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# Review of Volunteering in Lithuania

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## 1. Background and aims of the survey

1.1 This Report was commissioned by *The Tiltas Trust* (TTT)<sup>1</sup>, the charitable arm of the *British-Lithuanian Society*, and the *British Embassy* in Lithuania. It seeks to:

- analyse the present state of volunteering in Lithuania;
- to explore the main problems facing volunteer organizations;
- to discover whether there are any obstacles to expanding volunteering activity; and
- to set out possible ways in which they might be solved – see paragraph 1.4 below.

1.2 The report was written by Asta Medisauškaitė,<sup>2</sup> and is based on a questionnaire survey of voluntary organizations conducted in November - December of 2011 by the author, interviews with members of voluntary organizations and those working for public bodies, the findings of other research and an analysis of written material.

1.3 The report covers four aspects.

- Initially, the historic and economic context in Lithuania that is relevant to the present volunteering situation is outlined.
- Next, the special characteristics of voluntary organizations, the legal framework within which volunteering takes place and the relationship between voluntary organizations and the Lithuanian Government are described.
- Then the prospects for voluntary organizations expanding their activities are discussed: through strengthening voluntary organizations; through improving their financial situation, including promoting links between business and voluntary organizations; through creating a positive attitude by the community towards volunteering; and through involving the Lithuanian Government in the development of volunteering.
- There is then a look at the benefit of volunteering to the person involved in volunteering.

1.4 Finally, there are plans to make some recommendations for increasing the speed and quality of the growth of volunteering in Lithuania, possibly using expertise from the UK and elsewhere. However, *The Tiltas Trust* (TTT) feels that it cannot commission expert organisations in the UK to offer ideas until it is sure that the picture of volunteering in Lithuania presented in this Report is comprehensive and accurately reflects the situation in Lithuania. TTT will, therefore, make this Report available in English and Lithuanian on its web-site, inviting comments and amendments before making recommendations.

1.5 The analysis conducted by the author, given the size and diverse nature of volunteering, is limited in scope. It is, nevertheless, considered that the information submitted reflects the general tendencies in relation to volunteering in Lithuania.

1.6 Readers can get an idea of the scope of volunteering in the UK by reading a booklet published in Lithuanian by *The British Embassy* and *The Tiltas Trust* entitled *Savanorystė: Anglijos patirtis*. The Text can be seen at: <http://lt.thetiltatrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/savanoryste-brosiura.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> The Tiltas Trust – charity registered in England and Wales (Reg. No.118912), founded in 2007 as the charitable arm of the British – Lithuanian Society, seeking to promote the exchange of knowledge, experience and information between the UK and Lithuania. More information: <http://thetiltatrust.org/>

<sup>2</sup> a volunteer in the palliative care organization *Vita Digna*

## 2. Volunteering in Lithuania: the historical and economic background

2.1 Volunteering in Lithuania does not have particularly deep traditions formed over many years. The concept of volunteering as an activity is only just beginning to be established in Lithuanian society. The historic and economic situation in Lithuania plays an important role in explaining this.

2.2 Voluntary organizations in Lithuania began to be set up in the 18th century. They were charitable associations, with the aim of preventing poverty and begging. The volunteers in such associations took care of the poor, propagated religious ideas, and encouraged love of the country.

2.3 In 1919 doctors founded the *Lithuanian Red Cross*, which provided aid to the war-torn country. Currently the *Lithuanian Red Cross* is one of the largest organizations in Lithuania with 1248 volunteers<sup>3</sup>.

2.4 In the interwar years (1918-1939), social care institutions were established thanks to private and state initiatives. During this period voluntary organizations expanded significantly and acquired more powers. However, after the loss of independence (1940), the Soviet Union started to restrict volunteer initiatives. "Volunteering" activities became obligatory for all citizens, with obligatory accountability. Compulsory "voluntary" activity contradicted the volunteering idea itself and ruined the foundations of genuine voluntary activity. The strict control of people's lives in the Soviet Union had a great impact on voluntary initiatives. This increased people's lack of trust in each other, especially of strangers. Suspicion and doubts about people's sincerity have survived to this day: according to information from research carried out in 2005, only 17% of Lithuanians consider people to be sincere, trustworthy and benevolent.<sup>4</sup>

2.5 An understanding of the nature of volunteering activities has also been distorted due to a comparison with volunteering to serve in the Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Forces (NDVF)<sup>5</sup>, [set up in 1918]. Those serving in those Forces were called "volunteer soldiers". This comparison is made more frequently by older people.

2.6 The current economic situation within the country also has a big effect on how voluntary activity is understood and on ability to take part in voluntary activity. The unstable economic situation means that people must put in many hours of hard work to satisfy their own basic needs. People therefore do not have enough spare time or energy for unpaid work. According to data from research carried out in 2008, 41% of people indicated the shortage of time as the main reason for not volunteering<sup>6</sup>.

2.7 The economic situation in the country and the influence of the former Soviet Union could be the reasons why it is mostly young people (aged 15-19)<sup>7</sup> who take part in volunteering. A more favourable attitude towards volunteering by young people is due to their not having lived through a period of oppression. Financial support from a young person's family enables the young person to devote time to unpaid work.

<sup>33</sup> See: <http://www.redcross.lt/>;

<sup>4</sup> E. Butkuvienė (2005). *The involvement in voluntary activities: situation and perspectives in Lithuania after 1990*;

<sup>5</sup> TNS Gallup research (2008). *Volunteering in Lithuania : a study of the regulation and openness to the idea of volunteering of population in Lithuania*. See: [http://www.nisc.lt/lt/files/main/Savanoryste\\_TNS.pdf](http://www.nisc.lt/lt/files/main/Savanoryste_TNS.pdf);

<sup>6</sup> TNS Gallup research (2008). *Volunteering in Lithuania, 2008*.

See: [http://www.teo.lt/gallery/Dokumentai/Naujienu%20paveikslai/2009/Kas\\_kaip\\_kur.pdf](http://www.teo.lt/gallery/Dokumentai/Naujienu%20paveikslai/2009/Kas_kaip_kur.pdf);

<sup>7</sup> TNS Gallup research (2008). *Volunteering in Lithuania, 2008*.

See: [http://www.teo.lt/gallery/Dokumentai/Naujienu%20paveikslai/2009/Kas\\_kaip\\_kur.pdf](http://www.teo.lt/gallery/Dokumentai/Naujienu%20paveikslai/2009/Kas_kaip_kur.pdf);

2.8 However, although historical experience and the economic situation for volunteering in Lithuania have not created a particularly friendly environment, one can nevertheless notice an increasing number of Lithuanians being interested in and getting involved in volunteering activities. According to data collected in 2011, 34% of the population stated that they had participated or were currently participating in volunteering activities<sup>8</sup>.

### 3. Survey of volunteering activities

3.1 There is no regularly updated, high quality data in Lithuania on voluntary activity. According to data from the NGOs Information and Assistance Centre, there were about 20,000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country in 2009<sup>9</sup>, though it is not clear how many of them were active. According to research data from *Factus dominus* research in 2011, the contribution of volunteer activity to the national economy in Lithuania constitutes 1.5% of gross domestic product (GDP)<sup>10</sup>, though current data here does not exist.

### 4. Description of voluntary organizations<sup>11</sup>

4.1 Volunteering activities are most developed in the largest cities of Lithuania (Vilnius and Kaunas). There is not much information about volunteering in small towns, and opportunities to get involved are minimal. Most of the organizations involved in volunteering are in the social work and health care sectors. Other sectors include education, environmental protection, sport and culture.

4.2 Voluntary organizations differ significantly from each other by the number of volunteers (they have from 3 to 700). Organizations with more than 100 volunteers are active in more than one town (e.g., the Order of Malta has 700 volunteers, with branches in 24 Lithuanian towns). Those active in just one locality have an average of 18 active volunteers. The view of most organizations (around 55%), is that this number is insufficient.

4.2 As regards the social background of volunteers, one notices that students and school pupils are the most active in volunteering. The lowest participation rate is amongst old age pensioners and the unemployed. The results of a TNS Gallup survey in 2008 revealed that people aged 60-74 are least likely to engage in the voluntary work because of: lack of time (21%), do not feel than they can be helpful (24%), or health problems (36%).<sup>12</sup>

4.3 The time devoted to volunteering ranges from 1 to 30 hours per week. (Longer periods apply in particular situations, e.g. implementation of a project). The average time devoted to volunteering is 2-4 hours per week.

4.4 Voluntary organizations tend to maintain links with organizations working in the same area: they attend each other's events, work on joint projects, organize joint events, etc.

4.5 The proportion of organizations that co-operate by sharing information and experience is less than a half.

<sup>8</sup> Vilmorus research (2011). *Attitudes to voluntary activity*.

See: [http://ec.europa.eu/lietuva/abc\\_of\\_the\\_eu/duk/savanoryste/savanorystes\\_tyrimas\\_lt.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/lietuva/abc_of_the_eu/duk/savanoryste/savanorystes_tyrimas_lt.htm);

<sup>9</sup> NIPC (2009). *Nacionalinės nevyriausybių organizacijų tarybos sukūrimo studija*;

<sup>10</sup> „Factus dominus“ research presentation on NGO sector in NGO Affairs Coordination Committee's expanded meeting (26 January 2012);

<sup>11</sup> The chapter uses information obtained from the questionnaire on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>12</sup> See: [http://www.nisc.lt/lt/files/main/Savanoryste\\_TNS.pdf](http://www.nisc.lt/lt/files/main/Savanoryste_TNS.pdf)

## 5. Voluntary Work and the Law

5.1 One of the most important factors encouraging the development of volunteering is the creation of an appropriate legal framework that provides security to both to the volunteer and to the voluntary organization that accepts him/her.

5.2 *Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT)* is the biggest non-governmental youth organization in Lithuania, integrating 64 national and regional unions of youth organizations and representing interests of youth and forming youth policy. As stated by *LiJOT*, legislation should be extended by definition and submission of:<sup>13</sup>

- An example of a standard volunteering agreement;
- Examples and regulation of volunteers registration journal and other documents formalizing voluntary work;
- Rules on the reimbursement of expenses related to volunteering;
- Issues related to legal separation of volunteers and staff members of organization;
- Recognition of volunteering labour at school as socially beneficial;
- Recognition of voluntary activities (as informal nurturing) in labour market.

5.3 In 2006 the Regulations governing volunteer activity ceased to have effect following the adoption by the Seimas (the Lithuanian Parliament) of the Law amending the Labour Code. From then until 22 June 2011, when the Law on Volunteering was adopted, volunteering activities in Lithuania had no legal status. The new law defines the basic principles of voluntary work and the special characteristics for the organization such work, the rights and duties of a volunteer and of the person organising the volunteering, and provisions for volunteers' insurance and reimbursement of expenses.

5.4 Volunteering activities are not regulated in great detail in order not to restrict them within narrow confines. It is reasonable to infer that because of this, a large proportion of voluntary organizations (47%)<sup>14</sup> are not familiar with the Law. The organizations stress that there is insufficient public discussion about the Law that has been adopted, its significance, and the practical application of individual clauses.

5.5 There is no single view in Lithuania as to what constitutes volunteering. Due to this, inconsistent research findings are obtained in relation to volunteering. For example, according to *Eurobarometras* of May 2011, 20% of the Lithuanian population took part in casual/non-regular volunteering, while 4% were involved in regular volunteering<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand research by the Social Information Centre in 2010 showed that 61% of respondents were involved in long-term and short-term volunteering activities<sup>16</sup>. Accordingly one of the aims of the Law on Volunteering was to assist in forming a common understanding of what volunteering activity is.

5.6 The Law on Volunteering defines voluntary work as: *socially useful activities carried out by a volunteer free of charge, under the conditions and procedures agreed between the volunteer and volunteering organizer*. This definition is rather abstract and the opinion of those working in the *Common Affairs Division* of the *Ministry of Social Security and Work (MSSW)*, whose initiative led to the drafting of the Law on Volunteering, is that the definition should be made more precise.

<sup>13</sup> Based on data of the questionnaire on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>14</sup> Based on data from the questionnaire survey on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>15</sup> The Seimas conference „*Encouragement of volunteering and assistance to voluntary organizations*“ (30 November 2011);

<sup>16</sup> See: <http://www.sic.lt/index.php/lt/nv/pranesimai/savanoryste-lietuvoje>;

5.7 The concept of voluntary organization is not widely used in Lithuania. The volunteering organizer is generally identified with non-government, community or not-for-profit organizations. The Law provides that the following may be organizers of voluntary work: charity and assistance funds; budgetary institutions; associations; public establishments; religious communities, associations and religious centres; branches and representative offices of international public organizations; embassies; political parties; trade unions; other legal persons whose activities are governed by specific laws that are non-profit seeking and where any surplus obtained cannot be distributed amongst the participants.

5.8 Requirements for volunteering: volunteers should be over 14 years of age, citizens of the Republic of Lithuania and foreigners legally residing on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania. Persons who are under 16 years of age require the written consent of a parent or guardian. No qualification requirements are imposed on volunteers, except where special qualifications are required by law or the volunteering organizer imposes them.

5.9 Agreement in relation to voluntary activity: A voluntary activity organizer is required to draft a written agreement in relation to the voluntary activity, if:

- 5.9.1 voluntary work will be pursued 5 or more days in a row;
- 5.9.2 voluntary work will be pursued for more than 30 days;
- 5.9.3 volunteering-related expenses are subject to reimbursement; or
- 5.9.4 this is requested by either party.

A representative of *A.C.Patria*, which deals with volunteers and organizations that accept volunteers, emphasizes the significance of the volunteering agreement<sup>17</sup>. She states that an agreement in relation to voluntary activity is not just a formality, but also a volunteer's introduction to voluntary work: it encourages discussion about how voluntary work should be organised, about the rights and duties of both parties, a volunteer's expectations, and creates a connection between a volunteer and the organisation.

5.10 Recognition of volunteering activity: In order to encourage volunteering, the Law provides that, taking into consideration the aims and nature of the volunteering activity, it may be recognized as practical work and/or learning experience, or credited as social work under a programme of general education.

## 6. Training of volunteers<sup>18</sup>

6.1 There is no overall system in Lithuania for training of volunteers. Preparation of volunteers depends on the particular organisation involved.

6.2 The majority (~65%) of voluntary organizations provide training themselves.

6.2 Such training is most frequently carried out by organizations providing aid to vulnerable groups within society (e.g. people who are seriously ill). These organizations provide future volunteers with the knowledge and skills that would ensure a successful outcome to their voluntary work.

6.3 General skills (such as communication skills, time management, and team-work skills) are mostly taught in those areas of volunteering where specific knowledge is not essential. A small

<sup>17</sup> Based on an interview conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>18</sup> This section is based on data from the questionnaire survey on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

number (~15%) of organizations training volunteers devote some time to discuss the significance and meaning of volunteering.

6.6 Volunteer training is mostly conducted by more experienced or former members of voluntary organizations (~65%; managers, members, coordinators, alumni). It is only very rarely conducted by hired lecturers.

6.7 Where training take place depends on the resources available to the organisation: about third of training takes place in the organisation's own premises; otherwise it takes place in premises that are hired, in public institutions, outdoors etc.

6.8 Over a half of organizations measure the effectiveness of the training provided by: using questionnaires, having discussions, and observing whether or not there has been a change in behaviour.

6.9 Regional and national umbrella organizations such as the *Kaunas Association of Youth Organizations "The Round Table"* (KJOSAS) which brings together youth organizations active in Kaunas and *The Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations* (LiJOT) organise training for their own members that is either free or for which only a minimal payment is required. Sometimes (depending on the project) members of other organisations are invited. The subjects covered by training are very varied. They are often related to the management of the organization), and range from the development of communication skills to strategic planning, creation of the organisation's public profile, etc.

6.10 Larger organizations and/or those that have been established for some time have well-developed training plans: training takes place both at the beginning and during the course of the volunteering and volunteers are sent to training courses arranged at other organizations.

6.11 Some youth organizations consider that a sufficient amount of training takes place for volunteers (and even, in some cases, too much). The training of volunteers is often mentioned as a problem area by smaller, recently established voluntary organizations or organizations where the volunteers are older persons.

6.12 The period of time devoted to training volunteers is very varied. Examples of the different periods of time for training for prospective volunteers are as follows:

- *Youth line* – is a service for emotional aid by phone or internet, which is carried out by volunteer counsellors. The prospective volunteer attends courses of 5-6 months duration (about 80 hours) consisting of both theoretical and practical exercises and practice. Volunteers are taught work ethics and psychological counselling skills and practice, using another volunteer.
- *The Blessed J. Matulaitis Family Support Centre* provides social and psychological aid for families and for individuals within a family who are experiencing difficulties. The duration of training for a prospective volunteer is 4-5 sessions. Volunteers attending summer camps are provided with 2-3 day training.

## 7. The relationship between voluntary organizations and the Lithuanian Government

7.1 Voluntary organizations (mostly those having an umbrella structure) cooperate with state institutions by participating in various committees and work groups (e.g. *Save the Children* participates in a working party of the Lithuanian Seimas to improve legislation on the protection of children and in the Interdepartmental Committee on child welfare). According to

the 2009 NISC research data, there are around ten councils, committees and work groups with representatives from NGOs working in ministries (Finance, Education and Science, Culture and other ministries, bodies set up by them and departments within them).<sup>19</sup>

7.2 In 2010 *The Commission for Coordination of NGO Matters*, a government institution, started its work.<sup>20</sup> The aim of the Commission is to put forward suggestions to the Government of Lithuania on cooperation between state and local authority institutions and agencies and NGOs, giving effect to a policy of NGO expansion. The Commission has 20 members: a representative of the Lithuanian Local Government Association, nine representatives of state institutions and ten NGO representatives. The members are confirmed by the Ministry of Social Security and Work every 2 years. Meetings of the Commission are convened at least every 2 months. *The Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations* (LiJOT) representative who takes part in the work of the Commission states that during the meetings a great deal of attention is paid to consideration of drafts of proposed legislation and putting forward of suggestions. It is also hoped that in the future the Commission will work in a more active manner and over a wider range<sup>21</sup>.

7.3 The strengthening of youth volunteering is one of the strategic goals of the *Department of Youth Affairs* at the *Ministry of Social Security and Work* and of the *Youth International Cooperation Agency*. The *Youth Affairs Council* also is administrated by the *Department of Youth Affairs*; its main objective is to examine the most important policy issues relating to young people and to put forward suggestions to the *Department of Youth Affairs* on the most effective way of implementing policy relating to the needs of young people and youth organizations. Whereas the main aim of *Agency of International Youth Co-operation* is to ensure the development of international youth cooperation and successful participation of Lithuanian youth in European Union programmes for young people.

7.4 The *Community Affairs Division* at the *Ministry of Social Security and Work* is responsible for developing the expansion of policy in relation to communities and NGOs and organising its implementation. In 2011 its priority areas were: the encouragement of older people to take part in volunteering and the expansion of voluntary activities amongst young persons. In the same year training courses were organised in 12 regions for volunteering organizers by *A.C.Patria*, which had won a Ministry competition. In addition two pieces of research were completed:

- An analysis of the situation of NGOs;
- Research on the social work of community organizations.

7.5 As 2011 had been announced as the *European Year of Voluntary Activities*, the Government of Lithuania devoted more attention than usual to volunteering. *The Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations* regarded such increased attention as being more one-off than systematic: EU financing assigned to popularising volunteering was used up, but no national programmes making use of the financing were developed.

7.6 Most (75%) of voluntary organizations are of the view that the Government does not pay sufficient attention to volunteering and does not appreciate and properly evaluate the benefits obtained from it. They think that public servants should give greater support to the idea of volunteering, speak more about it in public, cooperate with voluntary organizations and foster social cohesion, and show a good example, starting with themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> NISC (2009). *Study on the establishment of the National Council of non-governmental organizations*;

<sup>20</sup> Decision of the Government of Lithuania (2010) *In relation to the setting up of the Commission for the Coordination of Non-governmental matters and confirmation of its rules*;

<sup>21</sup> Based on data of the questionnaire on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

## 8. Problem areas for volunteering in Lithuania

8.1 Research conducted by *Vilmorus* in 2011 on the attitudes of Lithuania's inhabitants found that the most significant factors impeding the development of volunteering are:

- An absence of a tradition of volunteering (51%)
- a lack of information about volunteering (42%) and
- A negative attitude to unpaid activity in schools (38%)<sup>22</sup>.

8.2 Little research has been done to find out the views and opinions of volunteer organisers.

8.3 Completed questionnaires and interviews carried out by the author in 2011 point to five main problem areas for voluntary organizations (listed in order of priority) :

8.3.1 Issues related to the management of volunteers:

- One the most frequently mentioned problems is the lack of volunteers' motivation, its maintenance, and frequent change of volunteers;
- Problems related to a proper introduction of a volunteer to activity (e.g. a difference in expectations of the organization and the volunteer);
- Lack of skills in planning and coordinating voluntary activities;
- Problems related to setting out the boundaries of a volunteer's responsibilities and keeping within them;
- A lack of skills needed to create an environment based on trust in an organization;

8.3.2 Society's attitude towards volunteering:

- An inappropriate understanding of volunteering or too narrow a conception of it e.g. volunteering is identified with public spiritedness or charitable donations; it is imagined that the time commitment to volunteering is the same as that for an ordinary job;
- The benefit from voluntary activities is insufficiently valued or understood;
- A suspicious attitude towards unpaid activities;
- A refusal to accept voluntary activity as a form of work experience.

8.3.3 Financing:

- Lack of knowledge about budget planning and finance management.
- A shortage of funds;
- The absence of stable funding;
- Lack of skills to search effectively for donors;
- Insufficient information about the possible sources of financial support.

8.3.4 Cooperation between volunteering organizers:

- Insufficient cooperation at the national level;
- Competition between organizations (e.g., arising because financial support from the same donor is sought).

8.3.5 The attitude of government representatives and the legal framework (more widely discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.4):

- The benefit of voluntary activities is insufficiently valued or understood by government representatives;
- Inadequate assistance by the government to the voluntary sector;
- The legal framework within which voluntary activities take place requires improvement.

8.4 It is important to stress that problems can differ depending on the voluntary sector, time dedicated to volunteering (long/short term) or activities in which volunteer is engaged. For instance, knowledge on budget planning and finance management is significant for the manager

<sup>22</sup> Vilmorus research (2011). *Attitudes to voluntary activities*.

See:[http://ec.europa.eu/lietuva/abc\\_of\\_the\\_eu/duk/savanoryste/savanorystes\\_tyrimas\\_lt.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/lietuva/abc_of_the_eu/duk/savanoryste/savanorystes_tyrimas_lt.htm);

of an organization; sponsor searching is not an issue for all organizations and not all volunteers do this work.

## 9. The development of volunteering in Lithuania and improvement of standards

9.1 Volunteering can be developed and strengthened in Lithuania (taking account of the problems mentioned in section 8 above) using these four basic approaches:

- the strengthening of voluntary organizations;
- by helping the formation of a positive attitude towards volunteering in society;
- by improving the financial situation and drawing the business sector into voluntary activities; and
- By the Government supporting the development of voluntary activities.

9.2 Information regarding the existing situation and the actions made in these 4 activity fields, as well as the opinions and proposals of voluntary organizations, is presented below.

## 10. Improving standards of volunteering organizers

10.1 Competencies in the area of voluntary activities: One of the major problems voluntary organizations face is a lack of systematic work with volunteers. A person wishing to become a volunteer must be properly accepted, prepared and mentored both at the beginning and throughout the time he or she is a volunteer. However, not all organizations have a person who is responsible for the coordination of volunteers.

10.2 Another factor, related to systematic work in the area of volunteering, is the competence of the person dealing with volunteers. Organizations involved in voluntary activities are of the view that competent coordinators/managers would help to solve the majority of problems related to the management of voluntary activities and think that it would be useful to organize more training, seminars or courses in which effective<sup>23</sup> planning of activity and performance would be taught<sup>23</sup>.

10.3 No training system for volunteers has been established in Lithuania. As mentioned above, training related to volunteer management is mostly provided by umbrella organizations for their own members. Other organizations that are not members of a regional or national organisation receive such training much less frequently, although it does exist. For example, in November 2011 PO *Social Partners* organised two seminars, for all voluntary organisations wishing to attend, on improving expertise on the management of volunteers and on how to seek financial assistance.

10.4 Higher education institutions could be involved in ensuring that systematic and accessible courses are provided for volunteers. D.Lukošiūnienė, the head of the *University Studies Division* at the *Ministry of Education and Science*, states that universities could put together formal and informal training or other courses for raising the qualifications of volunteers and volunteering organisers. One way in which this activity could be financed would be the writing up of projects, although only partial financing is obtained for most of them. Universities should therefore invest some of their own budget. Their unwillingness to do so probably explains their limited involvement.

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<sup>23</sup> Based on data from the questionnaire survey on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

10.5 Higher education institutions have not been included in the Lithuanian Government's plans for the development of voluntary activities. Staff working in the *Community Affairs Division* at the *Ministry of Social Security and Work* give priority to the training of volunteers and volunteering organisers in those organisations that already have experience in organising voluntary work. Their view is that it is higher education institutions that should take the initiative (e.g. in 2011 in the competition for the funding of training of volunteering organisers, only voluntary organizations took part)<sup>24</sup>.

## 11. Cooperation between voluntary organizations

11.1 Cooperation between voluntary organizations can be encouraged by the following means:

- By their joining up into regional and national organizations;
- By establishing centres for voluntary organizations (which would support voluntary organizations and those wishing to volunteer);
- By expanding networks of organizations, creating forums and other ways of sharing good practice<sup>25</sup>.

11.2 At the national level, most often organizations are associated based on their occupation sector. For instance, the *Association of Education of Adults in Lithuania* unites 75 individuals and 41 collective members for educating society, the life-long learning attitude and for developing continuous learning opportunities.

11.3 In December 2009, at the initiative of the *NGO Information and Assistance Centre*, the main active national NGO associations in Lithuania signed a cooperation agreement. The NGO Coalition consists of:

- *The NGO Information and Assistance Centre;*
- *The Coalition of Environmental NGOs;*
- *The Association of Cultural Organizations MENOrama;*
- *The Coalition „I can live”;*
- *The Council of Lithuanian Youth Organizations;*
- *The Lithuanian Disabled Persons' Forum;*
- *The Lithuanian Adult Education Association;*
- *The Lithuanian women's lobby organization;*
- *The National Anti-poverty network;*
- *The Platform of Non-government Development Organizations;*
- *The National Confederation of Consumers;*
- *The Confederation of children's NGOs;*
- *The Economic Information Forum;*
- *The Association of Lithuanian Local Community Organizations.*

The aim of the *NGO Coalition* is to strengthen the third sector and to represent its interests in state institutions. The coalition appoints its own representatives to working groups in ministries, and has formed four working groups:

- legal framework,
- structural funds and international assistance,
- taxation, and
- improvement of communications.

15-20 meetings of the coalition are arranged each year.

<sup>24</sup> Based on an interview conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>25</sup> Based on data from the questionnaire survey on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

11.4 The *Alliance of Voluntary Organizations* was founded for non-formal communication between individuals engaged in and/or interested in voluntary work. The Alliance, active in the social network *Facebook*, facilitates the discussion of the possibilities of promoting and developing volunteering as well as the sharing of information and ideas.

11.5 Voluntary organizations data bases are one of the ways for organizations to find each other and for people interested in volunteering to find them. In Lithuania several websites (cv.lt/savanorystė; būk-savanoris.lt; savanoriaujam.lt) are designed where voluntary organizations can put information about themselves and publish advertisements to search for new volunteers.

11.6 At a regional level, umbrella organizations, which associate organizations from similar sectors, exist as well, such as the *Round tables* which consist of the youth or those working with youth organizations on a city scale. In addition, NGO centres were established in the larger Lithuanian towns, but there are only three active at present (in Šiauliai, Alytus and Panevėžys). Vilnius and Kaunas have the largest numbers of NGOs (30% and 20% respectively<sup>26</sup>) but no such centres. According to Martinas Zaltauskas (*NGO Information and Assistance Centre*), the reason the centres closed was because of the complicated way they were maintained: international funds for financing them came to an end, and Government policy does not provide for their financial support.<sup>27</sup> The closure of the centres led to the cessation of the *NGO Centre Network*, set up by the *NGO Information and Assistance Centre*.

11.7 Although successful examples of the coming together of organizations can be found in Lithuania, in the opinion of some organizations, wider collaboration still is needed. Organizations state that it would be useful to have more events and create various forums for intercommunication, sharing experience and searching for common goals.

## 12. The attitude of society: creation of a positive image of volunteering

12.1 In 2011 considerable efforts were made to publicise volunteering. A number of campaigns to encourage volunteering were set up on the initiative of the European Commission<sup>28</sup>:

- Presentations of voluntary activities were arranged (e.g., presentations of voluntary organizations during the European Days events in 30 Lithuanian towns);
- A volunteer's anthem was composed;
- *Be a volunteer – change the world* was published;
- 5 short films made, in which well-known Lithuanians encourage volunteering;
- A competition was held for the best short films on volunteering ;
- A page in the social network Facebook was set up which enabled people wishing to volunteer to find a suitable organization (54 organisations registered , with 486 users);
- Awards ceremonies for volunteers were held (the best volunteers taking part in the project were chosen).

12.2 In the same year, innovations appeared:

- a new section in one of the largest news websites *www.delfi.lt* was introduced devoted to news relating to volunteering;

<sup>26</sup> „Factus dominus“ research presentation on the NGO sector in the NGO Affairs Coordination Committee's expanded meeting (26 January 2012);

<sup>27</sup> Based on an interview conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>28</sup> Seimas Conference „*Encouraging Volunteering and assistance to voluntary organizations*“ (30 November 2011);

- a television show “Volunteers‘ Bureau” was transmitted explaining some of the ideas underlying volunteering.

European basketball championship organized in Lithuania also had an impact on promoting volunteering: approximately 2,000 volunteers were participating in this championship. Moreover, attention was drawn to people of senior age volunteering: voluntary work was promoted through discussions and seminars.

12.3 In 2011 the sudden increase in the attention paid to volunteering had some negative consequences: volunteering came to be seen as fashionable. *A.C.Patria* thought that there was insufficient informed discussion about volunteering that would assist in creating a positive image of volunteers.

12.4 In making volunteering more popular, better ways of doing this should be considered. *The Association of Kaunas Youth Organisations (Round Table)* thinks that new and non-traditional approaches should be considered, as traditional methods such as conferences and talks are not effective.

12.5 In seeking to form a positive attitude towards voluntary activities, regard should be paid to the differing ages and social status of the following groups:

12.5.1 Pupils and students. The ideas underlying volunteering should be disseminated from childhood, more general education schools should be implemented, and parent-children voluntary activities should be organised. Higher education institutions can create positive attitudes to unpaid activity, by informing the student community about volunteering and encouraging participation. For example, students at *Vytautas Magnus University* and *Siauliai University* volunteer in university activities (e.g. in the *Communication Department*); *Voluntary Centre* started to work in *Siauliai University* from 2011; students studying for the social work bachelor’s degree at *Mykolas Riomeris University* study “Voluntary social work” as part of course; at the *University of Klaipeda* there is a course entitled “Volunteering as part of social development”. Dealing with volunteering in lectures or the encouragement of volunteering depends on the attitude of a university and its lecturers, as no common guidelines exist.

12.5.2 Older people. Young people seeks to achieve new experience and knowledge from volunteering, whereas the sharing their own experience and the sense of giving through helping others is more important for older people. These differences stress the necessity of giving tailored attention to different age group when promoting voluntary activities: the precise benefits for these individuals should be highlighted. In 2011 various seminars were organized in order to introduce volunteering possibilities for older people. It would be useful to have more such seminars. One more aspect is the creation of a good environment for volunteering at work. This would promote wider engagement in voluntary work and decrease the shock brought about by their changed circumstances.

12.5.3 Job seekers. The social group which is least engaged in voluntary activities consists of the unemployed. The job market is a forum within which information about volunteering could be included. Persons seeking jobs should be encouraged to use their period of unemployment productively by doing some volunteering. This would assist a person’s development and assist in the acquisition of professionally useful skills. It is also important that knowledge and/or skills acquired by volunteering should be publicly recognised and accepted as work experience. The job search website [www.cv.lt](http://www.cv.lt) encourages such recognition and includes a section on voluntary activities. At the beginning of 2011 there were 140 voluntary organizations registered on the website and 1,200 completed volunteering questionnaires. Some Lithuanian enterprises are of the view that a job seeker with volunteering experience should be treated preferentially for some,

though not all, vacancies<sup>29</sup>. The skills gained by a volunteer that are listed in an official document (e.g., the *Youth Pass*) should be more widely recognised.

### 13. The financial situation and business sector involvement in voluntary activity

13.1 Volunteering organisers receive funding for the development of volunteering activities from the following sources: the national budget through projects, EU funding, donors, support from charities, membership fees, charges for services provided, and 2% income tax assistance. Shortage of funds is a frequent problem and voluntary organisations state that they do not know enough about effectively seeking funds<sup>30</sup>. R.Guogis is of the view that if information about potential sources of funding and about the relevant legal provisions were to be found in one place, this would make it easier for organizations to operate<sup>31</sup>. Training on such topics would be beneficial as well.

13.2 Cooperation between business and voluntary organizations is not widespread in Lithuania, though there do exist projects and one-off initiatives promoting cooperation. The *United Nations Development Programme* in Lithuania promotes the engagement of NGOs by developing social responsibility in the business sector<sup>32</sup>. The *United Nations Development Programme* deals with 22 NGO-business partnership initiatives in the following fields: environmental protection, relations within the workplace, the integration of business into society, encouragement of social responsibility by businesses and of volunteering, human rights, anti-corruption and transparency in business.

13.3 Businesses have a significant part to play in the development of voluntary activities. *TEO LT* is one of most active enterprises promoting volunteering: it published a booklet about volunteering, supports various voluntary initiatives and employees are encouraged to get involved in voluntary activities (in 2010 a corporate volunteering day was announced, financed by the employer). In 2010 it was one of three companies given an award for social responsibility. However, there are not many examples of active business enterprises, contributing to the development of volunteering. According to research conducted in 2010, only 26% respondents stated that initiatives to encourage volunteering had been taken by their employer or teaching institution or that there were paid days off for volunteering<sup>33</sup>.

13.4 In general the promotion of business organizations' social responsibility, the initiation of closer voluntary and business organizations relationships, the development of voluntary work as a part of a career path, the creation of appropriate environment for volunteering at the workplace would help in strengthen voluntary work.

### 14. Plans by the Lithuanian Government to develop volunteering activity

14.1 The aim of the *Non-government Sector Development Programme 2011-2013*, confirmed by the *Ministry of Social Security and Work* is to provide conditions for the long-term development of the NGO sector. Many of the objectives of the programme were implemented in 2011, and the following are planned for 2012-2013:

<sup>29</sup> See:<http://www.cv.lt/volunteering/viewArticle.do?id=ebb85b34-b645-4fbe-9cdb-dbb67d357ce1>;

<sup>30</sup> Based on data from the questionnaire survey on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011;

<sup>31</sup> The Seimas conference "*Encouragement of volunteering and assistance to voluntary organizations*" (30 November 2011);

<sup>32</sup> See:<http://www.undp.lt/>;

<sup>33</sup> See:<http://www.sic.lt/index.php/lt/nv/pranesimai/savanoryste-lietuvoje>;

14.1.1 By means of a competition, to select an NGO to develop and to maintain a specialised NGO information web page (in 2012, and 2013);

14.1.2 By means of a competition, to select an NGO that would organise an annual national NGO forum where representatives could share experiences on best practice on cooperation and discuss current policy issues on NGO development (in 2013);

14.1.3 By means of a competition, to provide partial funding to regional NGOs engaged in the areas of the organisation of voluntary activities and information (in 2012, 2013).

14.1.4 A member of staff in the *Community Affairs Division* of the *Ministry of Social Security and Work* states that, in 2012 a competition for funding was announced for NGOs operating in different regions to provide assistance to people wishing to volunteer and volunteer organisations (on matters such as the taking on of volunteers, how to organise activity, documentation and other relevant matters).

14.2 The EU proclaimed 2012 as the *Year for Active Older Persons and for Solidarity between the Generations*. Accordingly, the following was planned as the programme for “The development of Communities and non-government organisations”:

- To strengthen the influence of NGOs representing older people, implementing a social security policy; and
- To support the activities of NGOs representing older persons.

14.3 The Ministry’s plans also included the support and development of community activity.

14.4 One of the areas expected to be funded is training - to promote social awareness in business, to acquire expertise in the development of social activities and to develop voluntary activities.

14.5 The head of the *Communities Division* A.Kučikas says that in addition to the activities included in the development programmes an emphasis will be placed on the following ways in which voluntary activity should be developed<sup>34</sup>:

14.5.1 Provision of information to society and the creation of a positive attitude towards voluntary activities (e.g., by emphasizing the benefit to society and the economic benefits to the country and by increasing awareness about areas where volunteering can take place);

14.5.2 The development of voluntary activity in a number of areas of public policy (to encourage cooperation between the responsible state institutions and NGO networks);

14.5.3 The establishment of a network of organizations that are developing voluntary activity and improvement of the quality of work of organizations working with volunteers.  
Why is it worthwhile to be a volunteer?

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<sup>34</sup> Seimas conference „*Encouragement of volunteering and assistance to voluntary organizations*“ (30 November 2011);

### 15. Why is it worthwhile to become a volunteer?

*“A volunteer is a person who approaches another person in a totally open manner, bows down and remains with him. Providing assistance as a volunteer is unique as it is a gift to the volunteer himself and not to what is performed: not the time saved, but the hours of one’s own life, not the warmth of the hands of a stranger, but the beating of one’s own heart; nestling up not to shallow hope and comforting words, but demonstrating to oneself the embodied Face of Hope” – priest R.Doveika.<sup>35</sup>*

15.1 Volunteering is valuable both to society and to a person, engaged in it. Voluntary organisations have mentioned many benefits derived from volunteering<sup>36</sup>:

- A volunteer acquires specialised knowledge and competences that are needed for professional development. For example, volunteering in *Youth line* helps to develop psychological counselling skills.
- A volunteer acquires skills and competencies that are needed in everyday life, such as organising skills, time management, team working, effective communication skills, creativity etc.
- Volunteering gives a person an opportunity to test himself and for self-realisation. Some areas of volunteering can serve as a major personal challenge. For example, assisting a person who is seriously ill forces one to think about the meaning of life, and to ask oneself “uncomfortable” questions, but encourages personal growth.

Thus, volunteering is a beneficial activity, which allows people to feel useful and to give meaning to their free time.

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<sup>35</sup> See:[http://www.teo.lt/gallery/Dokumentai/Naujienu%20paveikslai/2009/Kas\\_kaip\\_kur.pdf](http://www.teo.lt/gallery/Dokumentai/Naujienu%20paveikslai/2009/Kas_kaip_kur.pdf);

<sup>36</sup> Based on data from the questionnaire survey on voluntary organizations conducted by the author in 2011.