

# National analysis on volunteering – Poland

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## I. STRUCTURE OF VOLUNTEERING IN POLAND

### **Is there any act of law of voluntary service? Description, highlight the main features (privileges and obligations)**

Volunteering in Poland is regulated by the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the Act is to ensure balance between protection of basic entitlements of volunteers and flexibility of the legal relationship. Pursuant to the statutory definition – a volunteer is a natural person who provides services voluntarily and without remuneration, under the provisions specified in the Act (Article 2 point 3), where also a member of association may be a volunteer (Article 42 paragraph 3).

What is important, the regulations concerning volunteer work (with several exceptions) are independent of the Labour Law regulations. This is reflected, among others, in the provision stating that to agreements concluded between the beneficiary and the volunteer, within the scope not regulated by the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, the provisions of the Civil Code shall apply (Article 44 paragraph 5).

In order to enhance security of rights of both parties, the scope, manner and time of provision of services by volunteers should be specified in an agreement concluded with the beneficiary, which has to provide the possibilities of its termination. Should a volunteer provide services for a period exceeding 30 days, the said agreement shall be made in writing, if for a shorter period, the beneficiary, at the volunteer's request, shall confirm the agreement's contents in writing.

The non-negotiable entitlements of a volunteer include:

- right to information on health and safety risks connected with the provided services and on the rules of protection against hazards as well as about rights volunteers are entitled to and obligations they are responsible for,
- safe and hygienic conditions of services provision, including appropriate personal safety measures determined by the type of services provided and the related hazard under separate legal provisions applicable to employees,
- casualty insurance (if services provision lasts for a period of less than 30 days, such insurance is guaranteed by the beneficiary and if volunteer work is provided for a longer period of time, a volunteer is entitled to such insurance pursuant to the Act of 30 October 2002 on provision on account of accidents or occupational diseases resulting from specific circumstances)
- if a volunteer is delegated to provide services in the territory of another state, where an armed conflict, a natural disaster or a natural calamity occurs – the volunteer is entitled to casualty and expatriate medical insurance, should their costs not be covered otherwise, in particular under the coordination provisions set out in the Act of 27 August 2004 on health care services financed from public funds.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/Public,Benefit,and,Volunteer,Work,Act,567.html>

Moreover, unless the volunteer releases the beneficiary in full or in part from such obligation, the volunteer is entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses and to allowances, under separate legal provisions applicable to employees.

The beneficiary may also cover: other indispensable costs incurred by a volunteer, connected with provision of services for the beneficiary as well as costs of trainings and third party insurance in relation to the provided services as well as casualty insurance and expatriate medical insurance (optional in other situations than delegation to the territory of another state, where an armed conflict, a natural disaster or a natural calamity occurs).

Source: <http://pozytek.gov.pl/Volunteering,in,Poland,577.html>

### **Researches (connected to voluntarism on national level)-short introduction and summary**

Volunteering seems to be very interesting topic for the researchers – especially after the European Year of Volunteering 2011, that highlighted the importance of such activity and after the 30th anniversary of the Solidarność (Solidarity) – the social movement, born in the 1980s, that engaged millions of Poles and led to semi-free elections in 1989, ending the communism in Poland. It all reminded the Polish people, that there is a great social potential in the nation and that if we undertake social activity, we can change the world for the better. This is why there are many researches on volunteering conducted in Poland by various institutions and organizations, that study the ability of Poles to support each other and to undertake different social activities. Thanks to them the knowledge on social commitment in Poland is diversified and enable to compare the results obtained from few points of view. Recent and most popular researches are:

- Klon/Jawor, *Podstawowe fakty o organizacjach pozarządowych*<sup>2</sup>, Warszawa 2013 – In depth research on the Polish third sector. Contains, among others, detailed data on the number of NGOs, their members and volunteers working for Polish NGOs.
- Fundacja Dobra Sieć, *This is volunteering! The code of key values of volunteering*, Warszawa 2011 – 1st qualitative research on Polish volunteering, contains volunteer's stories, representing different kinds of volunteering and the description of different kinds of volunteering<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ngo.pl/PodstawoweFakty\\_2012\\_raport/ebook/content/PodstawoweFaktyNGO\\_2012\\_KlonJawor\\_raport.pdf](http://www.ngo.pl/PodstawoweFakty_2012_raport/ebook/content/PodstawoweFaktyNGO_2012_KlonJawor_raport.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://e-volunteering.eu/this-is-volunteering-research/>



- CBOS, *Potencjał społecznikowski i zaangażowanie Polaków w wolontariat*, Warszawa 2012 – the research tries to analyze the „social potential” of the Polish – e.g. their willingness to become volunteers and support NGOs.

### Statistics (no. of volunteers, tendencies, most popular target groups and tasks)

- 55% of Polish NGOs cooperate with volunteers – people, who are not the members of NGOs, but support them in a voluntary and non-paid way. Those NGOs operate mostly in the field of: social care, healthcare, education, art&culture, sport, tourism, hobby, local development.
- Socio-deographic characteristic of Polish volunteers: age over 34, higher education, high satisfaction level of the financial self-condition. About 20% of Poles declares voluntary and unpaid work for common good and others in need<sup>4</sup>.
- Tendencies: There are several types of volunteering developing in Poland nowadays. Among others: employee volunteering (companies engage their employees in supporting NGOs or creating their own projects influencing local communities), volunteering in groups (eg. family volunteering), seniors volunteering (engaging people aged over 50 in volunteering), e-volunteering – volunteering done via the Internet.

### Types and specialities of volunteering on national level (age, type, e-volunteering etc)

There are a lot of different kinds of volunteering recognized in Poland. We can classify them:

- By the organizer:

<sup>4</sup> CBOS, *potencjał społecznikowski i zaangażowanie Polaków w wolontariat*, Warszawa 2012

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- formal volunteering: led by non-governmental organizations, institutions and other entities that can cooperate with voluntary workers under the law.
  - informal volunteering: led by informal groups, typically in the form of a grassroots initiative mobilized to solve a community problem.
- b. By the social group, who volunteer:
- Student volunteering
  - Senior
  - Pupils
  - Employee
  - Family
  - ...
- c. By the field of activity:
- Cultural
  - Health-care
  - Environmental
  - ...
- a. By time-intensiveness:
- Microvolunteering: tasks that take from several minutes to several hours to complete (e-volunteering).
  - Long-term volunteering.
- b. By volunteering character:
- Permanent: cooperation lasts longer and consists of completing continuing well-defined tasks (recurring or forming a logical sequence).
  - Cyclical: repeating at specific time-intervals dependent on the success of individual project stages.
  - Project-based: characterized by short-term 'actions' that aim to simultaneously engage as many people as possible.
- d. By the place of volunteering:
- On-site volunteering

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- E-volunteering<sup>5</sup> - a volunteer work conducted via the Internet. It is often called also virtual volunteering, cyber volunteering, digital volunteering, online volunteering, but it always refers to work where an online system (accessed through a computer, a mobile device, etc.) plays a key role in recruitment, facilitating access to tasks, and conducting that tasks (source). And there are plenty of activities that can be done via the Internet:

*e-learning, free Web counseling, translating documents, researching information, editing or writing proposals, press releases, newsletter articles, forming assistance and self-help groups, moderating online discussion groups, coordinating campaigns, creating web pages, teaching on-line courses, providing expertise, designing graphics, editing videos, creating podcasts, monitoring the news, tagging photos and files, offering feedback and many, many more!*

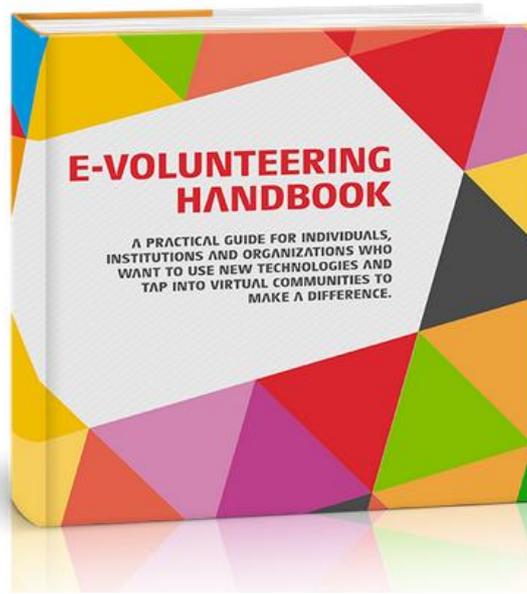


Virtual activities overcome the barriers of space and time, so they are accessible for everyone. No matter where you live – in small village or in a huge city, are you disabled or not, through the Internet you can support every project you want.

Good Network Foundation promotes e-volunteering since 2009, both on national and European level. We launched the [www.e-volunteering.eu](http://www.e-volunteering.eu) – the first website in Poland dedicated to volunteering done via the Internet. What is e-volunteering? What are myths around it? Who can become an e-volunteer? How to use ICTs for social good? Answers to all those questions can be found on [www.e-volunteering.eu](http://www.e-volunteering.eu). Moreover, in 2014 we published the [E-volunteering Handbook](#) - a practical guide for individuals, institutions and organizations who want to use new technologies and tap into virtual communities to make a difference. The handbook is free, available in electronic format (.PDF, EPUB, MOBI) in different languages: English, Polish and Ukrainian. You can download it from [www.e-volunteering.eu](http://www.e-volunteering.eu) and get inspired.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://e-volunteering.eu/>



### **Can I complain if it does not work? (volunteer, project, host org)**

Reflections and complains makes the organizer able to improve their volunteering program. The protection of basic entitlements of volunteers is provided by the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work as well as agreements concluded between the beneficiary and the volunteer. Within the scope not regulated by the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, the provisions of the Civil Code apply (Article 44 paragraph 5).

If there's something wrong, you can contact:

- The volunteer coordinator in the organization you volunteer for.
- The Board of the organization you volunteer for.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Department of Public Benefit: Ul. Żurawia 4a, 00-503 Warszawa, tel.: (+48 22) 693 47 59, fax.:(+48 22) 693 46 60, e-mail: [pozytek@mpips.gov.pl](mailto:pozytek@mpips.gov.pl)

## II. STRUCTURE OF VOLUNTEERING IN YOUR COUNTRY IN PRACTICE

### Who can support me (NGO, organisation) in my country

If someone wants to be a volunteer and is looking for some advices/detailed information, he/she can contact, inter alias:

- Volunteer Centers: <http://wolontariat.org.pl/> located in many cities, collecting data about voluntary work opportunities, matching volunteers with those in need, organizing workshops for volunteers.
- Centers for NGOs (institution of self-government, that can be found, e.g. in the city hall) that take care of cooperation between local government and local NGOs, and also support NGOs in different ways, e.g. by organizing workshops for them, or lending the office.
- Or visit the website of Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Department of Public Benefit: <http://pozytek.gov.pl/>

Volunteering opportunities can be found on:

- [http://ogloszenia.ngo.pl/organizacja\\_szuka\\_wolontariusza](http://ogloszenia.ngo.pl/organizacja_szuka_wolontariusza) - adds added by organizations looking for volunteers, as well as by volunteers willing to support NGOs (only Polish language version).
- <https://www.mojwolontariat.pl/> - website dedicated to matching volunteers with NGOs (only Polish language version).
- [www.e-volunteering.eu](http://www.e-volunteering.eu) - web portal dedicated to virtual volunteering where you can find information about tasks that you can do online to support NGOs in Poland and in Europe.

### What 'volunteering' means in your country?

In Poland volunteering is understood as a formal or informal activity undertaken freely and without expecting remuneration, helping to benefit the common good, typically performed on the behalf of non-governmental organizations or grassroots communities

### What support do I get? (materials, like pocket money, accomodation etc.)

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According to the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work, the host organization shall provide volunteer with all the materials and cover all the costs (e.g. travel or accomodation), that are necessary to do the volunteer work in a proper way.

**What supporting system does exist?**

There are several NGOs, that offers support for organizations, that search for volunteers and for volunteers, seeking for volunteering opportunities. To mention few of them:

- Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu: <http://wolontariat.org.pl/> - the coordinator of local Volunteer Centers, that provides volunteers with all sorts of information (eg. law, agreements).
- Fundacja Dobra Sieć (specialized in e-volunteering): <http://dobrasiec.org/>, [www.e-volunteering.eu](http://www.e-volunteering.eu) offers information connected with volunteering online, as well as the database of e-volunteering projects that you can join.

More information on workshops/training projects for both NGOs and volunteers can be found on: <http://szkolenia.ngo.pl/> (in Polish).

**Institutions about volunteerism (structure)**

There is no hierarchical structure for volunteering in Poland. Every NGO, institution and other body, that can cooperate with volunteers on behalf of the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work can organize volunteering itself, and volunteers doesn't have to be registered anywhere. As a volunteer, you can choose organization/institution that actions are in line with your interests and support it!

**Database connected to voluntary work**

Educational materials on volunteering can be found on:

- <http://pozytek.gov.pl/Volunteering,in,Poland,577.html> – website of Public Benefit Department contains useful information about NGOs and volunteering, e.g. legislation.
- <http://bibliotekawolontariatu.pl/tag/dla-koordynatorow/> - online library with content connected with volunteering, e.g. how to run volunteering, what to pay special attention to, etc. (in Polish)
- <http://e-volunteering.eu/category/knowledge-base/> - knowledge about online volunteering – both for the organizers of e-volunteering projects, and for e-volunteers.

- [http://dobrywolontariat.pl/baza\\_wiedzy](http://dobrywolontariat.pl/baza_wiedzy) – guides on volunteering, good practices, researches (in Polish).
- <http://poradnik.ngo.pl/x/377783> - guide for NGOs and volunteers (in Polish).

### **Trainings**

There are many trainings for NGOs and volunteers. Some of them are organized by the NGOs mentioned in the question „What supporting system does exist?“, while others are organized by self-government institutions.

More information on workshops/training projects for both NGOs and volunteers can be found on: <http://szkolenia.ngo.pl/> (mostly in Polish).

### **Where to get the money from?**

For organizations: Organizations generally organize and fund volunteering opportunities themselves. Sometimes they can obtain some funds/ grants from self-government or other NGOs.

For volunteers: According to the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work, the host organization shall provide a volunteer with all the materials and cover all the costs (e.g. travel or accomodation), that are necessary to do the volunteer work in a proper way.

### **References – how can I prove what I have learned during my voluntary service? (europass, youthpass, etc.)**

Volunteers can always ask the organization they volunteer for to give them references (according to the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work).

### III. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS, BODIES IN YOUR COUNTRY, WHICH EXISTS AND DEALS WITH VOLUNTEERING-target area V4-((bi-,trilateral, also - V4)

According to the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work, foreigners can volunteer in Poland without receiving the permit to work.

(Is there any NGO abroad I can contact directly?)

- Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji – Erasmus Plus national operator (Poland): <http://www.frse.org.pl/>

### IV. DATABASE-V4 level (bi-,trilateral, also – V4)

**What is the task?**

- European Voluntary Service volunteering opportunities: [http://europa.eu/youth/vp/opportunity\\_list\\_pl](http://europa.eu/youth/vp/opportunity_list_pl). You can filter them by the country you live in, the opportunity location, dates and topics and find something that you'll be really interested in.

**Database (host org, sending org, volunteers)**

- European Voluntary Service host organizations from Poland (accredited): [http://europa.eu/youth/evs\\_database\\_pl](http://europa.eu/youth/evs_database_pl). You can filter them by the organisation country, town/city, name, PIC number or EVS accreditation typ (e.g. sending organization, receiving, coordinationg).
- FIYE Poland – an NGO active in the field of voluntary service and particularly committed to international youth exchange programmes, e.g. workcamps. <http://www.fiye.pl/index.php>, <http://workcamps.pl/>

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- Volunteer can also contact an NGO of his/her choice directly. The database of all the Polish NGOs can be found here: <http://bazy.ngo.pl/> (in Polish) and here is the database of Polish community foundations, that also can cooperate with volunteers: <http://www.v4program.org/>.

**Is there anyone who helps me? (institute, expert, previous volunteer, similar experienced organisation)**

- Eurodesk Poland: <http://www.eurodesk.pl/>
- Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji – Erasmus Plus national operator (Poland): <http://www.frse.org.pl/>
- You can also take a look on the publication: *Volunteer guide to Poland. For EVS volunteers by EVS volunteers*, that contains useful information for people from abroad, who want to volunteer in Poland: [http://workcamps.pl/new/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=50&Itemid=126](http://workcamps.pl/new/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=50&Itemid=126)

## V. LIFE IN MY COUNTRY

**Situation in the country-cultural aspect; make attractive the country; travel; behavior; cost of living; habits; safety; using of mobile; healthcare; unique, hot beer**

Poland is a country with great history, a country of contrasts, country that in 2014 celebrated 25 years of freedom recovered after the communists era. You can see and learn great solidarity in here, live a life of big city or feel the peace of small villages with traditional cuisine, music and lifestyle. Actually in Poland lives over 38 million people, the largest city is Warsaw (capital) with almost 2 million citizens. With Baltic sea in north and Tatra mountains in south – it is definitely worth visiting or staying longer. The number of NGOs is growing every year so you will find many volunteering opportunities in here!

We also recommend you the publication: *Volunteer guide to Poland. For EVS volunteers by EVS volunteers*:

[http://workcamps.pl/new/index2.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=50&Itemid=126](http://workcamps.pl/new/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=50&Itemid=126)

**Can the volunteer work or learn parallel the voluntary service?**

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Yes, according to the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Work volunteer can learn and work at the same time. However, he/she should ensure, that the regulations of the program/project he/she volunteer within allow him/her to work or learn paralell the voluntary service.