

Volunteering as a Response to Society's Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Volunteering, with its potential for economic and social contribution, has gained the growing interest of decision makers. In parallel, the research community tried to build comprehensive theoretical frameworks in order to better understand volunteering as a phenomenon. Also, the importance of measuring the contribution of volunteering was recognized in order to create informed decision-making and to the preservation of volunteering as a complementary phenomenon to the welfare state. This paper is aimed to answer what are the key theoretical views on volunteering, what are the key challenges in the measuring of volunteering and how volunteering can be a response to challenges in society. By reviewing the relevant literature and presenting the case of volunteering infrastructure in the Republic of Croatia, recommendations for further development are given. Documents created at the European level are recognized as a mirror for decision-makers to check the state of their country and to take the further steps towards the development of volunteering. The contribution of volunteering as the response to the priorities of the countries of the Western Balkans, is highlighted as well.

KEYWORDS: volunteering, volunteering theories, volunteering measurement, social policy, social innovations, volunteering infrastructure

POVZETEK

Prostovoljstvo s svojim potencialom gospodarskega in družbenega prispevka pridobiva vedno večje zanimanje nosilcev odločanja. Vzporedno s tem je raziskovalna skupnost poskušala zgraditi bolj ali manj celovite teoretske okvire za boljše razumevanje prostovoljstva kot fenomena. Obenem je bil prepoznan pomen merjenja prispevka k prostovoljstvu za sprejemanje informiranih odločitev za najustreznejši razvoj prostovoljstva in ohranjanje prostovoljstva kot komplementarnega pojava socialni državi. Članek predstavlja bistvene teoretične poglede na prostovoljstvo, izzive v metodologiji raziskovanja prostovoljstva in kako je lahko prostovoljstvo odgovor na izzive v družbi. Na podlagi pregleda relevantne literature in prikazom primera infrastrukture prostovoljstva v Republiki Hrvaški so podana priporočila za nadaljnji razvoj ureditve. V tem kontekstu so nastali ključni dokumenti na evropski ravni, ki so lahko odločevalcem kot ogledalo za preverjanje stanja posamezne države in določanje nadaljnjih korakov delovanja v smeri razvoja prostovoljstva. Izpostavljen je prispevek prostovoljstva k ciljem trajnostnega razvoja in s tem k odzivu na prioritete držav Zahodnega Balkana.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: prostovoljstvo, teorije prostovoljstva, merjenje prostovoljstva, socialna politika, družbene inovacije, infrastruktura prostovoljstva

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INTRODUCTION

The terms that define volunteering and its manifestations may differ in different contexts, languages and cultures (UNV, 2021; GHK, 2010), but the values that initiate it are, in its core, common and universal: the desire to contribute to the common good with free will, in the spirit of solidarity and without expecting material compensation (GHK, 2010). Although the scientific community is still searching for a unique definition of volunteering (Skov Henriksen, et al., 2008; Hustinx, Cnaan, Handy, 2010), when talking about volunteering, exactly those three elements (giving, free will and intangible benefits) are continuously present, regardless of whether it is a theoretical, regulatory or operational definition. These features of volunteering, along with its widespread nature, placed volunteering as a phenomenon in the interest of the bearer and implementer of social policies.

It is recognized that volunteering is part of all communities and a significant social and economic contribution to all societies, exceeding the global workforce of many major industries. The data speak of a global amount of 15% or 862 million people as a monthly volunteer rate (proportion of people of working age who volunteer in a month). Globally, 6.5% of people are involved in formal volunteering and 14.3% in informal volunteering² (UNV, 2021). It is estimated that global involvement in volunteer activities exceeds the number of people employed in more than half of the 10 most populous countries. Analyses put the global volunteer workforce at the equivalent of 109 million full-time employees, a number that exceeds many of the world's major industries (Salamon, Wojciech Sokolowski, Haddock, 2018).

Ten years ago, the topic of the social and economic contribution of volunteer work became a central focus in documents at the European Union level (GHK, 2010), which is also evident through the call on governments to cooperate closely with volunteers in order to achieve the goals of sustainable development set in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe – P.A.V.E. (CEV, 2011) played a significant role in encouraging the affirmation and development of volunteering, which provided recommendations for more effective European policy frameworks for supporting and

2 Formal volunteering is done through organizations, associations or groups, typically by volunteers with a permanent and continuous commitment to the organization, who contribute their time on a regular basis. Informal volunteering occurs directly between individuals and communities without the mediation of an organization (UNV, 2021).

promoting volunteering.³ P.A.V.E. was focused on the quality of volunteering, volunteer management and volunteering infrastructure (CEV, 2021). Building on the strengths of P.A.V.E., the document 2030 Blueprint for European volunteering was created as an additional tool for all stakeholders who want to see the full potential of volunteering at the European level (CEV, 2021). The document is organized around the following topics: Independent and Inclusive Engagement; New Volunteers and Methods; Empowerment; Appreciation of Contributions, Resources and Coordination. Both documents detected areas of strength where it is advisable to further build volunteering and emphasize the importance of awareness that volunteering should not be used to solve European problems but should be valued as an expression of European values and an appropriate expression of solidarity among citizens. It was also recognized that the impact of volunteering depends on the context of the volunteering policy in which it takes place (CEV, 2021).

Although the historical and contextual background of volunteering varies between countries (GHK, 2010), in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, volunteering was put on hold after the Second World War until the 90s (Angermann, Sittermann, 2010; GHK, 2010) and after that period it was more often placed within the framework of the law, promoted through various policies, encouraged in its development, etc. Its actualization is related to responses to the challenges that arose during the transition to a post-industrial society (Babić, Baturina, 2016; Morel, Palier, Palme, 2012a) when volunteering was increasingly seen as a significant resource in addressing various social problems (Rochester, 2013).

The welfare states in the Western Balkans face multiple challenges that are to some extent specific to the region and that require consideration of strategic options for improving social protection and human resources. Most countries have a relatively low gross domestic product, an unfavorable demographic and social situation, and inadequate educational and health outcomes. Specific challenges include high emigration, long-term unemployment, widespread gray economy and European integration (Matković, 2019). COVID-19 pandemic has added to the challenges by affecting the already weak social protection

3 See also: Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Communication on EU Policies and Volunteering: Recognizing and Promoting Cross-border Voluntary Activities in the EU' COM(2011) 568 final. Official Journal [online] C 181, pp.150-153. Available at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:181:0150:0153:EN:PDF>> [Accessed 8 August 2022].

system. At the same time, COVID-19 pandemic pointed out the specific role of volunteering, which appeared somewhere as a parallel form of service provision and which was thus perceived as a positive development element (Matković, Stubbs, 2020).

For the countries of Western Balkans, significant developmental economic and social achievements have been observed in recent decades, but finding sources of productivity growth and drivers for structural transformation are recognized as urgent challenges. Investments in better education and competences, strengthening of social cohesion and a cleaner environment were singled out as priorities. Everything to make the country an attractive place to live, work and invest in. At the same time, the listed priorities have their own specific topics and areas of overlap that require synergistic action (OECD, 2022). Volunteering has a place in this synergy with its contribution to the individual level (volunteer and user of volunteering) and the community level (organizational level, local level, national level, international level).

The significance of the economic and social contribution of volunteering is an open research area that builds theoretical approaches to consider the phenomenon and search for a unique methodology that will enable the monitoring of the phenomenon and its comparison between countries. Following theoretical and methodological frameworks is important for understanding volunteering and its correct positioning in the implementation of policies as a response to challenges in society. In order to answer the questions of what are the key theoretical perspectives on volunteering, what are the key challenges in the methodology of researching the phenomenon, and how can volunteering be a response to challenges in society, by reviewing the relevant literature and presenting the case of volunteering infrastructure in the Republic of Croatia, recommendations for further policy development are given.

THEORIES BEHIND VOLUNTEERING

Comprehensive theoretical frameworks that cover volunteering are the focus of several authors, each covering certain features to a greater or lesser extent. The good thing is that the foundation on which research can be based is being more and more developed, which will be (and is) the basis for informed decision-making.

Rochester (2013), in order to overcome the segmentary part of certain paradigms of the phenomenon of volunteering, established a comprehensive approach to volunteering. In his three perspectives model (Figure 1), he distinguishes three paradigms of volunteering: 1) the non-profit paradigm, 2) the civil society paradigm, and 3) the serious leisure paradigm. In their overlapping areas of perspective, they provide four hybrid forms of volunteering.

Figure 1: Presentation of the three perspectives model



Source: Rochester, 2013, p.181.

The dominant paradigm is also the non-profit paradigm, which he states is the basic setting in analyses and discussions about volunteering in non-profit societies. Each of the paradigms is observed through key elements: motivation, area of activity, organizational context and the role of volunteers.

The dominant paradigm, according to the key element of motivation, assumes that the primary motivation of volunteers is based on altruism, essentially as a philanthropic act (giving time that can go hand in hand with giving money). In the area of activity, volunteering is widely seen in the field of social welfare and contributes to counseling, care and support for people in need. As part of the organizational context element, opportunities for volunteering are provided within a larger, formally structured organization with professional employees, which, in addition to humanitarian and voluntary sector organizations, also includes institutions such as hospitals, prisons and schools. Volunteers provide a significant additional resource in

the form of unpaid work and are treated as a human resource that needs formal management similar to that of employees. The volunteer role element presupposes that the volunteer's work is pre-defined by the volunteering organizer and volunteers are sought for a specific role or task that may involve varying degrees of formal selection, onboarding and training procedures.

In contrast to the dominant, non-profit paradigm, the paradigm of civil society (sometimes "horizontal volunteering") assumes that the motivation of volunteers is related to self-help and mutual help in associations or self-help groups. The primary area of activity is providing mutual support in self-help groups or campaigns for better service provision and is not only related to the area of social welfare. The roles of volunteers within this paradigm cannot be defined in advance, but develop over time. The serious leisure paradigm assumes that volunteer motivation is primarily intrinsic, related to enthusiasm for a specific involvement. The field of volunteering activities includes art, culture, sports and recreation in associations that can be within larger, more complex, organizations or in smaller volunteer groups in the community through different variations of roles with frequent opportunities to move from one role to another.

Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010), recognizing that despite multiple theoretical and conceptual models there was no emergence of an integrated theory of volunteering, offer a new conceptual framework of volunteering that takes complexity and contradictions in the object of research as a basic point. Their hybrid model is built on three identified layers of complexity. For each layer of complexity, they provide theoretical elements and key frameworks and approaches. Here we highlight layers of complexity and theoretical elements: 1) the problem of definition (theoretical element: what is the object of the study), 2) the problem of interdisciplinarity (theoretical element: why do we study) and 3) the problem of multidimensionality of theory (theoretical element: theory as explanation; theory as a narrative; theory as enlightenment).

Smith and Puyvelde (2016) provide a comprehensive overview of theories of volunteering (as well as associations with which volunteer work is primarily associated). Smith and Puyvelde (2016) distinguish between theories related to volunteering: a) those related to the nature of the entire non-profit sector, the so-called macro-theories, b)

those that are related to clarifying aspects of non-profit associations or that explain the loss of collectivity such as social movements or social conflicts, the so-called meso-theories and c) those that explain the membership and participation of individuals as volunteers, members, participants, activists or that generally explain pro-social behavior, so-called micro-theories.

As part of the macro theories of Smith and Puyvelde (2016), they single out theories that capture the nature, origin and structure of the non-profit sector (contract or market failure theory, the public goods or government failure theory, entrepreneurship theories, stakeholder theory, interdependence or voluntary failure theory, social origins theory, general theory of voluntary association prevalence), theories that affect the relationship of the non-profit sector with other sectors in society (theory of the relationship of the non-profit sector with other sectors in society), theories that affect the rates of incidence - prevalence - cessation of non-profit organizations (demand theory, supply theory, social structure theory) and theories involving rates of incidence - prevalence - exit of associations (theory of prevalence of associations).

The contract or market failure theory the public goods or government failure theory, the entrepreneurship theories and the stakeholder theory come from the economic approach and are theories of demand and supply developed to explain the existence of non-profit organizations. The interdependence or voluntary failure theory argues that the relationship between the nonprofit sector and government is not one of conflict or competition, but one of partnership. Given that volunteer activity can be limited, sporadic, disorganized and ineffective, in addition to market and state failure, there is also volunteer failure, which can result in ensuring a more stable flow of resources as a government intervention.

The social origins theory claims that variations in the size and composition of the non-profit sector depend on the type of non-profit regime of a particular country (liberal, social democratic, corporatist and statist). Each type reflects a particular constellation of social factors, policies and policy-making, leading to the development of a particular form of the non-profit sector. The general theory of voluntary association prevalence distinguishes three types of social factors influencing associations: factors of social origin, aspects of the basic social structure and factors of social mobilization.

As part of the theories of the relationship between the non-profit sector and other sectors in society, there is a view according to which the non-profit sector consists of two sub-sectors that make up the fourth and fifth sub-sectors in society, where both operate differently and their components usually have internally oriented goals. These are a) the sector where members benefit and which consists primarily of associations and b) the sector where non-members benefit and which consists of non-profit agencies.

Demand theories suggest the emergence of non-profit organizations in the economy to correct market and government failures. Supply-side theories argue that non-profit organizations are usually formed by entrepreneurs who want to gain control over the organization and maximize non-monetary income. Theories of social structure suggest that variation in the nonprofit sector can be explained by factors such as population size, employment structure, political culture, and social cohesion. Association prevalence theories isolate key factors influencing association prevalence.

Smith and Puyvelde (2016) observe meso-theories in relation to the clarification of aspects of non-profit associations or the loss of collectivity. Within them, they include those interpreted by all conventional associations (General Theory of Associations), associations with paid-staff (Management tensions, member influence and management power), deviant voluntary associations (Theories of social movement organizations and social movement theories, Smith's general theory of deviant associations) and informal collective conflicts and protests (Gurri's theory of why people rebel violently, Chenoweth's and Stephans' theory of nonviolent resistance).

Within the framework of micro-theories, Smith and Puyvelde (2016) distinguish between those that interpret membership, participation and volunteering in associations (Rocherster's three perspectives model, Smith's analytical types of volunteering) and those that interpret general human behavior and prosocial behavior (Lewin's theory, Exchange Theory, Model of political participation, S-Theory).

From the dominant paradigm identified by Rochester (2013), we can draw out the importance of formal management for nurturing volunteering resources within formally structured organizations that will offer volunteering opportunities. From the non-profit par-

adigm, we can draw out the importance of open space for volunteer initiatives that will arise in response to currently perceived needs. The free time paradigm, as well as the non-profit paradigm, can talk about the importance of an open space for an individual to make a change through their free action. Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010) return us to the basic elements of what and why we study while recognizing that every good theory is multidimensional. Of the macro, meso and micro theories listed and described by Smith and Puyvelde (2016), macro theories as those that capture the nature, origin and structure of the non-profit sector, come into the significant focus of this paper. They gain significant focus due to the opening of space for consideration of the relationship between volunteering and the state. In this segment, the claim that the relationship between the non-profit sector and the government is one form of the partnership, and the development of the non-profit sector is the result of demand and supply, stands out from the aforementioned theories. The very development of the non-profit sector (and all phenomena that are primarily connected to it, such as volunteering) is dependent on the current regime in a particular country. The remaining theories cited by Smith and Puyvelde (2016) also have their importance. In order to maintain a clearer focus, they are not further distinguished except for Rochester's model of three perspectives (Rochester, 2013) due to its pure emphasis on three perspectives and their overlapping areas, which can be a reminder of the importance of setting a political framework that will enable the coverage of all three.

METHODOLOGY IN THE BACKGROUND OF VOLUNTEERING

In order to adequately recognize the potential of partnership between volunteering and the government in responding to demand and needs, it is important to have specific data on volunteering. Along with the recognition of the important economic and social contribution of volunteering, the need for high-quality data and evidence that would support that contribution, also grew. Little is known about how many people volunteer, in what way and how their contribution can be maximized (UNV, 2021). The importance of creating a methodology that will enable greater comparability and unification of data is highlighted (CEV, 2021; UNV, 2021). For this purpose, at the international level few initiatives are launched. As an example we can point out a package of tools by Kuonqui (2020) based on the guidelines of United

Nations bodies, initiatives of national governments, civil society, the private sector and researches. The toolkit presents resources related to the identification of the prevalence, scope and trends of volunteering (who volunteers, when and how), intrinsic values of volunteering (what is the economic and social value of volunteering), instrumental values (what is the contribution to sustainable goals - 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda) and volunteer initiatives (what patterns and connections are present in the interventions and what is the effect of specific instruments). As tools for identifying the prevalence of volunteering, Kuonqui (2020) presents a labor force survey, a time use survey, a census and research on the type of volunteering activities. The intrinsic values of volunteering can be captured by organizational surveys, national and cross-national surveys and by collecting qualitative data in order to capture collective possibilities. Models of economic and social contribution are used to capture instrumental values. Initiatives in the evaluation of effectiveness are affected by quasi-experiments, case studies and mixed methods.

At the global level, the measurement of volunteering remains a challenge (UNV, 2021) with the recommendation of the United Nations Volunteers program (UNV program) to use newly developed tools by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the UNV (UNV, 2021). ILO (2021) in cooperation with the UNV program, following the aspiration to support countries that want to collect data on participation in volunteer activities, developed a question module that represents an adapted and upgraded earlier version of the labor force survey module, harmonized with the current international statistical standards. Such data collection is also seen as a possible contribution to the generation of valuable evidence used in economic and social policy making, especially if used in combination with other data.

The ILO (2021) singles out three basic indicators: 1) the number of volunteers, 2) the proportion of volunteers and 3) the number of volunteering hours. The main topics recommended by the ILO (2021) for data collection include:

- tasks performed to help or support others
- number of hours worked
- type of user of volunteer work
- the main reason for engaging in volunteer work
- organizers of volunteer work

- the main activity of the organization through which the volunteering took place (if relevant)
- support or encouragement provided to volunteers (if relevant).

The methodology proposed that the classification of tasks performed by a volunteer should be harmonized with the Standard Classification of Occupational Activities (ISCO-08), according to which every activity collected by the questionnaire would be coded, all in order to facilitate the subsequent calculation of the economic contribution of volunteer work (ILO, 2021).

It is important to keep in mind that research should not be limited to the economic value of volunteering, but should also cover the contribution to personal well-being, health, safety, social ties and civic engagement, and that the collected information should be used to change policies related to volunteering (CEV, 2021). Such comprehensiveness is in line with what Kuonqu i (2020) provides in the Measuring Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda toolkit.

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEER WORK IN SOCIAL POLICY

As a result of economic and social changes related to the transition to a post-industrial society, new social risks appeared in the second half of the last century (Babić, Baturina, 2016; Morel, Palier, Palme, 2012a; 2005; Ascoli, Ranci, 2002). New risks (increase in the share of women on the labor market, increase in single households and single-parent families, weakening of family ties, reduced fertility, increased life expectancy, increase in the share of the elderly population, migration, etc.) have put additional pressure on the structures of the European welfare state constructed for dealing with the needs generated in industrialism. The welfare state was challenged to reconcile three concurrent factors: growing demand, limited resources, and the limited capacity of governments to reconcile the previously two (Taylor-Goo-by, 2004; Ascoli, Ranci, 2002). In the search and consideration of stable solutions, concepts such as the welfare mix, volunteering, social investment and social innovation were actualized.

Through the welfare mix, all parts of the community have gained a more visible role, including the private sector, which is increasingly appearing as a service provider and users who participate in the service. There is a difference among researchers regarding the view of the

welfare mix as a novelty. Stewart (2019) states that the combination of involvement of the state, family, market and the voluntary sector in the provision of care has always existed, but that the role of an individual actor, the range of his involvement and the relationship between individual actors changed over time depending on the prevailing historical circumstances. On the other hand, the welfare mix is recognized as a new trend and concept that constitutes one of the frameworks of the modernization of the welfare state (Bežovan, Dimić Vugec, Radović, 2015; Bežovan, 2009).

As the main aspiration the welfare mix, set out how to combine and use all available potentials of different sectors in the community in the most efficient way in economic and social terms (Bežovan, 1998). The state is one of the equal stakeholders with a regulatory role, which is a shift from its earlier monopolistic position (Bežovan, 2009), recognizing other stakeholders as partners for cooperation in the preparation, decision-making and implementation of social programs (Bežovan, 2009; Bežovan, Dimić Vugec, Radović, 2015).

The concepts of social investment and social innovation were actualized as a response to the challenges of the welfare state in the 1990s (Morel, Palier, Palme, 2012a; EU, 2013a; Edwards-Schachter, Wallace, 2017). The approach of social investments focuses on human capital (Morel, Palier, Palme, 2012a; Morel, Palier, Palme, 2012b) recognizing the importance of preparing an individual to deal with risks and changes in the labor market, giving a double return: financial and social (Babić, Baturina, 2016). At the European level, social investment becomes an important tool for growth and cohesion (EU, 2013b). Social innovation as a concept has its origin much earlier than the 90s, in technological innovations (Edwards-Schachter, Wallace, 2017). Today we note that in the leading initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and the Innovation Union, social innovation is identified as a powerful tool for facing social challenges and as a response to insufficiently met social needs⁴.

Volunteering is traditionally primarily associated with civil society (volunteer, independent, informal, third sector), which is one of the

⁴ UREDBA (EU) br. 1296/2013 Europskog parlamenta i Vijeća od 11. prosinca 2013. o Programu Europske unije za zapošljavanje i socijalne inovacije. Official Journal [online] L 347, pp.238-252. Available at: < <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R1296&from=IT> > [Accessed 8 August 2022].

components of the welfare mix. It is increasingly recognized that the boundaries in the characteristics of a particular sector or organizations within it change and that the characteristics of one sector are present in another, which leads to the overcoming of the weakness of one sector, with the strength of another (Billis, 2016; Evers, 2008). Such is the situation with volunteering, which becomes a contribution and a partner in the regular provision of services, their innovative improvement and part of a thoughtful and wise social investment. Villadsen (2011) distinguishes voluntary organizations and states that for the last twenty years they have been placed in the center of the discussion on how to innovate social services and how to make them more sensitive. This potential is also transferred to other sectors, i.e. to organizations in other sectors that are not primarily voluntary, enabling them to raise the level of quality of service provision.

Discourses on the role of volunteering in the welfare state contain different thematic orientations, thus reflecting a different understanding of the volunteer sector: a) the struggle between volunteer organizations and market actors over public contracts for the provision of social services, b) new ways of involving volunteers and increasing volunteering inside and outside volunteer organizations (e.g. local communities and public institutions) while calling for democratic participation and the need to increase the legitimacy of the social model and c) the potential of the volunteer sector as an arena for innovation in creating new responses to social problems and in establishing a multi-sector platform for the participation and cooperation of actors from different sectors - voluntary, public, market (Essen, Frederiksen, Loga, 2019). Boje, Hermansen, Juul Møberg (2019) recognize that depending on the social model and the construction of the combined model of social policy, the connection between volunteering, paid work and informal assistance varies among European countries. For example, the Scandinavian countries, with the organized provision of services through the public sector and professional employees, had a request for volunteers, but due to economic limitations, the authors announce the possibility that an increasing part of care activities will be through volunteering and informal forms of care provision.

The need for further study of the phenomenon of volunteering in the provision of social services is recognized, in order to ensure that the role of the state, volunteers and organizations that organize volunteers remain complementary in the provision of services and with

the needs of users in focus. In this way, volunteering is retained as a complementary feature of the welfare state, and not exploited as its integral feature (Civico, Nagy, Adamson, 2013). This is also in line with the message of the document 2030 Blueprint for European volunteering, which wants to bring policy makers a vision that volunteers are not only a source of labor for essential and significant tasks in society, but play an important role in social cohesion, interpersonal relations, social transformation and pave the way for the transformation of European values into reality (CEV, 2021).

The latest report on the state of volunteering in the world (UNV, 2021) highlights that volunteering plays a central role in strengthening the relationship between people and the state: it promotes better governance, helps build an inclusive society and fosters stability. Global volunteering is a powerful driver for shaping and encouraging development. In dealing with society's challenges, all stakeholders and all sectors are important, with partnership gaining importance. The report identifies three models of the relationship between volunteers and the state, categorizing them according to the actors involved, the relationships between actors, and the extent to which they deal with voice and inclusion, innovation, and ownership: 1) the deliberative management model, 2) the service co-production model, and 3) the social innovation model. In the case of the deliberative management model, it is considered how different voices and aspirations are introduced into the decision-making processes at the state level. The co-production model considers the extent to which volunteers can shape public policies and programs, from their creation to the implementation and evaluation of services. The social innovation model considers how volunteers can be involved in the generation, implementation and dissemination of new ideas and practices aimed at solving current and emerging social challenges. We will stick to the model of social innovation and consider the roles of volunteers in the context of innovation in more detail.

VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

Existing research is not explicitly directed towards the role of volunteering and volunteers in the process of generating, implementing and spreading innovative activities (Wit, et al., 2017). In research focused on organizational factors that can contribute to and hinder the contribution of volunteers to social innovation, Wit, et al. (2017) through 26

interviews in 17 organizations of the third sector in eight European countries, detected that the contribution of volunteers to social innovations is strengthened by: a decentralized organizational structure, a systematic gradual increase of ideas, providing education and giving a sense of ownership in contrast to a reluctant attitude and a lack of resources that act limiting. They considered the role of volunteers in the context of the stages that every innovation goes through according to the more general formulation of the linear model⁵: generation, development, production and dissemination. Munro (2018), investigating the contribution of the volunteer sector to local innovations through the public sector, states that his findings confirm the findings of earlier research, for example, the importance of volunteer organizations is confirmed and that volunteer organizations can bring fresh thinking and experience to cooperation. Investigating the success of volunteer social innovation, Reznickova and Zepeda (2016) suggest that meeting the needs and intrinsic motivation of volunteers is related to the creation of self-propagating social innovation where volunteers create new ideas and successfully transfer skills to others. We can say that the role of volunteer work in the creation of new innovative ideas can be seen here.

As stated above, volunteer work in the context of social innovations appears as a generator of the process (phase) of social innovations, where volunteer work contributes to the generation of ideas, the development of ideas, the production of ideas and their dissemination. Another position that we can consider is the situation when volunteer work itself is a social innovation. As an example, we can take the voluntary work of socially excluded groups or groups at risk of social exclusion when it is applied as a way of influencing their greater involvement in the community (by building additional social ties), increased employment opportunities (by generating competencies that will contribute to greater competitiveness on the labor market). Here we distinguish volunteer work, which is the overall idea for solving a perceived problem, from volunteer work, which is a resource for the production of a specific idea, as would be the case with the aforementioned first position. Such a distinction resembles that described by O'Leary, et al. (2018) who, when focusing on the lack of research on social investment programs and the lack of research on the connection

5 The linear model is a basic model of technological innovation that includes basic research, applied research, development, production and dissemination. See: Godin, B., 2006. The Linear Model of Innovation: The Historical Construction of an Analytical Framework. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*. [e-journal] 31(6). pp.639-667. doi:10.1177/0162243906291865.

between social investment and social innovation, come to the conclusion that volunteer work is a significant feature among the twenty evaluated case studies that they include in their analysis, and that as a means by which the intervention “financed” and as a means (service model) through which social activation can be achieved. The authors cite examples of programs that could not function without volunteer work, e.g. connecting volunteer mentors with young unaccompanied migrants and examples where volunteer work is a mechanism for building human and social capital, e.g. beneficiaries support a service within the framework of social entrepreneurship through volunteer work, where such involvement helps them in employability and integration into the community. In O’Leary, et al. (2018) it cannot be read that they classify volunteer work as a social innovation. They classify the activation of vulnerable groups through training, volunteer work, employment and entrepreneurship as a social investment, observing within the phenomenon social innovation through a new form of social value and exchange.

Taken as a whole, volunteer work will contribute to social innovation in one of its phases or will be a social innovation itself. At the same time, if we want to fulfill the full potential of social innovation, i.e. volunteer work, it will be necessary to pay attention to the factors observed to be important for realizing their full potential, as is stated by the research findings of e.g. Wita, et al. (2017), Reznickove and Zepeda (2016), Studer and von Schnurbein (2012) and others. Through a systematic literature review, which included 386 publications relevant to the coordination of volunteers, Studer and von Schnurbein (2012) have singled out the key factors that reflect on volunteers: the practice and instruments of volunteer management, the organization’s attitudes towards volunteers and the values embedded in the organization are determined by social processes such as integration and production of meaning. The management of human potential and human resources (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1999) teaches us about the importance of external (economic system, institutional factors, labor market, social culture) and internal factors (management, size of the organization, type of activity, technological equipment) in achieving the maximum that will be kept as a reminder of the complexity of the phenomenon. Paying attention to organizational factors can be based on the efforts of Paton (according to Osborne, 1998), who, considering research in the field of organizational theory and volunteer organizations, emphasized the

difference between approaches from the direction of social welfare/care services and the direction of organizational theory and management, stressing that such a distinction could be a source strengths, and Osborne (1998) saw in this a rich potential for mutual stimulation of ideas and joint learning. This is just one of the theories that can be used to approach the segment of the emergence of volunteer work in the context of social innovations.

CROATIA'S EXPERIENCES IN VOLUNTEERING

When it comes to volunteering, Croatia has built a comprehensive volunteering infrastructure following events at the European level. Thanks to such an infrastructure, a stimulating political, social and economic environment for supporting, increasing and developing volunteerism was created. Ten years ago, the infrastructure of volunteering in Croatia included: a) Legislative framework, b) Government policy on volunteering, c) Organizers of volunteering activities: organizations and networks at the local, regional and national level d) Volunteer centers and the Croatian Volunteer Development Center, e) Opportunities for volunteering and mediation mechanisms between (potential) volunteers and volunteer positions, including online databases, f) Promotion and raising public awareness of the value of volunteering, g) Financial support to ensure the sustainability of volunteer programs and h) Research projects by the academic community and civil society organizations (Forčić, Ćulum, 2012). Such infrastructure is still current, with additional upgrades and strengthening over time. The upgrades also included responses to the challenges detected ten years ago: establishment of systematic research on volunteering and data collection, increase of cross-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders (especially corporations and universities), recognition of volunteering especially in the process of employment and education, adjustment of the system for measuring the economic value of volunteering and ensuring various an opportunity to finance volunteering⁶.

The basic legal framework for volunteering is the Law on Volunteering 2007. It was upgraded twice (in 2013 and 2021)⁷. Adoption of the Reg-

6 See also: Volunteering in Croatia – Fact Sheet. Available at: <<https://voluntaris.cat/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Volunteering-in-Croatia.pdf>> [Accessed 9 August 2022].

7 See: Law on Amendments to the Law on Volunteering 2013 (22). [online] Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_02_22_361.html [Accessed 8 August 2022].; Law on Amendments to the Law on Volunteering 2021 (84). [online] Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_07_84_1558.html [Accessed 8 August 2022].

ulation of the National Volunteer Award 2007 (upgraded in 2021)⁸, the Code of Ethics for volunteering 2008 and the Regulation on the content and form of the Report from Volunteer Organizers 2015 (upgraded twice – in 2018 and 2021)⁹ were followed after adoption of the Law on Volunteering 2007. The Law on Volunteering 2007 regulates the basic terms related to volunteering, the basic principles of volunteering, the conditions of volunteering, the rights and duties of volunteers and volunteer organizers, the conditions for concluding a contract on volunteering, the adoption of the Code of Ethics for volunteering, certificate of volunteering, national volunteer award and supervision of the implementation of the Law.

Croatia was able to monitor the reflection of basic public policies related to volunteering through the National strategy for the creating of enabling environment for the civil society development¹⁰ and through the National program for the volunteerism development¹¹. The new National strategy for the creating of enabling environment for the civil society development is still being drafted. The development of the National program for the volunteerism development began in 2011 and public consultations were held twice. It is noteworthy that the National Board of Volunteering Development acts as an advisory body of the Government of the Republic of Croatia with the aim of promoting and further developing volunteering¹².

The volunteer organizers (the organization who organizes volunteering), according to the Law on Volunteering 2007 and its amendments,

8 See: Regulation of the National Volunteer Award 2021 (109). [online] Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_10_109_1921.html [Accessed 8 August 2022].

9 See: Regulation on the content and form of the Report from Volunteer Organizers 2018 (9). [online] Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2018_01_9_220.html [Accessed 8 August 2022]; Regulation on the content and form of the Report from Volunteer Organizers 2021 (109). [online] Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_10_109_1920.html [Accessed 8 August 2022].

10 See also: VRH - Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2012. *Nacionalna strategija stvaranja poticajnog okruženja za razvoj civilnoga društva od 2012. do 2016. godine*. Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske.; Središnji državni ured za razvoj digitalnog društva, Ured za zakonodavstvo, 2022. *Nacionalna strategija stvaranja poticajnog okruženja za razvoj civilnoga društva od 2017. do 2021. godine - Nacrt*. Available at: <https://esavjetovanja.gov.hr/ECon/MainScreen?entityId=5697> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

11 See also: Središnji državni ured za razvoj digitalnog društva, Ured za zakonodavstvo, 2022. Nacrt prijedloga nacionalnog programa za razvoj volonterstva za razdoblje 2015. - 2018. sa nacrtom prijedloga operativnog plana provedbe nacionalnog programa za razvoj volonterstva za razdoblje 2015. - 2018. Available at: <https://esavjetovanja.gov.hr/ECon/MainScreen?entityId=1532> [Accessed 2 August 2022]; Središnji državni ured za razvoj digitalnog društva, Ured za zakonodavstvo, 2022. Nacrt prijedloga nacionalnog programa za razvoj volonterstva za razdoblje od 2020. do 2024. godine. Available at: <https://esavjetovanja.gov.hr/Econ/MainScreen?EntityId=14091> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

12 Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne politike, 2022. Nacionalni odbor za razvoj volonterstva. Available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/obitelj-i-socijalna-politika/socijalna-politika-11977/udruge-humanitarni-rad-i-volonterstvo-12006/volonterstvo-12023/nacionalni-odbor-za-razvoj-volonterstva-12027/12027> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

can be an association, foundation, institution and any other legal entity that it was not established with the aim of making a profit, i.e. that it is a non-profit legal entity. The volunteer organizers appoint a volunteer coordinator and draws up a volunteering program that determines the need to involve volunteers, the type of activities, i.e. services, the method and procedures of providing these services, and other elements important for the implementation of the volunteering program.

Regional and local volunteer centers in Croatia are connected in the Network of Volunteer Centers. The Network of Volunteer Centers (NVC) is one of the programs of the Croatian Volunteer Development Center (CVDC). The backbone of NVC's activities is communication with local and regional volunteer centers in order to increase the visibility and availability of information about the importance and value of volunteering in the national and international environment¹³. Volunteer centers are organizations or organizational units aimed at affirming the value and practice of volunteering (HCRV, n.d).

Possibilities for volunteering and mediation mechanisms between (potential) volunteers and volunteer positions are part of the activity of volunteer centers in addition to informational and promotional campaigns and conducting research in the field of volunteer work (HCRV, n.d.). Online databases of volunteering organizers, volunteers and volunteer positions that provide an accessible and fast way of connecting interested parties are also current as a mediation mechanism¹⁴. In the segment of promoting and raising public awareness of the value of volunteering, the national volunteering award, which is defined by the Regulation of the National Volunteer Award 2021, stands out. The national award for volunteering is the highest recognition that the Republic of Croatia awards annually for volunteering. In addition to the national award, awards are also given by volunteer centers in cooperation with local units¹⁵, universities¹⁶, etc. Research projects on the subject of volunteering are realized in cooperation with the academic community and civil society organizations¹⁷.

13 See also: Hrvatski centar za razvoj volonterstva, n.d. *Mreža volonterskih centara*. Available at: <<https://www.hcrv.hr/centri-heading/mapa>> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

14 See also: Volonteka. Available at: <<https://volonteka.vcz.hr/>> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

15 See also: *Volonterski oskar*. Available at: <https://www.oskar.vcz.hr/oskar/>. [Accessed 2 August 2022].

16 See also: Sveučilište u Rijeci, 2022. *Rektorove nagrade*. Available at: <<https://uniri.hr/studiranje/studenti/rektorove-nagrade/>> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

17 See also: DKolektiv, 2022. *Radius V*. Available at: <<https://www.dkolektiv.hr/public/hr/project/radius-v>> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

As a contribution to the recognition of volunteering, especially in the process of employment and education, in 2013 the Certificate on Competences gained through volunteering was created. The Certificate is a document confirming participation in volunteering, describing activities/tasks as well as what was learned and developed during volunteering. The Certificate uses the common European framework on key competences for lifelong learning, contributing to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning¹⁸.

Financial support, in order to ensure the sustainability of volunteer programs, is incorporated through public tenders for civil associations and public institutions, where an integral part of the tender documentation and information on the number of volunteers involved in the operation of the organization and/or program/project being applied for. Continuous (co)financing of volunteer centers in the territory of the Republic of Croatia, by the competent ministry¹⁹ for volunteering, has existed since 2008²⁰. Then the first partnership agreement was signed with four regional volunteer centers, which ensured systematic financial and partnership support for volunteer centers as the basic units of the infrastructure for the development of volunteering in Croatia (HMVC, n.d.).

The report on the services and activities performed, as an obligation of the organizer of volunteering, is a step in building a systematic research on volunteering and collecting data on volunteering. The report is submitted annually to the relevant ministry²¹ in accordance with the Law on Volunteering 2007 and its amendments and the Regulation on the content and form of the Report from Volunteer Organizers 2021. An increase in cross-sector cooperation among stakeholders is ensured through the Network for the development of corporate volunteering, established in 2017, which, among other things, aims to integrate corporate volunteering into as many business organizations

18 See also: Ministarstvo socijalne politike i mladih i Nacionalni odbor za razvoj volonterstva, 2013. *Kako do potvrde o kompetencijama stečenim kroz volontiranje. Vodič za organizatore volontiranja i volontere*. Zagreb: Ministarstvo socijalne politike i mladih i Nacionalni odbor za razvoj volonterstva. Available at: <<https://mrosp.gov.hr/>> [Accessed 2 August 2022].

19 The current name of the relevant ministry is the Ministry of Labor, Intergenerational Solidarity, Family and Social Policy. At the time of the first partnership agreement, the ministry was called the Ministry of Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity.

20 Ministarstvo rada, međugeneracijske solidarnosti, obitelji i socijalne politike, 2022. Volonterstvo. Available at: <https://mrosp.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/obitelj-i-socijalna-politika/socijalna-politika-11977/udruga-humanitarni-rad-i-volonterstvo-12006/volonterstvo-12023/12023> [Accessed 3 August 2022].

21 See also: Ministarstvo rada, mirovinskog sustava, obitelji i socijalne, 2022. *Aplikacija za izvješća organizatora volontiranja*. Available at: <<https://volonteri.mdomsp.hr/Admin/Login>> [Accessed 8 August 2022].

as possible in Croatia (Opačak Bebić, Prgić Znika, 2017). Two years later, the initiative of signing the Charter on employee volunteering by various organizations in the private and public sector was launched²².

The above information about the infrastructure of volunteering in the Republic of Croatia is only basic information. A more detailed insight goes beyond the scope of this work, but it certainly deserves special attention from the aspect of monitoring the development of volunteering in the Republic of Croatia, but also as a case study that can be an incentive for other countries in the region.

22 See also: *Povelja o volontiranju zaposlenika*. Available at: <<https://korporativnovolontiranje.vcz.hr/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Povelja%20o%20volontiranju%20zaposlenika.pdf>> [Accessed 8 August 2022].; VCZ – Volonterski centar Zagreb (n.d). *Povelja o volontiranju zaposlenika*. Available at: <<https://korporativnovolontiranje.vcz.hr/>> [Accessed 8 August 2022].

CONCLUSION

The general aspirations at the European level when it comes to volunteering are outlined in the document 2030 Blueprint for European volunteering (CEV, 2021) and its predecessor: Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe – P.A.V.E. (CEV, 2011). Both documents, providing rich guidelines for policy makers, can be a mirror for checking the state of a particular country and determining further action steps towards enabling the development of the full potential of volunteering. The 2030 Blueprint for European volunteering (CEV, 2021) recognizes the existence of different cultural and legal contexts for volunteering and emphasizes as the main message for policy makers that volunteering also has an important role in social cohesion, interpersonal relations, social transformation and the revival of European values. P.A.V.E. (CEV, 2011) with its focus on the quality of volunteering, volunteer management and volunteering infrastructure, has been a reference point for the development of volunteering in many countries, and still contains that potential.

The current report on the state of volunteering in the world (UNV, 2021) also highlights key recommendations for policy makers to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Highlights include: removing obstacles faced by marginalized groups when volunteering; increasing partnership through volunteering; recognition of expertise, knowledge and experience of volunteers; promoting social innovations; recognition of informal volunteering and its contribution; and investing in measuring volunteering.

Volunteering and the values that drive it are deeply woven into communities at the European level (and beyond). These values, such as solidarity and democracy, deserve special attention and a suitable context for development that will be made possible through adequate policies. Without looking at where we are and where we want to go, it is difficult to expect a forward movement in this development. Therefore, the priority task of national governments is to check how far they have allowed volunteering to grow and what they must and should do to enable its further development. The guidelines of the previously mentioned documents and examples of individual countries can be an additional incentive in this regard.

Although it is seen as a significant response to challenges in society

such as the demand for social services, the significant response(s) of volunteering is in building trust in the community, developing and transforming the community and acting in solidarity. To preserve this perspective of volunteering, the economic and social contribution of volunteering should be viewed in parallel. Observing volunteering as an innovative response to problems (when volunteering is innovation and when volunteering is a generator of innovations, a resource for their implementation and their spreader), should also follow both contributions: economic and social.

The key segment here is the cooperation and partnership between different stakeholders and sectors in solving challenges in society as a wise path to success, especially if the characteristics of individual stakeholders are respected through an open participatory dialogue. Only with such a dialogue, the characteristics of individual stakeholders and sectors can be united as a strength and driving resource. Such a dialogue is thus a guardian of significant values (volunteering and others). In this dialogue, the research community has a big task, relying on existing theories and building new ones, to give a strong basis to decision makers in the process of creating policies for the development of volunteering.

In dealing with multiple challenges, like other countries globally, the countries of the Western Balkans, can rely on volunteering as a resource. Priorities recognized for the countries of the Western Balkans (OECD, 2022): investing in better education and competences, strengthening social cohesion and a cleaner environment seem to call for the resource of volunteering. All three priorities are nurtured through volunteering if it is correctly recognized, set and encouraged through national policies, which is also recognized through the contribution of volunteering to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Every society and every community has its own challenges. Some are common and some are specific. Volunteering, on the other hand, is always the same: giving, free will and intangible benefits that generate multiple changes. The extent to which volunteering will be an answer to society's challenges (national, regional, global) depends on how much policy will recognize its importance, recognize its roots and potential among its residents, and build stimulating frameworks for its noble growth.

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