of the Republic, Constitutional Court. Legislative power is the supreme power in the country. It is exercised by the Parliament (the National Assembly). The National Assembly is elected for a four-year term of office.

■ **European elections**

Bulgaria elected its members of the European Parliament in a by-election on 20 May 2007. It was the country's first European election after joining the Union on 1 January 2007. The country now has 18 MEPs, no change from before the election. Previously, Bulgaria was represented by MEPs appointed by the National Parliament. The major two parties, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria and European Socialists Platform, obtained 5 seats each, followed by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms with four, *Ataka* with three, and National Movement Simeon II (NDSV) with one.

■ **Social security and welfare system**

Social Security in Bulgaria provides a welfare system for unemployment, pensions and health insurance. In 2008, 60% of social security payments were paid by the employer and 40% by the employee. In 2009, that ratio changed to 55:45 and, in 2010, will change to 50:50. Issues relating to state social security and overall social welfare are governed by the Social Welfare Code. The right to pensions and compensation is guaranteed by the National Social Security Institute. The Institute is a public organisation which, on the

basis of the Code for the Obligatory Public Insurance, guarantees the citizens' rights to pensions and benefits. The Institute provides for quality service and manages the funds of the state social security in an effective and transparent way. The Supervisory Board is the highest management body of the National Social Security Institute; it includes representatives of the state and the national representative organisations of workers and employers. The National Social Security Institute administers the mandatory insurance programmes for disability, old age and survivors' benefits, sickness and maternity, work injuries and occupational diseases, as well as control and information services for citizens.

■ **Public health system**

Before the structural reforms of the 1990s, the organisational arrangement of health care, decision-making and funding was centralised. The reforms led to the reorganisation and decentralisation of the main functions, whereby the Ministry of Health and its 28 decentralised regional health care centres develop and implement comprehensive national health policy and National Health Programmes. Following the transition to democracy, Bulgarian health care switched to a system of payroll contributions, establishing a semi-autonomous National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) to raise revenue and allocate resources. The Fund's operational activities have been decentralised to regional level and delegated to the 28 regional health insurance funds. Privatisation is another important feature of the Bulgarian health system. The Health Care Establishments Act outlined procedures for the privatisation of both state and municipality medical establishments. Private practice was legalised in 1991 and has since expanded significantly; in 1992, ownership of most health care facilities was transferred to locally elected municipalities. The current organisational structure of the Bulgarian health system is defined by the interaction of public and private players and a mixture of decentralised and centralised structures. The main stakeholders in the Bulgarian health system are the Parliament, the Ministry of Health, the NHIF and the Higher Medical Council. A number of other ministries own, manage and finance

their own health care facilities, including the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Transport. Private practice has expanded significantly, now including dental practices, pharmacies, physicians' surgeries, laboratories and outpatient clinics and polyclinics.

■ **Level of education**

In 2003, Bulgaria's literacy rate was estimated at 98.6 percent, with approximately the same rate for both sexes. Bulgaria traditionally has had high educational standards. In the post-communist era, low funding and low teacher morale have damaged the system to some extent, particularly in vocational training. Adherence to classical teaching methods has hindered development in some technical fields. The current system of primary and secondary education, introduced in 1998, has 12 grades, in which attendance is compulsory from age seven through age 16. In 1998, enrolment in the primary grades was 93 percent of eligible students, and enrolment in the secondary grades was 81 percent of eligible students. The ratio of females to males in primary schools was 0.97, and the ratio in secondary schools was 0.98. Because of Bulgaria's low birth rate, overall primary and secondary-school enrolment has decreased in the post-communist era, causing reductions in teaching staff and facilities. At the same time, the number of private schools increased 10 times during the 1990s. Bulgaria's higher education system was fully reorganised in the mid-1990s. Between 1995 and 2002, the number of university graduates increased from 33,000 to 50,000. In 2002, some 42 institutions of higher learning were in operation, and 215,700 students were enrolled. In 2003, some 4.9 percent of Bulgaria's national budget was devoted to education.

15-24 years old who have completed secondary schooling

From the total population aged between 15 and 24, the numbers in the age bracket 15-19 years old are as follows: 387 (0.06%) have completed a college education; 56,843 people (8.43%) completed their secondary specialised education; 120,984 people (19.03%) finished secondary general education; 403,834 people (63.5%) reached the primary level and 40,763 people (6.4%) graduated no higher than elementary school; only 6,956 people (1.1%) failed to complete their elementary education. In the 20-24 year bracket, the numbers are as follows: 15,792 (2.66%), graduate-level; 21,703 (3.66%) college; 19,145 (3.22%) secondary specialised; 237,309 (40.02%) secondary general education; 102,328 people (17.26%) primary education; 16,550 people (2.8%) elementary; 3,978 people (0.007%) are with incomplete elementary education.

The main conclusion is that the population aged 15-24 years old has a very high literacy level and is involved to a considerable extent in the form and degrees of the education system.

- **Immigration rate** (approx) 2009: -0.311%
- **Growth rate** 2009: -0.79%
 - Births 0.951%
 - Deaths 1.431%
- **Employment rate** 2007: 58.6%
 - 15-64 years old (2009) (total) 68.5%
(male 2,426,060/female 2,508,772)
 - 55-64 years old (2009) (total) 17.7%
(male 518,711/female 756,784)
- **Unemployment rate** (Sept 2009) 8.03%

Bulgarian Center For Not-For-Profit Law (BCNL)

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The Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL) was founded in 2001 as a not for profit legal entity with public benefit purposes (PBO) registered in the Central Registry of the Ministry of Justice. BCNL is the local affiliate of the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and a founder and affiliate of the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL), headquartered in Budapest, Hungary.

The mission of BCNL is to provide legal support for the development of civil society in Bulgaria. Its goals are to support the development of an enabling legal and fiscal framework of NGOs in Bulgaria and to provide legal assistance to NGOs. BCNL promotes the transparency, accountability and proper internal governance of NGOs.

Legislative initiatives

A priority activity of BCNL is the assistance in drafting and advocating legislation concerning NGOs. BCNL organises roundtable discussions with stakeholders, provides comparative legal information to interested parties, makes legislative analyses, provides technical assistance in the drafting of specific legal provisions, provides training and other technical assistance to NGO coalitions for improved advocacy on behalf of their public interests and in presenting those interests to state institutions. Its work in that area includes:

- Participation in the preparation of the NGO law and in drafting the latest amendments of the NGO law that have been passed by the Parliament in September 2006.
- Assistance in drafting and advocating amendments to tax laws related to the increase from 5 to 10% of the donation deductions for PBOs (Public Benefit Organisations), exemption from VAT of import of gratuitous aid, creating a possibility for employees to deduct donations, decrease of the tax on donations, exemption of inheritance tax for PBOs and others that were adopted in December 2001 and 2002.
- Preparation of amendments to the Law on Healthcare Institutions introduced on the floor of Parliament in 2003 to allow public benefit NGOs to become healthcare institutions.
- Participation in drafting the amendments of the Social Assistance Act and its Implementing Regulations that allow municipalities to contract out social services to NGOs.
- Participation in the inter-agency working group (Ministry of Finance, Social Ministry and the National Association of Municipalities) setting the financial criteria for the standards for social services in 2008.
- Drafting amendments to the State Budget Act for 2007 that provide clear criteria for selection of NGO-recipients of government grants in

2007. As part of the process BCNL also assisted the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice in preparing Guidelines for Applicants and an Application Form for the 2007 budget grants competition.

- Preparing a draft Law on Volunteering that is supported by the major volunteer organisations in Bulgaria. The Law is expected to be introduced to Parliament by a group of MPs.

NGO-Government partnership

A large part of BCNL's efforts target to increase the NGO/Government cooperation in different areas: the contracting of social services to NGOs, public procurement, inclusion of NGOs in the healthcare area and others. BCNL is organising trainings for both NGOs and municipalities on social contracting, consulting municipalities on the organisation of competitions for social service providers, assisting with the preparation of a municipality regulation on NGO/municipality cooperation and others.

Trainings

BCNL has organised more than 50 seminars and trainings for NGOs throughout the country on topics such as: NGO law, taxation, labour legislation, public procurement, advocacy and social service provision. BCNL has organised training for the tax experts from the Chief Tax Directorate, trainings for different municipalities, state officials and others. BCNL experts have been lecturers at a number of other events.

Consultations

BCNL has established itself as the key legal expert in the NGO field in Bulgaria. Its highly qualified consultants provide advice, related to the registration, taxation of NGOs, staff employment and other legal issues. So far, we have registered more than 130 NGOs and have helped other 150 to re-register. For the period of our existence, BCNL has assisted more than 1,800 NGOs with legal consultations.

Information services

BCNL has a website both in English and Bulgarian (www.bcnl.org) where all the latest legal information - laws affecting NGOs, legal deadlines approaching, etc. - is regularly published. The website has an on-line library that provides extensive information for NGOs: regularly updated legislation, interesting legal cases, analyses, publications and researches. The BCNL website is included in the network of the European Foundation Centre as part of the Legal Websites Project.

An addition to the website is dedicated solely on the process of social services and social contracting in Bulgaria (www.bcnl.org/social). It contains useful links, different legal texts, information on contracting competitions already held by municipalities, best practices of social service delivery, etc.

Publications

BCNL has published many of its analyses and legal researches. Some of the most important publications are: *Legal Arrangements on Healthcare Institutions in Bulgaria, the European Union and the United States*, a comparative analysis; *Economic Activity of NGOs and Business Planning; Hospices in Bulgaria*, a brochure; *Hospices in Bulgaria and in the European Union*, a comparative analysis on the legal framework of hospices; the textbook *Not-for-Profit Legal Entities Legal Framework*; *Taxation of NGOs in Bulgaria; NGOs and VAT; Legal Framework of Social Services*, a handbook; *Contracting of Social Services between the State and NGOs*, a comparative research; *NGOs and Public Procurement*, an analysis; *Social Entrepreneurship and Control on the Social Services in Bulgaria and in the European Union*, an analysis and a comparative research; *What is a Social Enterprise*, Q&A manual; *Philanthropy for Cultural Organisations in Bulgaria*, an analysis; *Survey on NGO Governance Practices in Bulgaria*, an analysis on the governance practices of NGOs including a sociological study of the Bulgarian NGO sector.

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Glossary

1 DEFINITIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1.1 VOLUNTEER, VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY, VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION, VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRE

The Bulgarian legal system does not define volunteer, volunteer activity, volunteer organisation or volunteer support centre. Generally, the term volunteering in Bulgaria refers to any provision of work and service without concern for financial gain. Therefore, a volunteer is any person who provides such free labour. The fact of the matter is that the status of volunteers, their rights and responsibilities are not legally regulated.

There are a number of problems in defining the terms volunteering and volunteer which derive from the difference in the perspectives of citizens, volunteers and representatives of third sector organisations. Bulgarian citizens perceive volunteers as those people who have found a solution to their everyday problems of existence, have a relatively high standard of living and can afford to spend time and other resources to do something for others. According to volunteers, the most important factors in making the decision to get involved are the matching of their interests with voluntary opportunities, the benefits to be derived from the experience and the feeling of satisfaction. According to representatives of third-sector organisations, volunteering is a social activity where the humanistic attitudes and active social position play the leading role.

2 VOLUNTEERS ON VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS)

The respondents of the interviews for this study unanimously agree that there is a lot of potential for volunteer work, especially among young people and young retirees, as well as the fact that volunteering is good for society and in fact shows how developed civil society is. *"The development of volunteering is actually the development of civil society, if one is not doing well, nor is the other."*

Now there is a bit of controversy as to if and when people in Bulgaria volunteer. According to some interviewees, Bulgarian society is not a society that volunteers for several reasons, mostly economical (Bulgaria has been in transition for the past 20 years and the physical survival of people has been the priority) and historical reasons, associated to practices during communism: *"The culture of volunteer work was destroyed during communism. Before that, there are examples of purely civic volunteer actions in Bulgaria (building of churches, saving the Bulgarian Jews during*

World War II etc). During communist times volunteer activities were organised and forced which to this day brings back negative associations in people when speaking about volunteer work. After communism people still need to be organised in order to do volunteer work and that doesn't happen." On the other hand, there is a trend that can be observed and spoken about by one of the respondents, that of young people who have been exposed to other cultures and countries and come back to Bulgaria looking for community work and volunteering opportunities. *"The young people of Bulgaria want to serve in their communities and volunteer. That is mainly based on their previous experience: many of the young people travel a lot these days (exchange programmes, work abroad during the sum-*

mer holidays, study in foreign universities...) and they are exposed more and more to the western models and values, they see the volunteer and citizen culture in the countries in question and that inevitably causes some changes in their attitude. *They come back home and start looking for opportunities to do something meaningful in their own country. The globalisation affects young people in that way and it is a good side."*

One idea that few people talked about is the need for volunteering from a very early age, when building that community spirit as an asset is crucial. *"Helping kids realise that they can be of service to people who need it or find a cause that they might be engaged in to do something for their community or society."*

Historical overview

1 ROOTS: BEFORE 1900

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

Historically, the period before 1900 (the period of Bulgarian National Revival, also called Bulgarian Renaissance) is the period of Ottoman rule (lasting 5 centuries). During that period, the church and the community centres, called *chitalishte*, had been the driving force for civic participation and volunteer work through their organising people to help the poor and needy, support orphans, provide education for Bulgarian children, fundraise etc. It can also be characterised as the period of efforts for self organisation, socio-economic development and national integration among Bulgarian people to face the struggles under Ottoman rule, as well as the reviving of the country after its freedom in 1878, when churches, schools and universities were built thanks to donations of money and land.

2 THE BRIEF CENTURY: 1900 - 2000

The beginning of volunteering in Bulgaria dates back to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century which is the era of the Renaissance in Bulgarian history. Later on, with the beginning of the communist period in 1944, volunteering was forcefully imposed on the Bulgarian community and people were expected to give their time to the construction of the communist state and volunteering was associated with physical work and political propaganda. The negative attitude towards volunteering and participation coming from communist times was still prevailing even after 1989 when democratic reforms began. The state of volunteering was furthermore aggravated by the sharp political changes and difficult socio-economic conditions of the country.

3 WHERE WE STAND: 2001 - 2008

In recent years, Bulgaria has been going through a very intense period of socio-economic and political transformation. Despite the challenging and insecure economic situation, volunteering in Bulgaria takes many forms, both formal and informal. Volunteers act in groups on their own initiative, according to other people's needs and requests, or lately within international programmes. Young people now have the opportunity to travel more outside the country and are exposed to other cultures and societies; one direct result has been an increase in voluntary initiatives. Many view such activities as a direct and effective way of contributing to their country's democratic and economic develop-

ment. New volunteering organisations are being established, especially by former volunteers, and not for profit organisations in general increasingly look to use the help of volunteers. Corporate volunteering has been successfully introduced in the last couple of years by the Bulgarian Charity Aid Foundation. However, the specific trend in the number of voluntary organisations or the number of people performing volunteer work in Bulgaria has not yet been examined.

The majority of organisations hosting volunteers in Bulgaria, about 95%, are not for profit and working in public benefit (e.g. NGOs, foundations, youth centres). Only about 5% are public sector organisations (e.g. community halls, municipal structures etc.). In the past couple of years, voluntary activities have been growing in the fields of environment and culture. These two issues seem to attract people of all ages.

4 VOLUNTEERING NOW (INTERVIEWS)

"There are at least two 'kinds' of volunteering: individually and collectively organised. The first kind is about personal choice and determination to help in a variety of ways. The second one represents the group activities in some sort of community: a class, workplace, a neighbourhood." This is how one of the respondents tried to explain the volunteering types in Bulgaria at this time.

What can be said without an argument is that volunteering in Bulgaria is underdeveloped and not enough attention is paid to it. There is not enough capacity and resources to recruit and work with volunteers. *"Currently, volunteering is an interesting topic, sometimes linked to two other interesting topics: corporate social responsibility, for companies, and building constituencies, for not for profits. Beyond this interest the activities are few and the development level low. Few organisations work with more than 3-8 volunteers and, as a rule, NGOs are bad in attracting and welcoming newcomers on a regular basis."*

As mentioned earlier, during Communism, volunteering was or-

ganised and not voluntary, which brings back bad memories and associations to people's minds. Now, after Communism, people still need to be organised in order to do community service and volunteer work and that doesn't happen. There is no infrastructure for that.

Also, as already pointed out, young people who have the opportunity to travel and be exposed to different cultures have the desire to serve, given the opportunity and a good cause. Young people, university students mainly, are the easiest and most often used volunteer force. The generation of people between ages 40-60 needs a strong cause, because usually they are working full time and are rarely active in volunteering, which leaves them aside as a target group.

At the moment, the predominant roles of volunteering have to do with social services like support for people in need (poor and disadvantaged people, orphanages...), help in disasters or one-day community work, for example, cleaning a park, painting a playground or gardening.

What has been a very obvious observation in the past couple of years is that more volunteers seem to be involved in environmental and cultural initiatives, the explanation being that these areas seem to have more understandable, visible and clearer goals, thus attracting more people. These organisations also seem to be more active in reaching out to the young people in universities, as well as on the web, where young people spend a lot of time.

One of the respondents managed to put the role of volunteers in one simple and structured sentence: *"Volunteering should allow for cross sector cooperation through the donation of skills from one sector to another and exchange of knowledge about the functioning of different sectors in society which ultimately enhances development."*

According to another one of the respondents the volunteer is to spot a need in the community and address that need, the addressing of that need being a process, rather than just an action. Generally, the volunteers are seen as a support power, offering help in places where the state cannot provide such at this time. Volunteers are also viewed as potential coordinators of youth exchanges, leaders of campaigns and recruiters of new volunteers.

Legal framework

1 OVERVIEW OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

The Law on Not for Profit Legal Entities has been adopted by the 38th National Assembly in September 2000 and is in force since January 2001. The next paragraph will provide more information as to the types of not for profit organisations the law allows, as well as the types of activities they are permitted to perform. In the past decade, no major changes in the law have been made. There have been several amendments.

1.1 NORMS SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is not legally defined in Bulgaria as of this moment. A Draft Law on Volunteering has been developed by several voluntary organisations and the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law in 2006. The Draft Law defined the terms volunteer and volunteering and was in alignment with the European legislation in this area. The legal framework on volunteering covered the status, rights and responsibilities of the volunteers, as well as the obligations of the voluntary youth organisations towards their volunteers. This law has not been approved by Parliament to date.

The currently existing legal framework, with regard to volunteering, is far from being fully developed. There are some laws which partially define or regulate voluntary activities. For example, under the Crisis Management Law (2005) voluntary organisations can be set up in cases of crises, volunteers being persons above the age of 18. The law also regulates the legal status of volunteers, for example, if volunteers are employed while taking part in voluntary activities, they are considered to be in unpaid leave from their occupation. Contrary to the legal status of volunteers defined by the Crisis Management Law, in reality, volunteers are treated as state employees and not as purely volunteers because any income or in-kind contribution received is subject to taxation.

2 PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

There are several challenges to the effective and efficient participation of the not for profit organisations and civil society in general in the policy making process. Some of them have been outlined and discussed in 2009, during a national work meeting initiated by the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law, BCNL. The discussion suggested that the legal framework of the civic and NGO participation in the process of decision making is insufficient and ineffec-

tive. Also, that there is lack of clear rules and procedures on the civic and NGO participation, which leads to insufficient and selective participation and representation of the NGOs in the processes of legislative drafting and policy-formulation and implementation. The existing mechanisms are not applied by the authorities and when applied they are applied selectively. The consultation process is highly dependent on the “good will” of the public officials. The civil society representation in different consultative bodies with the public institutions is not transparent and open; there are no clear mechanisms for legitimate selection/election of NGOs in such bodies. Last but not least, there is a certain lack of understanding on behalf of the institutions as to the importance of NGO participation in the decision-making for the legitimacy and transparency of the governmental process and for the implementation of the principle of good governance. The understanding that the NGOs can serve as partners is not fully there. The result of the above mentioned discussion was a strategic paper prepared by the BCNL on the NGO participation in the decision making process, which contains concrete suggestions for improvement, including the establishment of rules and principles of consulting between government institutions and NGOs on policy development. The project is still running and it is envisioned that eventually the principles and rules, as well as the other suggestions, will be presented and discussed at the Council of Ministers.

3 FISCAL POLICIES

The Law for Legal Entities with Not for Profit Purposes (2001) regulates the registration and operation of not for profit organisations in Bulgaria and was later followed by amendments to the Law on Corporate Income Tax (2006) and the Tax Law for Physical Persons (2007), introducing tax exemptions for not for profit organisations and donations made to such organisations. The legal framework for NGOs was particularly improved through the introduction of the notion of public benefit organisations, which must be registered at a special central registry within the Ministry of Justice. All taxpayers may

deduct from their taxable income donations made to registered public benefit organisations (for individuals up to 5% and for companies up to 10%); in addition, donations of imported goods to such organisations’ recipients are now exempt from VAT.

The problem with the current legislation is that there is no clear definition of what constitutes economic and non-economic activities. Furthermore, there is no clear definition of regular economic activities. These questions are a matter of interpretation by local tax authorities, which consider all income from economic activities as taxable; hence no tax exemptions for economic activities practically exist. However, pension and health care funds, universities and state and municipal health facilities registered under the law can deduct 80% of their profits derived from economic activities directly related to or supporting their primary activities. Additionally, there is a danger that if the authorities decide that an NGO is engaged mainly in regular economic activities or derives most of its income from such activities, the organisation could lose its not for profit status and be forced to re-register as a business entity. When the law first permitted NGOs to carry out economic activities and to seek profit, opponents of this idea resisted firmly but the outcome of the debate was completely unpredictable. In the end, not only were not for profit organisations allowed to carry out economic activities but the proposed prohibition on profit distribution was also abandoned. The logic of the legal implications relating to NGOs in Bulgaria, therefore, is quite obscure.

4 ROLLS AND REGISTERS

Generally, in order to be recognised as legal entities and to receive status of legal persons the associations/foundations should be registered by the respective district court. According to the regulation of the Not for Profit Legal Entities Act, the procedure consists of preparing a set of documents: mainly, the Statute and the Minutes from the General Assembly in the case of an association and deed of incorporation in the case of a foundation. The court reviews the documents for their legality and the observance of rule of law. Public Ben-

efit Organisations deserve special attention: upon court registration they have to be registered in the Central Register at the Ministry of Justice. The Central Register is available to the general public on the Ministry of Justice website.

Law for the Bulgarian Red Cross, 1995.
Bulgarian Labour Code, 1986.
Law on Corporate Income Tax, 2006.
Tax Law for Physical Persons, 2007.
Public Procurement Law, 1999.

5 LIST OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Law on Legal Entities with Not for Profit Purposes, 2001.
Crisis Management Law, 2005.

Volunteers involving organisations

1 ORGANISATIONAL FORMS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

In Bulgaria there are many terms used to describe the organisations working in the third sector, for example, not for profit, non-governmental, voluntary, community etc.

The Law on Legal Entities with Not for Profit Purposes (2001) defines such organisations as associations and foundations which could self-define themselves as public (or private) benefit organisations.

As mentioned above, the existing legal framework on volunteering is far from being sufficient and developed. In 2006, a Law on Volunteering was drafted by a number of not for profit organisations among which were the Bulgarian Red Cross, the National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA), the Lale Foundation, and the Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL). If it had been ratified by Parliament, it would have provided a definition which would identify volunteering as an activity outside of an individual's legal employment relations, one which is carried out voluntarily and without remuneration in not for profit organisations, local and state organs.

A definition of youth volunteering is provided under Article 23 of the Draft Law for Youth Development introduced in 2008, where the term is coined similarly. In addition, the definition ascertains that young volunteers are usually associated with a volunteering organisation and that volunteering is an activity which broadens the knowledge, skills and experience of volunteers and the people they help.

2 RULES AND FUNCTIONING

Not for profit public benefit organisations freely define the means to achieving their goals; can undertake additional economic activities, provided that they are related to the main activity area for which the organisation is registered at the Ministry of Justice; are not for profit distributing to their owners, directors etc.; have a supreme governing and management body; use their assets for achieving any of the following goals:

- Developing and strengthening moral values, civil society, healthcare, education and science, culture, technology, physical education.
- Supporting socially vulnerable people, the disabled and those needing care.
- Supporting social integration and personal realisation.
- Supporting human rights or environmental protection.

3 RELATIONSHIP WITH PUBLIC SECTOR

3.1 OVERVIEW

Recent amendments to the Public Procurement Law (1999) allow not for profit organisations to compete for government contracts at local and central levels; however, information on the current share of such organisations successfully tendering for public contracts is largely unavailable. According to data provided by NAVA, the number of competing organisations rose from 120 in 2001 to 373 by the end of October 2002. According to the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF), however, NGOs are sometimes afraid that they do not have the necessary capacity to carry out the task which affects their chances in winning call for tenders.

3.2 FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW (INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

Generally, the volunteer organisations tend to work with organisations that are alike them, have more or less the same structures and orientation, as well as face the same problems. An interesting suggestion was made by one of the interviewees: to involve more the schools and the community centres (*chitalishte*) in the volunteer organisations' work.

What can be seen as an observation of the responses to the questionnaires is that every organisation has its own individual experience and view on the relationship between the respective voluntary organisation and the public sector. Perhaps, if we look at it case by

case, we can agree that it is very individual as to what the relationship between a specific organisation and institutions is, but if we have to draw a conclusion on the bigger picture we can be somewhat pessimistic. Some organisations have good relationships with the local authorities, especially in smaller towns, where a local municipality, for example, allocated a building rent-free for the purposes of an organisation for a specific time in return for the maintenance of that building. This is how several organisations, both voluntary and other not for profits, have secured their office space and day to day activity. When it comes to policies, however, in principle there is no much interaction and organisations seem to think that it is because of lack of interest and "other" priorities.

"Despite a difficult economic situation, volunteering in Bulgaria takes many forms, from spontaneous to organised, formal or informal. Volunteers act in groups, within the framework of international programmes, on their own initiative or upon request of others. Due to the lack of a legal framework and data, it is however difficult to estimate their real impact in Bulgaria."

This is how one of the respondent organisations answered a question about the participation of the voluntary sector in the definition of public policies very openly and directly. Organisations participating in this study generally agree that there is no much participation, and whatever exists is not sufficient and effective. Despite the legal gaps, perhaps the most efficient participation in the past one or two years are the voluntary activities particularly in the environmental field, culture and animal welfare.

"Young people become more and more active in this field, as volunteer engagement is seen as a direct and effective way of contributing to the country's democratic and economic changes."

1 RESEARCH AND STATISTICS HIGHLIGHTS

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

There is an observed lack of academic research on volunteering in Bulgaria, which is why no systematic and recent attempt to quantify the number and profile of volunteers exists.

The new government that came into power in the summer of 2009 started revisions to the strategic paper developed by the previous administration: Strategy for Youth Development 2008-2018. The document is now called Strategy for Youth Development 2010-2020¹ and it contains some findings which might be of interest. The document looks at the challenges for the civic initiative of people up to the age of 35. As per their information, the youth organisations increasingly do not perceive themselves as an environment for citizen involvement and participation for young people. Five years ago, 7% of the youth were engaged in some sort of civic organisation, whereas in the last year this percentage barely reaches 2%. According to the same source, the most common interest of the youth are sports organisations and professional sports clubs, as well as dance clubs. Youths prefer to be involved in an informal way (internet clubs, forums and chats, torrent portals or musical websites) and the predominant attitude is one of common scepticism, exhibiting little or no interest in being active in anything. This attitude among young people about civic/community engagement as something that has no “purpose” and is basically a “waste of time” is a serious threat to democracy.

That being said, an observation that can be made is that the environment and the protection of personal rights and internet-related freedoms have become significant civic causes contributing to youth engagement and fast organisation. In just a few hours, an internet protest is able to attract large groups of young people and reach the media and the streets.

The Ministry also evaluates the challenges that youth face when it comes to volunteering. Although the interest of youth to participate in volunteer actions increases, the opportunities for volunteering are still limited. The value of volunteer work is still not widely recognised by youth. The mechanisms for public support of youth volunteering as a form of informal learning and experience-building are still underdeveloped. The government recognises that the rights of young volunteers need to be legally regulated.

As mentioned, there have not been any quantitative statistical data about volunteering, which is why the information presented below comes from a survey among volunteers and not for profit organisations across Bulgaria conducted during the period February-May 2002 by the Information and Society Foundation.²

¹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, *Draft Strategy for Youth Development 2010-2020*.

² Information and Society Foundation, *Study on the Voluntary Sector in Bulgaria, 2002*.

The above-mentioned study finds that only about 6% of Bulgarian citizens take part in voluntary activities. In addition, the report outlines the percentage of organisations relying on a certain number of volunteers:

- 23% of organisations rely, when necessary, on 10 volunteers.
- 18% use between 10 and 20 volunteers.
- 19% use between 21 and 50 volunteers.
- 10% use between 50 and 100 volunteers.
- Over 30% use the help of more than 100 volunteers.

Over 200 young people from different EU Member States volunteered in Bulgaria through EVS in the period 2000-2008 but, unfortunately, the number of Bulgarians who volunteered in another EU country is not available.

Data on the trend in the number of volunteers in Bulgaria in the past decades are largely unavailable; but, based on the practice of voluntary organisations, this trend is stable. However, another observation can be made: while EVS volunteers from across EU have increasingly become more interested to serve in Bulgaria, Bulgarian youth has proven difficult to motivate with unpaid voluntary opportunities, despite the benefits.

2 ECONOMIC AND STATISTICAL INDICATORS

2.1 TYPES AND RANGE OF NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

According to a recent study by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation,³ the largest part of volunteer involvement in Bulgaria takes place in the third sector. Bulgarian NGOs increasingly take on a vast majority of social services provision and community development activities, as local governments often do not have sufficient funds to provide these kinds of services or activities.

The most popular sectors for volunteer involvement are:

- Education, 55%
- Care for children in need, 47%
- Charity, 44%
- Development of the civil sector, 31%
- Protection of the environment, 29%
- Human rights, 29%
- Culture, 25%

According to a 2003 study by the Open Society Institute, volunteering in the cultural field, indeed, did not seem widespread in practice, with the exception of using students to help for specific art events. The study offered an estimate of the percentage of volunteers engaged in this field:

- Building heritage and museums, 30%. Especially in archaeological digs, where students in archaeology work as volunteers.
- Performing arts, 15%
- In some theatre productions, students and young people work as volunteers on backstage functions. Opera and ballet performances sometime use children from secondary school to participate on a voluntary basis.
- Audio-visual sector, including music, 5%. This sector is very much market-orientated and people who work there insist on payment as professionals. In very few cases, young people participate in the organisational side of the cinema and video businesses as unpaid volunteers.

As per the study by the Information and Society Foundation from 2002, NGOs involved in organising sports, tourism or leisure activities also attract a very large segment of young volunteers.

The profile of not for profit organisations in Bulgaria is the following:

- Unions, 45%
- Legal persons with not for profit purposes, 29%
- Foundations, 15%
- Community centres etc., 11%

Their distribution per sector is as follows:

- Education and research, 50%
- Social services, 45%
- Arts and culture, 32%
- Philanthropy and work with volunteers, 24%
- Healthcare, 23%
- Environmental protection, 22%
- Legislation, advocacy, politics, 22%
- International cooperation, 19%
- Business and professional organisations, 11%
- Religion, 3%

The majority of volunteers involving organisations, about 95%, in Bulgaria, are not for profit and working in the public benefit arena (e.g. NGOs, foundations, youth centres). Only about 5 % are public sector organisations (e.g. community halls, municipal structures etc.).

2.2 FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

According to the National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA), organisations providing financial support to civil society in Bulgaria are classified as follows:

- NGOs that re-distribute foreign funds (re-granting foundations), 46%
- Corporations with charity activities, 25%
- Community funds, 10%
- Private/family foundations, 7%
- Faith-based, 6%
- Foundations with endowment or property, 3%
- Other, 3%

Although NGOs in Bulgaria are not very successful in attracting sponsorship, local funding should not be ignored: over 65% of the companies in Bulgaria have made donations in the last two years and 23% of all NGOs report receiving donations from Bulgarian businesses during this period. In addition, the new Law on Persons with Not

for Profit Purposes allows NGOs to charge fees for the services and products they provide: 15% of their income is self-generated in this way and the amount is expected to grow in the future.

In general, there are no administrative grants allocated to volunteering or supporting voluntary organisations in Bulgaria. The central state budget provides subsidies to a small number of not for profit legal entities such as the Bulgarian Red Cross. The state is also partially funding the Bulgarian cultural centres called *chitalishte*. An additional fund has been created by the government to support projects of non profit organisations in public benefit, which have projects in the areas of education, social services, environmental projects, as well as projects targeted at the preservation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage. In 2005, the state contributed 4.387 million *leva* (2.2 million euro) to these organisations, including 1.267 million *leva* (641,000 euro) to the Bulgarian Red Cross. In 2008, that contribution has grown to 8.666 million *leva* (4.4 million euro), 2.5 million *leva* (1.2 million euro) of which went to the Bulgarian Red Cross.

The most common source of funding for volunteering organisations is external donors. Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of financial support for Bulgarian NGOs and other charitable and development activities comes from foreign donors working on a wide range of issues: education, health and health care, minority and human rights, child protection and child welfare, gender equality, participation of citizens in decision making processes, environment and biodiversity protection, community development and local philanthropy development.

Bulgarian private and corporate philanthropy represents at least 20% of the financial contributions to charitable and development goals. Areas of activity include cultural heritage, education, health care, social services, and child development.

2.3 FUNDING

In the period 1991-1998, the contribution of the non-trade sector to the GDP of Bulgaria was about 0.15%. During the following years, more favourable macroeconomic and institutional conditions for the

functioning of the non-trade sector were created and, in 2001, the added value of this sector was 62.8 million *leva* (32.1 million Euro) which formed 0.21% of the country's GDP.

In 2000, the added value of the activity of not for profit organisations in Bulgaria was 31.8 million *leva* (16.2 million Euro) which made up 0.12% of the country's GDP. However, if community halls and sports organisations are excluded from the group of NGOs, the added value is 23.1 million *leva* and the share of NPOs in the country's GDP decreases to 0.087%.

Despite its small contribution to the economic development of Bulgaria at the end of the 20th and beginning of the new century, during the period of the economic and financial crisis in 1996-1997, the not for profit sector in Bulgaria increased its net financial assets thanks to received transfers. This implies that this sector could become an important factor for long-term growth in the economy of Bulgaria, given that an appropriate economic policy fosters its development.

Under the Law for the Bulgarian Red Cross (1995), the Crisis Management Law (2005) and the Draft Law on Volunteering (2006), volunteers are reimbursed for the expenses they incur in the course of their voluntary service and also have a right to compensation in cases of injury. With regard to social protection, only under the Crisis Management Law volunteers are insured against all secured social risks: if a volunteer dies while performing voluntary service, his or her spouse, children or parents are entitled to compensation. There are no taxation rules on reimbursement of expenses for individual volunteers, however. Therefore, voluntary organisations choose whether and how to compensate volunteers' contributions, which usually includes basic expenses, such as transport, daily allowance, office supplies etc.

3 OF VOLUNTEERS AND ORGANISATIONS (INTERVIEWS)

The factors which motivate individuals to volunteer are various.

According to a study by the Information and Society Foundation from 2002,⁴ 56% state that they want to be useful and help concrete vulnerable groups. The cause is a motivator for about 17% of people, followed by the desire to change the social surrounding and make new friends and useful contacts, 16%. Skills transfer and experience-building are also among the motivators for serving with 12%. What can be observed is that in the past few years, after the opportunities were introduced for young people in universities to spend their summer holidays working through exchange programmes in western countries, we see more youth becoming interested in engaging in volunteer work. That comes as a direct result from their exposure to a different culture where the sense of community and active citizenship is very broad and visible. In that sense, globalisation has been a positive factor.

In addition, youth volunteers see in volunteering the opportunity to increase their qualification and civil competence as a way to invest in their future and professional realisation.

Finally, a very important factor motivating volunteers seems to be personal experience: for example, big brothers/big sisters who have been mistreated during their childhood may be driven to help children who experience a similar misfortune.

3.1 MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

Naturally, the motivations to serve and do volunteer work are very individual, but from the interviews we can outline some of the most commonly mentioned reasons. The general and common reasons for volunteering, according to the respondents, are the good idea and cause, as well as the sense of satisfaction and achievement. Secondly, we can put the exposure to different cultures and learning from the experiences that the volunteer work brings. This is a way for social interaction and responsibility to someone other than the person themselves: it is about being responsible for the community, for

the greater good or simply giving something back in return of what you already have. The “feeling good” factor is also mentioned as a powerful motivator, as well as being trusted, being given the vote of confidence, making someone else feel good and, as a result of that, feel good yourself.

The reasons why people do not engage in volunteer activities vary. The most common ones among the respondents were the fact that people do not know enough about volunteering, which has to do with education and upbringing, as well as the somewhat negative practices during communist times, and that there is no well established infrastructure of volunteer organisations and opportunities: the volunteering options are poorly organised.

Another good point made during the interviews was that Bulgaria has been in transition for the past 20 years now. The personal physical survival has been the priority of people in this period and, due to these purely economic reasons and the dynamic changes, volunteer work has remained at the periphery of civil society development.

Perhaps worth mentioning is the fact that, with volunteer work and social work in general, there is no quick change seen, which might sometimes serve as a demotivator. In today’s world, where we look for quick fixes, profits and solutions, the slow process of changing attitudes and working with people in need might not be a motivator. *“Part of the young people hasn’t got the experience and the knowledge of the processes in civil society: volunteer work is part of a process”* it is not just action.

3.2 NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

One of the main challenges for volunteer work is the concept of what a volunteer is. As mentioned above, the concept has been linked to Communist times when people were forced to do some volunteer work and now, in this day and age, very few are inclined to volunteer. The problem is that individuals do not see their role in society development. Some of it is perhaps a matter of culture. There is no middle ground. There should be more community service promotion.

Another challenge is that in Bulgaria there is no appropriate and sufficient organisation of volunteer work, no structure to support it. That is especially true in the big cities. What is missing is a regulation for volunteer work: no law, no official definition, no strategy, there is no official data on volunteering. *“Volunteering is not a priority in our society, yet.”*

The Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL) is currently working on the creation of an information database of not for profit organisation in Bulgaria and in this web-based database there is a section on volunteering. It aims to serve as a bridge between organisations that have opportunities for volunteer work and people who are willing to volunteer. It will also give advice and counselling on how to organise volunteer work, how to use a volunteer in the most efficient way, how to be a volunteer and help the best way possible according to time and capacities. They hope that, through this section, in the data base there will be more active discussions about volunteer work and community service and the idea of volunteer work will be promoted further.

Promotion is outlined as another challenge volunteering faces in Bulgaria. *“On another note there should be a conscious effort on behalf of not for profit organisations working in the field of volunteer work to promote community work in schools and universities, think about civic education classes in school, presenting different NGOs and their work, and engage kids in their work and causes.”*

The respondents acknowledge different needs of their organisations. For most, the needs amount to finding good partners and networking, as well as basic needs such as creating mechanisms through which the organisations can better recruit, use, and motivate volunteers.

The difficulties and challenges the interviewees face in their work seem to be very different. They start from the mindset and the culture of our dynamic environment, as well as the culture of the organisations themselves. Another clear difficulty stated is the lack of regulation about volunteer work, the rights and the roles of the volunteers. Some of the interviewees mention that they need to learn how to attract volunteers for longer terms.

Representation and coordination bodies

1 PUBLIC ENTITIES

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

In Bulgaria there is no public body responsible for volunteering, from a regulatory and institutional perspective. The Directorate of Youth Policy and in particular, the Unit for International Youth Programmes at the State Agency for Youth and Sports formerly dealt with volunteering among young people until July 2009, when the Agency was transformed into the Ministry of Physical Education and Sports. The work of the Directorate of Youth Policy and its constituents is now transferred to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science. The National Centre for European Youth Programmes and Initiatives, which is the main Bulgarian authority managing the Youth in Action Programme, is now also part of the same Ministry and will be responsible for youth volunteering. The Centre provides funding for youth exchanges and volunteering projects, publishes EVS promotional materials and provides information on youth activities through the EURODESK network. Over the years, however, voluntary organisations have become accustomed to working with volunteers without a legal framework and a superseding organisation.

2 NETWORKING (INTERVIEWS)

A very interesting observation can be made after talking to environmental organisations involving volunteers. They seem to be working in partnership between each other networking successfully, because they seem to have resolved their differences discovering that they all work for one cause and they are stronger together, rather than individually. This is why they seem to have established a strong network of ideas and volunteers of different ages involved in their activities. A good example for this is the For the Nature coalition.⁵

On policy level, there have been attempts to collaborate on a working group where volunteer organisations have tried to create a Draft Law for Volunteering but, for one reason or another, did not succeed. Unity and a common interest were lacking for the success of this initiative.

⁵ Coalition of non-governmental organisations and citizen groups campaigning for the preservation of the protected areas and territories in Bulgaria: <http://en.forthenature.org/>

Support bodies

1 SUPPORT MEASURES (QUESTIONNAIRES)

There is a genuine agreement between the respondents that there is no state policy regarding volunteering. The efforts and programmes available are limited to the Youth in Action Programme implemented by the Youth Agency, currently part of the Ministry of Education.

An interesting point was made by one of the respondents: *"The number of employees exceeds the number of volunteers, in contrast to other European countries. The weak motivation of Bulgarian citizens to work voluntarily in authorised civil forms can be understood if we explore the day-to-day priorities and values under the current conditions of Bulgarian society. The European level action encourages better coordination of trans-national civic service cooperation, an enhanced exchange of young volunteers and of information on national voluntary programmes, as well as the development and promotion of the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and possible extension to worldwide actions of solidarity."*

2 VOLUNTEER SUPPORT CENTRES

Youth Centres in Bulgaria are municipal structures whose work broadly aims at the civil society education of young people in the country. Youth Centres offer plenty of volunteering opportunities for young people's community involvement and often have an especially established Volunteering Centre within its structure (e.g. Haskovo Youth Centre). Such Regional and Local Volunteer Centres are responsible for placing volunteers, training, vetting and capacity building.

The network of 35 **Youth Information and Consultation Centres** across the country offers various services for young people or organisations which work for and with young people, including information on volunteering opportunities and obtaining funding for youth activities and initiatives, both through state funding and other donor organisations in the country and in Europe.

National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA) is a well-developed, not for profit organisation working for the benefit of the Bulgarian public and local communities, in particular through the provision of social services. The organisation was established in May 2000 with headquarters in Plovdiv. Five other Regional Volunteer Centres have been established in Varna, Gabrovo, Haskovo, Targovishte and Lovech. Its membership consists of 8 Regional and 17 Local Volunteer Centres, as well as 6 Centres for Social Support. NAVA's main purpose is to serve as a mediator between voluntary organisations and people willing to volunteer. Offering brokerage services to its regional members, NAVA is one of the networks solely dedicated to coordinating activities of voluntary organisations in Bulgaria, including recruitment of volunteers, training of volunteers and voluntary organisations, research-related activities etc. However, the organisation lacks real national representation capacity, partly because its headquarters are not located in the capital.

The **Bulgarian Red Cross** has a network of 28 municipal branches across the country. The organisation holds a General Assembly every year. The forum, attended by network representatives from across the country, discusses the work and achievements of the organisation and adopts the annual action plan and budget.

There is, however, no umbrella organisation representing the voluntary sector in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, voluntary organisations often cooperate with one another, forming working groups in pursuance of legislative or other initiatives affecting the development of the voluntary sector.

At present, 65 voluntary organisations in Bulgaria are EVS accredited sending, hosting or coordinating organisations. NAVA is in the process of evaluating its capacity to become an EVC/CEV member.

Although there are no Bulgarian members in the Association of Voluntary Service Organisations (AVSO), or in the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (ALLIANCE), yet, voluntary organisations use them as valuable sources of information.

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Focus on support bodies

(Questionnaires)

CVS-Bulgaria/Cooperation for Voluntary Service

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CVS-Bulgaria was legally registered as a NGO in June 2002. The organisation has been active at national and international level since 1998 and is part of the international voluntary service and peace organisation SCI (Service Civil International). CVS-Bulgaria was founded by few Bulgarian volunteers who, greatly impressed by their experience in voluntary projects abroad, decided to organise similar camps in Bulgaria. During the summer of 1998, two work camps with participation of international young volunteers were organised.

CVS-Bulgaria promotes the development of societal values and encourages responsible behaviour towards peace, social justice and environment preservation. This is achieved by organising volunteer initiatives and educational programmes. The aims and objectives of CVS-Bulgaria are to popularise the idea of voluntary work through organising voluntary initiatives, to motivate young people to participate in voluntary actions, to promote and support international understanding and solidarity, social justice, and respect for the environment.

To achieve its aims CVS-Bulgaria works in cooperation with organisations and institutions in Bulgaria and abroad. The main activities of CVS-Bulgaria are to organise short-term international voluntary exchanges and also to organise training courses, seminars, study visits, workshops and discussions. CVS-Bulgaria gives young people the opportunity to participate in voluntary projects of different areas: culture, ecology, art, work with children and disadvantaged people, in Bulgaria and all over the world.

Member of

- SCI (Service Civil International)
- SEEYN (South East European Youth Network)

QUESTIONNAIRES

CVS-Bulgaria/Cooperation for Voluntary Service

▪ Territory covered	Bulgaria	
▪ Volunteers	10	
▪ Staff	2 full time and 1 part time for volunteer support and development	
▪ Activities	ENVIRONMENT - NATURE - ANIMALS CULTURE AND CULTURAL GOODS	Environmental education Training
▪ Volunteering support activities	CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE TRAINING INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION	International volunteering and networking Courses, with or without stage Information office

European Information Centre

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The organisation began its activities on 24 October 1997, when the Council of Europe launched the first Regional Information Centre in Bulgaria in Veliko Turnovo. On 27 December 2000, the European Information Centre registered in court as a NGO. The organisation played host to the European Documentation Centre of the European Union on 4 January 2001. On 14 December 2001, the European Information centre carried out re-registration in court as a NGO in the public interest.

The mission of the Centre is to support the promotion of the ideas of a United Europe among citizens and facilitate the process of European integration for institutions, civil society and media. The goals of the Centre include:

- To promote the ideas of United Europe among citizens.
- To facilitate the process of European integration for institutions, civil society and media.
- To promote the Bulgarian, European and world culture and civilization.
- To work on education, training, research and counseling on issues of European integration etc.

The activities of the Centre consist of:

- **Information:** the European Information Centre is hosting the documentation libraries of the Council of Europe and European Union. It has over 18,000 books, 200 videotapes, 150 records, 50 DVD, archives with 250 European posters. The library is working free for citizens. EIC is the host organisation of the EUROPE DIRECT (2009-2012) and EDC (2007-2012).
- **Networking:** the EIC has its own based InfoPoints in regional cities in North Bulgaria. The InfoPoints are actively working in Rousse, Razgrad, Silistra, Lovech, Gabrovo, Turgovishte, Sliven, Lom and Pleven.
- **Publishing:** the EIC publishes the *European Horizons* magazine, financed by Strasbourg and Brussels; *EuroLibraryNews* and *Open Door* in 1000 copies. They are distributed to national legislative and executive institutions; regional and local power; society.
- **Social activities:** the Open Door Resource Centre, officially launched in September 2003. The Centre is designed by a group of European experts and is a sound example of the private-public partnership approach, occupying 5,590 sq.m. of municipal property, provided free of charge by the Municipal council for a period of 15 years. The Centre is hosting under one roof different social activities and services and serves as a community centre. Active elements at the moment are a telephone helpline against domestic violence, a children's day care centre, a conference centre, a well woman clinic. In 2006, the organisation founded the Regional Centre for Social Support under PHARE, which now is a state and municipality funded service for the Veliko Turnovo region.

b u l g a r i a

- Special activities refer to European integration process and priorities: conferences, seminars, education programmes, teacher's qualifications, research programmes, exhibitions, concerts, presentations, etc. Main fields covered are: gender education, anti-discrimination and human rights, education for tolerance, European citizenship education.

Member of the EC EUROPE DIRECT network.

QUESTIONNAIRES

European Information Centre

▪ Territory covered	Northern Bulgaria	
▪ Volunteers	15	
▪ Staff	1 full time for volunteer support and development 1 full time for other activities	
▪ Activities	HEALTH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	Promotion and/or coordination of self-aid Promotion of adoption Research, studies, documentation Re-education/reintegration Call centre and phone help Support for learning
	ENVIRONMENT - NATURE - ANIMALS CULTURE AND CULTURAL GOODS	History and architectural heritage protection Social cultural animation Training Work orientation
	CITIZENS RIGHTS AND TUTELAGE	Tutelage of citizens and participation Legal advice Civil rights
	PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES	Promotional campaigns on mass media Public events Meetings and conferences Festivals, expositions, fairs Publications
	CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE	Fiscal and administrative Management Project writing and presentations to bids Training processes

QUESTIONNAIRES

European Information Centre

INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION
COMMUNICATION

Events organisation
Fund raising
Communication
Access to European funds
Information office
Creation of special communication events
Presence in local and national newspapers
Production of lecture notes, books, manuals
Videos and CDs
Own web site

National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA)

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The National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA) in Plovdiv has been established in May 2000, as an organisation in public benefit. It has been functioning through a National Network of 24 Regional and Local Volunteer Centres throughout Bulgaria, which are hosted by partner organisations. Each Volunteer Centre, as well as NAVA, gained long-term experience in the development and management of projects directed at young people and children.

NAVA's mission is to revitalise volunteer traditions throughout Bulgaria by encouraging citizen's involvement in community problem solving, as well as organising initiatives and campaigns promoting volunteer values. The organisation has the following goals:

- To create, maintain and support the administration of comprehensive methodology for volunteers' management.
- To create, update and maintain effective system for monitoring the public confidence and necessities of Bulgarian society for volunteer issues.
- To identify fields of business and alternatives to volunteer.
- To be an active mediator between organisations/institutions working with volunteers and the people willing to be volunteers.
- To create, endorse and distribute positive models of coordination between children in need (children with communication deficits) and their social environment.
- To enrich and enlarge the youth's knowledge of skills to volunteer.
- To assist and support for the legality of volunteering in Bulgaria.

Its activities include:

- Training of volunteers communication skills with different special needs groups.
- Recruiting of volunteers for different social directions.
- Motivating and supervising volunteers.
- Maintaining the network of Volunteer Centres around Bulgaria.

In 2005, NAVA, in partnership with other Bulgarian NGOs, created and managed a Complex for Social Services for Children and Families

Support. Some of the following services have been provided since its functioning: primary prevention, deinstitutionalisation, supportive programmes for children with disabilities, specialised support, mother and child, centre for street children support, etc.

In 2007, NAVA created and promoted a Regional Resource Centre for Social Services for Children and Families, located in Plovdiv,

that ensures support to all community-support centres in the relevant municipalities, develops the social services' methodology, programmes for individual and group work with clients, policies and standards for provision of social services to clients, as well as permanent supervision and evaluation of local teams, working with children and families in the Municipalities.

QUESTIONNAIRES

National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA)

▪ Territory covered	Plovdiv, Gabrovo, Varna, Haskovo, Turgovishte, Lovech Bulgaria	
▪ Volunteers	500	
▪ Staff	500 part time for volunteer support and development 36 part time for other activities	
▪ Activities	HEALTH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	Psychological Help Animation and/or education for street children Home assistance
▪ Volunteering support activities	TRAINING PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE	Courses, with or without stage Promotional campaigns on mass media Public events Meetings and conferences Festivals, expositions, fairs Publications Information office Books, manuals, booklets Collection of laws (regulations, fiscal norms etc.) Database Management Project writing and presentations to bids Training processes Events organisation Communication

QUESTIONNAIRES

National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA)

COMMUNICATION

Access to European funds
European Voluntary Service
International volunteering and networking
Press conferences
Presence in local and national newspapers
Periodical publications or newsletters
Own web site

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

[CONTACT]

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YMCA Gabrovo was created in September 1991 as a not for profit entity. In the last 13 years, YMCA Gabrovo has implemented over 60 youth projects at local, regional and national level. It reached out to more than 6,000 young people in the region of Gabrovo and the rest of the country and supported the development of over 15 youth groups and organisations. The organisation has mobilised over 2,000 volunteers from 10 municipalities to participate in volunteer initiatives. YMCA Gabrovo manages to recruit and coordinate more than 70 volunteers annually in its programmes and initiatives.

YMCA-Gabrovo mission is to continuously support the holistic development of young people in Gabrovo and in the region. The goals include:

- To offer a range of information and training service provisions for youth and volunteers in the local community.
- To provide the range of specific services for children and youth at risk and their families.
- To extend the range of services in support of children based in institutions, in order to foster the process of deinstitutionalisation.
- To extend the cooperation with the local authorities, with government institutions, NGOs and other interested parties.
- To foster use of innovative approach and practices in youth work and in social work.
- To develop the capacity of staff and volunteers.

YMCA Gabrovo manages the Centre for Volunteer Work, which offers opportunities for training to local institutions, social services, and youth groups from Gabrovo and Bulgaria in general, as well as volunteering opportunities for children, youth and representatives of the local community. The organisation also implements a programme for youth in support the community development, where the concept of a youth volunteer passport is introduced and developed, which aims at documenting youth volunteering and participation. For the purposes of this project, a Finnish model has been adopted. YMCA Gabrovo also organises camps for children aged 6 to 12, where kids develop their leadership and organisation skills. Over 140 children have taken part in the camps in the year 2005 alone. YMCA Gabrovo also helps and works with an institution for children without parents, as well as an institution for the elderly in the region of Gabrovo.

Thanks to the continuous support of staff and volunteers, the organisation YMCA-Gabrovo succeeded in building a new youth territory edifice where the organisation at present operates.

Member of National Alliance for Volunteer Action (NAVA).

QUESTIONNAIRES

Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

▪ Territory covered	Gabrovo Gabrovo region: Gabrovo, Sevlievo, Drjanovo, Trjavna	
▪ Volunteers	27	
▪ Staff	3 part time for volunteer support and development 7 full time for other activities	
▪ Activities	HEALTH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CULTURE AND CULTURAL GOODS	Psychological help Re-education/reintegration Social assistance for children and youth at risk and their families Promotion of adoption Training Social cultural animation Youth exchanges Volunteer management Camping Work orientation
▪ Volunteering support activities	TRAINING PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES CONSULTING AND ASSISTANCE INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION	Courses, with or without stage Meetings and conferences Cultural events Publications Training processes Events organisation European Voluntary Service Information office

Development policies

VOLUNTEERING ACROSS EUROPE

1 PUBLIC INCENTIVES

Due to the lack of a legal framework, no support schemes for volunteers in Bulgaria have been established. There are no official state campaigns to promote volunteer action or civic participation. The same applies to the municipal level. Blood donations, for example, are promoted by the Bulgarian Red Cross and the National Centre for Haematology and Transfusion. According to the Bulgarian Labour Code, every employer is obliged to give two free days to an employee who donates blood, one being the day of donation and one being the day after the procedure. No special provisions are available in disaster situations and relief.

2 CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES

Unfortunately, within the country there are no good programmes that promote volunteering. No work has been done in schools to engage younger children. Some work is done in universities by professors or by NGOs, but certainly not enough. A few years ago, the Bulgarian Charity Aid Foundation has introduced the concept of corporate volunteering, which is well accepted but not yet widely known. Some companies, mainly larger international companies represented in Bulgaria, hold volunteer and corporate social responsibility events, when their employees have the chance to do some volunteer or community work in exchange for a day off, for example.

3 ON INFRASTRUCTURE FOR VOLUNTEERING (INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES)

On this question there have not been many discrepancies in the responses. The general view is that no measures and initiatives seem to exist. No official support seems to be available in terms of support centres, laws and regulations, no government promotion of community service.

“There is not any source of information to help in volunteer orientation, like websites offering volunteering opportunities, partly due to the lack of such offering and little interest from NGOs.”

At this moment, volunteer work only exists in developmental strategies and it is only referred to in regard to the youth. There is a general lack of interest from the government to deal with volunteering at this time. This being said, in small communities the local authorities seem to manage to organise community volunteer support in times of dis-

asters, for example, when help is needed. What is common for the respondents in this section is that they all like to see volunteer work to be regulated in an appropriate legal framework.

"I would like to see a state framework in which it is clear what are the status, the role and the rights and responsibilities of volunteers."

The other thing around which people seem to agree is the need for improvement of the infrastructure of volunteering: better organisation of the opportunities, resources, more information on the internet available to interested people, some sort of government support.

"There should be mobilisation of forces between the local governments and civil society and people should pay more attention to what surrounds them and sometimes show initiative and do something themselves, not expecting everything from their local authorities."

Another interesting point is that of the need for development of school programmes promoting community service, volunteer work, the value of community service, in a child-friendly manner concentrating on the practical aspects, the need for activities related to volunteering, like taking kids out in the field to experience it first hand.

"Perhaps I would like to see a text in the education law to make that a priority in education and render support for civic engagement present in schools. That would decrease the consumer approach in schools and would build life experiences in children at a very early age, so that, by the time they are out of university, they have the knowledge and the experience and continue serving their society."

4 STRATEGIC GOALS

Volunteering is not yet a priority on the political agenda in Bulgaria; hence, there is no national strategy or framework for developing volunteering as a value and virtue. Stakeholders, however, are optimistic that the lack of policy and legislation will be reversed under the new government elected in July 2009.

The role of youth volunteering was recognised in the draft for the National Strategy for Youth Development 2009-2018, produced by the previous government. This document identified three strategic priorities regarding youth volunteering, namely:

- Creating more voluntary opportunities for young people, in particular, with regard to transnational mobility.
- Guaranteeing the rights of young volunteers, especially those under 18 years old.
- Recognising volunteering as an important variety of non-formal education.

The document also includes a number of tasks that the government had considered in order to achieve these goals.

After the new government came to power in the summer of 2009, the Youth came under of the Ministry of Education, and so the new administration started working on a new strategy. Its draft was ready in the fall of 2009. The strategic goal of the 2010-2020 Strategy for Youth Development is to create sustainable mechanisms for investment in youth as a significant social capital and for mobilisation of the potential of young people for the development of Bulgaria and the EU. Part of this draft strategic paper is the chapter on youth volunteering. The main goal here is to develop volunteering among young people by the age of 29 as a driving force for their personal development, mobility, learning, social networking, solidarity between generations and forming of a civic conscious. The priorities are again as follows:

- To create more opportunities for young people to do volunteer work.
- To guarantee the rights of young volunteers, especially those under 18 years of age.
- To recognise volunteering as a valid and worthwhile addition to informal education.

The tasks in this strategic document overlap the ones from its older version. They are as follows:

- Creating legal guarantees on the status of the young volunteers and protection of under-aged volunteers from activities that can lead to negative consequences for their psychological development or health.

- Offering the appropriate training and qualification for young volunteers related to the activities they engage in.
- Certification and acceptance of the training, experience and skills gained by young people during their volunteer assignment.
- Introduction and implementation of good managerial practices for recruiting, training, stimulating, monitoring and evaluation of young volunteers, as well as acknowledgement of their achievements.
- Introduction of a “voluntary passport” as an official identification document for volunteers.
- Creation of a legal statute of voluntary organisations.
- Establishment of standards for youth volunteering and public control in support of young volunteers.
- Public support of youth volunteering by the state and the municipal authorities.
- Securing the implementation of the EU Convention for encouragement of trans-national long-term voluntary service for youth.
- Encouraging and supporting the participation of Bulgarian youth in international youth volunteer programmes.

5 EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE (INTERVIEWS)

As it is obvious that volunteering in Bulgaria differs from volunteering in other European countries the respondents mostly view volunteering in European countries as a *“useful tool for youth development and growth”*, as well as a means for exchanging experiences. As indicated by the interviews, the respondents see a possible change of policies at both national and EU level, as well as exchange of practices, information and models.

“Advocating for volunteer organisations and addressing the needs of individual volunteers or volunteer management organisations to the European level decision making bodies, as well as to the national government institutions.”

According to the profiles of their organisations, all of the interviewees agree that they would be open to engage in projects with volunteer involving organisations in other European countries. In particular, their interests lay in legal framework development initiatives, environmental initiatives, stimulation and benefits for volunteering. The networking and establishment of new contacts and partnerships is also included in the respondents’ answers.

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Elitsa **Barakova**

Executive Director of the BCAF-Bulgarian Charity Aid Foundation for the past 14 years. During that period, she and her colleagues have introduced and implemented projects for stimulating employee volunteering for some five years and, about two years ago, launched the project Responsible Company-Responsible Employees.

Lesley **Duncan**

Country Director for US Peace Corps Bulgaria for the past two years, distributed over 200 Peace Corps Volunteers to Bulgarian organisations and institutions according to the expressed need of these organisations. She herself has been a Peace Corps Volunteer and comes from a Peace Corps family. She has been involved in other types of volunteer work in her community back in the US.

Luben **Panov**

Former Executive Director, currently serving as a Program Director at BCNL-Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Mr. Panov initiated for his organisation more in-depth research into the legal status and regulations regarding volunteering in Bulgaria. BCNL created a work group consisting of not for profit organisations working with volunteers to develop a draft law on volunteering.

Radosveta **Krastanova**

Shtastlivetsa Sofia Civil Association. Mrs. Krastanova works as a university professor in political science at the New Bulgarian University and her civic engagement has started on a purely volunteer basis, when she and a group of her friends tried to establish a local grassroots group to solve some of the problems they faced in their neighbourhood. That group grew into being an organisation engaging people on a volunteer basis to act on issues of importance to society and related to environmental issues. She is responsible to the people she engages and for the issues and causes she finds important to her; this is her driving force.

Antoaneta **Yankabakova**

YMCA-Gabrovo. Mrs. Yankabakova is one of the few people in the country who has been working on promoting volunteer and community service continuously for the past 10 years, recruiting young people to volunteer, training them and engaging them in community projects. She consults other youth organisations all over the country and has touched and changed a lot of lives. Mrs. Yankabakova has worked closely with Peace Corps Bulgaria, introducing the volunteer concept in the country through the work of American volunteers.

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