

2.1 General context

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Historical Development

Croatian society inherited tradition of various forms of volunteering whilst being attached to the Church at the beginning of 20th century. During the period of socialism, volunteering was related to sport and culture, and the more present was traditional organising of citizens in volunteer fire-fighting associations (Bežovan, 2004). Historical development of volunteering in Croatia as a research topic is neglected, and this can be said for research interest in volunteering today as well. There are researches of regional and local character that give a very fragmented picture of the situation, dynamics and aspects of volunteering, whereat young volunteering is marginal and insufficiently explored. National research of specifically young populations only began in the previous decade with the study of the widespread volunteering and, in some cases, the types of volunteering.

According to the 2008 European Value Survey conducted among general population in Croatia, there are only 8.3% volunteers, the most of whom are active in religious organizations (5.3%), in educational and cultural activities (3.5%), and sports and recreational organizations (2.3%) (Bežovan and Matan?evi?, 2011). A significant drop in the number of volunteers compared to 1999 may be discussed, when according to the same survey there were 21.3% of them. The authors find causes of this decline in the tradition of informal voluntary work, the widespread economic (non) opportunities, the lack of adequate information and, in the still insufficiently adequate relationship of the society towards voluntary work (Bežovan and Matan?evi?, 2011). Responsibility for a low percentage of volunteering at the individual level is limited. Namely, practicing civic virtues in the form of voluntary work should not be directed only to organizations that already have poorly developed programs for the involvement of volunteers. In other words, the closure of state and public institutions has been detected with regard to the inclusion of this type of work in the area of its activity. In addition, the economic crisis has further directed people to engagement within the circle of family and friends (Bežovan, 2004). It is to assume that the lack of satisfactory functioning of some institutions that should take care of and help the citizens in need contributes thereto.

This situation is related to the overall dynamics of civil society characterized by weak civil participation, lack of trust among citizens, and partly inadequate public institutions' relations with civil society organizations as well (Zrinš?ak, Lakoš et al., 2012). Still Zrinš?ak, Lakoš et al. (2012) state that the development of volunteering over the last decade is evident, and that Croatia is more similar to Slovenia and the Czech Republic on this issue, and/or countries of the Central European circle of more developed civil society than those of the underdeveloped ones such as Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine.

Volunteering can have the features of formalization and informalization. Formal volunteering has the characteristics of contractual relations within the organizational structure and carries therein the authority of the organization, and partly the professional knowledge. The latter is less structured and contains the sense of responsibility borne by the individual social role of friends, neighbours or citizens (Onyx and Leonard, 2002). When it comes to informal forms of volunteering among young people, there is no reliable comprehensive data in Croatia, but there are some recent researches that give a picture thereof (Ilišin et al., 2013).

According to recent research, 60% of young people have never volunteered, 32% sometimes and 7.8% often volunteered, suggesting a relatively weak presence of volunteer activities among young people (Youth Research of the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth, 2013). According to the youth research data (Ilišin et al., 2013), the experience of volunteering during 2011, (given that the survey was conducted in 2012), had 13% of respondents. According to the same source, there is a significant proportion of informal structured volunteer work, given that a third of volunteers engaged in helping people with special needs and the elderly, and just over a quarter helped the schoolmates to master the subject matter. A quarter of the respondents participated in the organization of cultural events, and almost one fifth of them organized sports events. Public works in the local community attracted less than a fifth of volunteers, and every sixth volunteer engages in religious activities. Although volunteering is also a chance to gain work experience, a relatively low percentage of them experienced work in the business sector (9%) and non-governmental organizations (7%).

The statistical monitoring of the widespread of formal volunteering was initiated by the introduction of the legislative framework yet in 2007 and as well as the establishment of the [National Committee for the Development of Volunteerism](#), an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (RC) carrying out measures and activities related to the promotion and development of volunteering. In that sense, it can be said that, in Croatia, the development of volunteering itself as well as related instruments to encourage and monitor it still are not in full boost.

Main Concepts

The basic characteristics of volunteering are voluntarism, performed without remuneration and general usefulness, which are manifested as mutual support, provision of services and active inclusion in society (Bari?, 2008). The official definition of volunteering is contained in the Act on Volunteering ([Zakon o volonterstvu, NN 58/07, 22/13](#)) which reads: “as an investment of personal time, effort, knowledge and skills out of free will with which services and activities are executed for the well-being of another person or wider public, without existence of any conditions of providing a financial reward or seeking any other material benefit for volunteering accomplished“.

Volunteering differs in terms of its duration and frequency. Long-term volunteering is the one that a volunteer performs regularly and continuously on a weekly basis for a period of at least three months without interruption. Short-term volunteering is what a volunteer performs one-time or periodically in limited time of duration.

Based on the same Act, eight activities are recognized that cannot be considered voluntary: 1. performing those services or activities that are in contravention of the RC Constitution, laws and international obligations; 2. performing services and activities that imply the payment of cash benefits or property gains without the establishment of employment; 3. performing jobs for an employer that have the characteristics of employment-based relationship; 4. professional training for work without the employment relationship established by special regulations; 5. performing services or activities that are formally agreed between the two parties (except when it comes to a contract on volunteering); 6. performing services and activities that are considered to be binding between the two persons on the basis of laws or other regulations; 7. executing services in accordance with court decisions and judgments; 8. performing services or activities that are common in close relationships.