



Voluntary Activity of Polish People and its Motives in Recent Years: New Volunteering

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Abstract: *This article covers an issue or the phenomenon of volunteering. The introduction is a recall of a definition of volunteering. Then it shows the distribution of voluntary activity in different countries of the European Union in order to look at some aspects of the phenomenon in the microscale of one country - Poland. It shows the percentage of involvement of Polish women and men in volunteering, their age, their motives to work for others. It makes the reader to think about an innovative definition of volunteering.*

Keywords: adult education, voluntary work, Poland

Exploring the issue of volunteering we turn to the tradition of ancient Greece and Rome, or thoughts - directions contained in the Bible. Work of others, selfless and without compensation has been promoted for ages. In myths gods are unsurpassed models of proceedings. An example is Prometheus, who stole fire for the benefit of humanity. Philosophers themselves had little to do with charity, however, thanks to their teachings they propagated the idea of helping others. Big breakthrough for the development of charity, understood in two ways by Christians was the Middle Ages. Almsgiving and charity were indispensable to obtain absolution. By the requirement of the time social assistance, care for widows, children, old people, the sick and the homeless was promoted. One can write long how charity was shaped in the world throughout the ages and what varieties of it we can find.

The very concept of volunteering comes from the Greek word *voluntarius* meaning voluntary, dependent on the will. The activity itself as voluntary and free comes from the post-war period, when the Swiss - *Pieree Ceresole* organized the first *Civil Service Volontaire camp* near Verdun in 1920, where the previously fighting met to rebuild what had been destroyed. Such actions were repeated and soon they found their followers in other areas of social life.

Currently, analyzing literature, web browsing voluntary institutions, reaching the research on volunteering, following the mass media, including social ones, we can now see how volunteering is changing its face, functions, operating ranges, recipients. From all this emerges a different, different from the original, image of volunteering, volunteer.

M. Górecki (2013) approximates the results of the European Union research "about volunteering", published in 2010. Level of participation in volunteering in various countries was shown:

- very high - 40% - Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom
- high – 30-39% - Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Germany
- average -20-29% - Estonia, France, Latvia
- low - 10-19% - Belgium, the Czech Republic, Spain, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia, Cyprus, Malta
- very low - less than 10% - Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Lithuania (Górecki, 2013:84).

* *results in Hungary had a high degree of divergence*

European Year of Volunteering - 2011 as well as Football Championship the UEFA EURO 2012 are the two events which had impact on the increased interest in volunteering.

In 2000-2006 we dealt with a decrease in the activities of this type due to increased migration of young people abroad. Medialy publicized events such as *Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy*, *Szlachetna Paczka* are already a part of a permanent image of Polish charity. Not that I mean for example financial donations in annually organized *WOŚP* finals. However, that is the way in which charity is often confused with philanthropy. I will name after A. Jeran, A. Basińska (2014) *CBOS* survey of 2011 *Young, rich, educated, religious - myth of Polish volunteer* activities considered volunteering and reference to the definition of volunteering according to the respondents (Jeran & Basińska, 2014).

Table 1. Activities considered volunteering and reference to the definition of volunteering according to the respondents

Description of activity	Percentage of indications	Compatibility with the definition of volunteering
Voluntary, unpaid work for the benefit of public institutions (hospitals, social welfare, health, etc.)	62%	Yes
Voluntary, unpaid work for social organizations (foundations, associations, parishes, religious communities, churches).	54%	Yes
Participation in the collection of money or payment on account of the organization implementing a social purpose (WOŚP, helping the homeless, animals, etc.)	49%	No
Social, voluntary and free engagement in activities directed to other persons within such institutions as the Volunteer Fire Brigade, Voluntary Water Rescue, the Tatra Voluntary Rescue	38%	Yes
Voluntary, unpaid work for the benefit of neighbors, housing community, cooperative	29%	Yes
Sending a text message to support a social purpose (eg. to help sick children)	26%	No
Voluntary, unpaid support to family members or close friends	24%	No
Unpaid work as a trainee or apprentice with the hope of future employment	16%	No
Voluntary, unpaid work for the benefit of political parties, electoral committees	13%	Yes
Membership in the school or pre-school parents council	11%	Yes
Working for free after hours in the workplace	11%	No

Source: Jeran, A., Basińska, A. (2014). *Nowy wolontariat w polu zróżnicowań – poszukiwanie modelu. Kultura i Edukacja. 1, s.124-125.*

The above-quoted section of the research shows how far are the Polish people from understanding what volunteering essentially is (voluntariness, lack of payment, execution of benefits). In the studies of Klon / Jawor association of 2013. *Social commitment of Poles - the audit report in 2013*, it is clear that the scope of meaning is understood narrowly by the Polish over 50 and more broadly by young people. E. Sitarska (2010) concludes that this passivity can be traced to factors of awareness – the heritage of the previous system. The low level of civic awareness, lack of tradition of volunteering transmitted from generation to generation, or current problems such as poverty, migration, persistent unemployment and ceaseless confrontation, distrust and division on "Us and Them" in various spheres of life (Sitarska, 2010). That attitude among others influences the distribution of the involvement of young people and the elderly in voluntary activities. A. Bejma (2012) states that young people up to age of 25 are the most socially active Then the activity falls to about the age of 35 which is often associated with obtaining the wider stabilization of life - career, family, or may be the indicator of a high level of emigration. People in the age group of 36-45 are also active. The decrease is observed in

people over 50 (2012, p. 97). So far, there is no visible change in volunteering of seniors, despite the changes implemented in recent years (eg. *Active until Hundred* Program of Regional Volunteering Centres *Active until Hundred*). Social capital and trust are built by very young people.

According to a survey by CBOS in 2011 30% of Polish people worked socially. 11% of respondents said they worked as a volunteer, 16% devoted their spare time to voluntary and unpaid work for an NGO, 21% to the community, the environment or locality, 36% in favor of strangers. According to research from the 2011 by CSO., where a broad definition of voluntary was used (unpaid, voluntary work, which is provided for the benefit of strangers, the environment, society and the local community and is taken individually or as part of an organization or public institution), 85% of the time of unpaid work refers to work done individually outside organizations. In a study of 2013 P. Adamiak (2014) reports that 18% of Polish people were involved in "formal" volunteering (understood as an activity for organizations or social groups). More than a quarter of respondents (27%) declared, however, that were active in their environment or towards people outside the circle of family and friends, not naming their volunteering activities ("informal" voluntary work). Almost one in ten (9%) of the respondents worked for the church or religious organization. If we treat these different coexisting with each types of social engagement together, it turns out that in 2013 34% of Polish men and women were socially active. It is worth mentioning that social activity is more characteristic of respondents with higher education - declared by 53% of them and only by 31% of the rest. Women are slightly more likely to engage in it (37%) than men (31%). Comparing the research in 2011 - 30% of Polish people were involved in volunteering while in 2013 - 34%. Thus it can be assumed that this activity did not change significantly.

There are different types of motivation by which volunteers can be guided engaging in volunteering, (altruistic, task, ideological, selfish, affiliate). Research suggests that the Polish give a number of reasons that led them to engage in volunteering. The first group are the psychological factors - 2/3 of respondents indicated them as important - 51% of respondents want to feel needed, 46% of respondents say that they enjoy helping. Another group are the normative contributions - values and social norms - 46% of Polish people think that you just have to help, while 40% believe that you need to be a useful, 28% of respondents think that it is worth to interact with other and less than a quarter of the population think that acting socially they make the world a better place. Society and social relations seem to be important for just over half of the respondents. Almost one-third (30%) are involved socially, as in this way they can gain respect or sympathy of others. The same number (30%) do it, expecting reciprocity and hoping in the future to be helped by others. For 28% the reason for the involvement is the possibility of being in a group and make contacts. The fourth group is a direct benefit for 44%. For 28% of this group it is an opportunity to gain new experiences and skills through social activity (life or work), 42% of young people aged 19-26, especially appreciate this aspect. 23% of respondents say that this type of involvement can be useful to them or their families. 36% of Polish people

are passionate about this type of activity. 29% of volunteers are guided by opportunism.

In the considerations it is worth to keep in mind what puts people off, what can be a barrier to volunteering activities - self-centered factors, ignorance and helplessness, fear, and the idealization of volunteering, physical factors are often associated with poor health and lack of confidence. Building social capital one should investigate what makes it difficult to act for others. It is worth working on yet untapped potential to strengthen the existing one.

A. Jeran and A. Jasińska (2014) suggest an Anglo-Saxon concept of "new volunteering", which is a counterweight to the classical expression and understanding of "volunteering". The new one results from the changes occurring in this area: changing patterns of implementing volunteering, diversity of volunteering functions, motivation of action. A different profile of activity is clarified with but in its essence it still remains volunteering (Jeran & Basińska, 2014:128).

Tabela 2. Classic and new

	classic volunteering	new volunteering
culture	Identified with traditional cultural norms	individualization
choice of organization	based on: - traditional cultural identities - huge loyalty - delegated leadership - permanent structure	based on: - personal interest - weak ties - decentralized structure - loose networks
the choice of fields of action	based on: - traditional cultural identities - inclusion and exclusion	based on: - the perception of new biographical similarities - dialogue between local and global
the choice of activity	based on: - traditional cultural identities - the needs of the organization - idealism	based on: - the balance between personal preferences and needs of the organization - analysis of the costs and benefits - pragmatism
the length and intensity of the commitment	- long-term - regular / systematic - unconditional	- short-term (clearly defined at the time) - irregular - conditional
relationship with the beneficiary	one sided, altruistic, selfless	mutual / reciprocal

Source: Jeran, A., Basińska, A. (2014). *Nowy wolontariat w polu zróżnicowań – óposzukiwanie modelu. Kultura i Edukacja. 1, s.128.*

Such a model of volunteering shows that volunteering is beneficial not only for the beneficiary. It brings various benefits to the volunteer and the community itself. *One can see (...) the erosion of traditional activist vision of subjectivity and the corresponding forms of volunteering in benefit to activities and practices well illustrating postmodern "distribution of*

accents" in both the public discourse and perceptions about the social order" (Nowak, 2014:240).

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