

## 2.1 General principles

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## Historical developments

### No stand-alone law

There is no national stand-alone law on youth volunteering in the Netherlands. The national government stimulates all voluntary activities, but municipalities are responsible. Voluntary work is part of the kind of activities Dutch people are involved in. This voluntary work is bound to certain laws and regulations, all concerning compensation, accommodation, insurance and whether and how many hours somebody can work as a volunteer.

The focus of the Dutch government is access to education and work. There is no 'third road' to volunteering. Volunteering is part of the [Social Support Act](#) (2015) (in Dutch: Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning – Wmo) and stimulates informal and formal social systems. The Social Support Act gives municipalities the assignment to connect with initiatives of citizens.

### Historical developments

Voluntary activities in the Netherlands has a history of many years. It is important to define what is meant by voluntary activities. In her article [Jongeren en vrijwilligerswerk: een verhaal over motivatie](#) (Young people and voluntary work: a story about motivation) (2004) Linda Bridges Karr gives an overview of available literature on the subject. Lucas Meijs, professor of volunteering, civil society and businesses at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University (RSM) states in his foreword to the article that this research shows only a limited insight into the motivation to do voluntary work, but the article forms a promising onset to new research and development in practice.

In her article Karr speaks mainly about forms of voluntary efforts that look like formal organized voluntary work. This term is applied throughout the article.

Many young people in the Netherlands where at that time (2004), and still are, enthusiastically active in a great diversity of forms of voluntary activities. In her article Karr describes that there was also a general image: young people are less active and are less interested in doing voluntary work than grown-ups.

Karr shows in her article that the general images of young people showing less interest in doing voluntary work does not correspond with the experiences of young people and young people's organizations in practice. As it turned out, general knowledge about voluntary work was lacking. That is why the effort to stimulate young people to civic participation was high on the agenda at that time. The [Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport](#) called for a special regulation that would reach 19,000 young people in 3 years.

## **Civic internship**

Together with the [Ministry of Education, Culture and Science](#) they stimulated the development of various ways to let young people get acquainted with voluntary work under the title 'civic internship' (maatschappelijke stage):

In 2007 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science made an amount of 30 million euro extra available for civil internships and volunteers. Municipalities with a secondary school could count on 15 million euro to help students find an organization to do their civil internship. Another 15 million would be divided between all municipalities and was meant to boost volunteering, such as civic internship. About 195.000 students were supposed to find a nice and educational internship in the environment of their school, village, town or city.

From the schoolyear 2011-2012 the introduction of civic internship was obligatory in vocational and secondary education. As of the schoolyear 2014-2015 civic internship is not obligatory anymore. Schools themselves can decide if they want to have civic internship as part of their curriculum.

The voluntary civic activities of young people got a lot of attention in those years. The general opinion was that a favorable image among young people will stimulate them automatically to participate in voluntary activities. As a result there was an increase of marketing campaigns, that aimed at improving the image of voluntary work.

## **Research about motivation (1999)**

Some Dutch practical researches discussed the motivation of young volunteers. These studies are mostly quantitative, based on predesigned categories of motivations. For example, in their background study Maatman, De Poorter en Van der Gugten (1999) point at a classification of motivations used in a research about young people and their participation in sport clubs: relational motives, personal development motives, recreational motives, intrinsic motives and external/expressive motives.

## **Pedagogical civil society - Programme about volunteering for and by youth and families (2009-2012)**

[Voluntary activities for and by youth and families](#) (Vrijwillige inzet voor en door Jeugd en Gezin). That was the title of a 4 year programme (2009-2012) ) that stimulated the active role of citizens in civil societies such as neighbourhoods and districts in towns and villages, in raising and growing up to strengthen a pedagogical civil society. The programme wanted to improve co-

operation and exchange between municipalities, youth care, welfare and volunteer organizations in the area of active citizenship about raising and growing up.

It was a successful programme that resulted in a great many projects, products and research, all compiled on the website. The last issue of the magazine [Vrijwillige Inzet](#) (Voluntary Activities) (June 2012) highlights all aspects of the programme, the use of it, and its possible follow-up. One article in the magazine (pag. 42-53) contains a dialogue between Lucas Meijs and Micha de Winter, two professors with expertise in the field of volunteering. They concluded: ‘*The pedagogical civil society is completely self-evident.*’

In the advice ‘Investing around children’ the [Council for Health and Society](#) (Raad voor Gezondheid en Samenleving) had introduced the concept of the pedagogical society three years earlier and in 2012 it was a common term. The advice formed an important basis for the programme.

The programme was financed by [ZonMw](#) The Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development, commissioned by the [Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport](#) and [NWO](#) The Netherlands Organization for Scientific research.

### **Recent research about volunteering**

[Statistics Netherlands \(CBS\)](#) published the research paper [Vrijwilligerswerk: activiteiten, duur en motieven](#) (Arends and Schmeets, July 2018) (Voluntary work: activities, duration and motives). Over a period of 6 years (2012-2017) the response of 45,695 persons was available and analyzed.

Almost half of the population (48,5 percent) of the Dutch population of 15 years and older said in 2017 that they had been active as a volunteer for an organization or union, at least once a year. This percentage is fairly constant since 2012. About 50% of all young people is involved in voluntary work. Most volunteers are active in sports clubs, schools, youth organizations, religious or philosophical organizations and in care and nursing. Volunteers spend an average of 4,5 hours a week doing voluntary work, with most hours (4.9) being spent in youth organizations and the least hours (1.5) in the neighbourhood.

There are strong differences between population groups:

- Volunteers are more likely to be found in the middle aged groups;
- Men and women spend about the same time in voluntary work, but differ in the type of organizations they are active in: Women are twice as active in schools and in care, while men are more active in the area of sport and youth work. Men put more time in voluntary work than women;
- Higher educated people are more active as a volunteer than lower educated people, but for less hours a week;
- More than half of the volunteers with a Dutch background do voluntary work, while people

with a Western and non-Western migration background are much less active.

- People of religious or philosophical denomination are more active than others, of which members of the Protestants Church Netherlands and Reformed Church are most active.
- In less urbanized communities more volunteers are active than in strongly urbanized communities.

**In conclusion, results show that level of education, age and religious denomination are most relevant for doing voluntary work.**

The majority of volunteers are regularly working as a volunteer, mostly every week. Voluntary work is often incidental for the neighbourhood and for schools. Young people in the ages of 15 to 19 are more often incidentally active than older people.

According to the volunteers themselves the kind of work they do is mostly organizing and coaching, 'something else' and administrative tasks, depending on the type of organization

Young volunteers (15-19) mostly organize activities, give training or 'something else – not specified'. Young people are less inclined to continue the voluntary work than older people.

Most of the volunteers come in contact with voluntary work through the organization they work at, through family, friends, or acquaintances, or through work or study. The most important reasons why people do voluntary work is because they like it and they enjoy doing something for somebody else. Volunteering because it helps to find a job plays a role only to a minority of volunteers.

## Definition(s) and concepts

### Volunteering, voluntary activities, voluntary work

To define voluntary work [Movisie](#), Netherlands centre for social development, uses the 2008 definition of Civiq (the former organization on volunteering, now part of Movisie): *Voluntary work is work that gets done unpaid and voluntarily for the benefit of other people or the (quality of) the society in general, in an organized setting.*

In their theme card on volunteering (april 2016) Movisie talks about volunteering in a broader sense, also including non-formal activities such as citizens initiatives. Six years ago the focus was on all organized forms of volunteering, whereas starting from 2015 citizens are supposed to take the initiative themselves. That meant a change in the main functions and focal points of municipalities. They now act as brokers to facilitate citizens in their own initiatives. Two developments are significant, both asking for the full participation of all citizens:

- In the **care** for people that have care needs and demands the support given is the link to the social systems of a client. A person's own coping competences and sense of responsibility are important factors in this form of volunteering.
- Also there is attention for the development of **active citizenship** and a so-called 'Do-

democracy' wherein citizen's own initiatives are being stimulated.

**Volunteering is participating** Movisie developed a theme card about [Participation](#) (2017). It describes volunteering and voluntary work as a means of participating in society. Doing voluntary work for example, provides a sense of esteem and lesser feelings of stress and loneliness. In Chapter 5 Participation all aspects of youth participation are described.