

## Information about volunteering in Italy

The term 'volunteerism' in Italy refers to all types of activities, whether formal or informal, full-time or part-time, at home or abroad. It is undertaken of a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and is without concern for financial gain. It benefits the individual volunteer, communities and society as a whole. It is also a vehicle for individuals and associations to address human, social or environmental needs and concerns. Formal voluntary activities add value, but do not replace professional, paid employees.

The last survey of volunteers was carried out in 2010<sup>8</sup> by the FEO-FIVOL (Rome Foundation – Third sector) and examined 12,686 voluntary organisations<sup>9</sup>. It estimated that there were approximately **1.125 million volunteers donating their time to voluntary organisations for solidarity purposes**. This represents 2.2% of the adult population<sup>10</sup>. Voluntary organisations in Italy (Organizzazioni di Volontariato – OdV) are defined on the basis of the Framework law 266/91 on volunteering. It lists six criteria which define a voluntary organisation (VO) and when the Regional Voluntary Register.

### Volunteering Service Centres

These centres aim at supporting and qualify voluntary activities. To this end, they deliver their services to voluntary organisations, both registered and not registered, in regional registries.

Volunteering in Italy, in particular in relation to young people, is particularly viewed as a **civic education experience**. In the past decade two factors have contributed to volunteering gaining this role: on the one hand, civic education in schools has been slowly taken out of the education curriculum and now represents only a few hours over a limited number of academic years; on the other hand, the national military service has been abolished. Young people today are therefore less aware of the importance of solidarity and the consequences of their own actions on their communities and direct environment. Thus, volunteering has become an opportunity to sensitise young people to become responsible citizens and respond to the needs not only of more vulnerable citizens, but also of their communities as a whole.

## EU POLICIES AND VOLUNTEERING

Within national literature there is no information on the impact of EU policies on volunteering in Italy. Nonetheless, during case study interviews, stakeholders appeared mostly aware of awareness raising actions taken by the EU in the fields of volunteering (such as the European Year of Volunteering) and youth (European Youth Week). In fact, since the EYV will take place in the same year of the publication of the Triennial Report on Volunteering in Italy, a small number of working groups will be discussing the event and the issues at stake.

In relation to particular pieces of legislations such as the 'Service Directive', stakeholders did not seem to be particularly aware of any impacts this may have had on the voluntary sector in Italy. The issue of SSGI does not appear to be widely debated in Italy. Few organisations are aware of the European legislation on the topic and those who are believe that the legislation in its current form does not contribute to bringing clarity to the concept. During the seminar on 'commissioning from the third sector in the EU', Italy's representative

noted that when applying European legislation, local authorities apply a principle of 'anticipatory obedience': where there are uncertainties regarding the applicability and application of EU-directives or regulations, public authorities apply the procurement rules everywhere and in every circumstance regardless of whether it is really needed and/or appropriate. This is essentially a consequence of the fear by local authorities that if they use existing social clauses and unsuccessful bidders complain about the process, they might be subjected to infringement procedures<sup>51</sup>.