

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

On this page

1. **Existence of a National Strategy**
 2. [Scope and contents](#)
 3. [Responsible authority](#)
 4. [Revisions/ Updates](#)
-

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

As mentioned before there is no national programme for volunteering in the Netherlands. The government does support volunteering activities in general but municipalities and NGO's are responsible for the execution of volunteering efforts and work.

Funding

Since March 2020 all young people between 14 and 27 years old can voluntarily donate an amount of time to do [social service](#). This way, [central government](#) simulates young people to discover, use and develop their skills and talents, to meet new people, to contribute to society, to strengthen civil society and to make choices for their future. All young people are able to serve a period of time in social service, no matter their education, background or stage of life. Young people can work in a variety of sectors: nature & animals, sustainability, engineering and IT, politics and government, education, media and culture, sports, safety, and welfare and care. Social service takes at least 80 hours in maximum 6 months. It can be done alongside school, study, work or during a holiday or gap year. Young people receive supervision, often training, and a certificate or other reward afterwards.

The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport is responsible for the development of social service. After consulting young people about their views and ideas on the design of the social service period, pilot projects started in 2018 to experiment with social service. [ZonMw](#), the Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development, with the help of a panel of young people and experts granted subsidy requests of 87 pilot projects. The projects had to be compliant to the wishes of young people. The development of social service projects in the experimental phase has been monitored. Their results have been described in the evaluation report [Past the experimental phase: social service in the future](#). The majority of the participating youngsters (71%) regarded social service as a positive experience. 10% till 20% of the participants stayed involved in their social service organizations after finishing social service. Over half of the participants did not have any prior volunteering experience.

In March 2020 social service officially started, with new grants from ZonMw. At the end of 2020 183 social service projects existed. Between the end of 2018 and December 2020 almost 21.000 young people volunteered in social service in 18.000 organizations. The ambition is to scale up to 60.000 young people participating.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

[Statistics Netherlands \(CBS\)](#) published the research paper [Vrijwilligerswerk: activiteiten, duur en motieven](#) (Voluntary work: activities, duration and motives) (Schmeets and Arends, July 2020). Over a period of 6 years (2013-2018) the response of more than 45.000 persons was available and analyzed. Almost half (48 percent) of the Dutch population of 15 years and older said in 2018 that they had been active as a volunteer for an organization or union, at least once a year. This percentage is fairly constant since 2013. 48.4% of all young people were involved in voluntary work. Most volunteers were active in sports clubs, schools, care and nursing, youth organizations and in religious or philosophical organizations. Volunteers spent an average of 4.4 hours a week doing voluntary work, with most hours (5.1) being spent in social care and the least hours (1.4) at school.

Support to young volunteers

In some cases young people get compensated for their voluntary work by the organization they work for. Also, under certain conditions they are exempted from paying income tax. Information about working as a volunteer and taxes can be found on the website of the [Tax and customs administration](#) (Belastingdienst).

Quality Assurance (QA)

[The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport](#) has a coordinating role regarding the national policy for volunteer work. Several [laws and regulations](#) apply to different aspects of volunteer work:

- The Act on Working Conditions.
- The General Data Protection Regulation.
- A police record check (free of charge) for volunteers working with vulnerable people.
- A volunteering fee exempt from income tax, with a maximum of € 1.800 a year.
- Specific rules for volunteers on benefits.
- [Rules of conduct and a road map](#) to prevent and talk about inappropriate behavior in volunteer organizations, like bullying, sexual intimidation, aggression or discrimination. The products have been developed by the Association of Dutch Volunteer Organizations (Vereniging Nederlandse Organisaties Vrijwilligerswerk).

The [Association of Dutch Volunteer Organizations](#) improves the quality of volunteer work by, among other things, offering manuals for the recruitment of volunteers, drafting a volunteer

policy and volunteer management to volunteer organizations.

A social service programme for young people has been developed and is described in this section under 'Funding'. The development of social service projects in the experimental phase has been monitored. Their monitor's results and recommendations for further improvement of social service have been described in the evaluation report [Past the experimental phase: social service in the future](#).

Target groups

At national level Dutch government has made efforts to promote the opportunities and benefits of volunteering among all young people. Apart from social service, there are no measures taken to enhance the participation of specific groups of young people in voluntary activities.