

Philanthropie Aktuell

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers



The European Year of Volunteering 2011 is coming to a close. In Switzerland, volunteering was the topic of several conferences and numerous articles. Thus, one of the fundamental targets

of the national organizers has been met: to make the social relevance of volunteering visible.

At events such as the European University for Voluntary Service, held in Basel in September, it became clear just how versatile and complex volunteering is. Democratic and technological change have led to new forms of volunteering that also address newly emerging needs in society. Latest by now, volunteering has turned from a supplier's market to a market of demand. Thus, volunteers choose and decide on their civic engagement independently from existing structures and given frameworks. As a consequence, nonprofits are facing the challenge to carefully manage their access to the human capital resource of volunteers.

This edition of «Philanthropie Aktuell» offers you interesting food for thought on a modern and professional volunteer management.

Enjoy reading our newsletter!

Sincerely, Georg von Schnurbein

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Five assumptions about volunteering

The European Year of Volunteering 2011 aims at raising the awareness of the value and importance of volunteering and, thus, to improve the recognition of volunteering. The media frequently reported on it. In the following, Sibylle Studer, scientific researcher at CEPS, makes five assumptions that shed light on less frequently discussed issues of volunteering.

Volunteers constitute an ephemeral resource

Buzzwords like the «competition for volunteers» imply that there is a clearly defined demand and supply on the volunteer market, along the lines of the (paid) labour market. While volunteering is neither pressured by having to earn one's living, nor by complying with contracts, the willingness to volunteer constantly fluctuates, depending on individual motivation, assignment and life situation. A new work area can potentially activate an underlying willingness to volunteer. During a volunteer assignment, interests and expectations can change, these conditions need to be transformed into new forms of volunteering. A bad volunteering work experience can extinguish commitment and the willingness to volunteer. If volunteers are understood as an ephemeral resource that is constantly changing and regenerating itself, we need a more sustainable handling of volunteers. Agencies providing super-organisational matching of volunteers and assignments such as Benevol (Swiss umbrella association for voluntary organizations) and the forum freiwilligenarbeit (national forum on volunteer work) support this development.

Volunteering is a luxurious commodity

Historically, volunteering was left to those well-off. Statistics show that also today, it is the people from social fringe

groups that volunteer the least. Under the pressing demand for professionalization, NPO preferably search for volunteers with high educational levels, broad networks, as well as with high levels of mobility and time availability. If volunteering is to be perceived as a value that should be accessible to all, inclusive organisational forms for volunteer commitment that are needed that are able to integrate people from different backgrounds, equipped with different resources.

Volunteering can also have negative effects

In contrast to the often lamented unreliability of volunteers, volunteers often tend to over-identify with an (unattainable) goal. Until today it is a taboo to talk about the burnout of volunteers. Equally rarely the «release» of volunteers is talked about, e.g. when necessary quality standards are not met and people may end up being put at risk. A constructive discussion on the negative effects of volunteering is needed to improve negotiations on how the benefits of volunteering should be distributed between volunteers, NPO, clients and the society at large.

Volunteering creates meaning

The «new volunteers» search for personal development in their commitment. It is criticized that this leads to conflicts of interests between volunteers and the NPO. A more positive view is expressed

concerning the fact that volunteers experience «meaningfulness» in their work. The search for an activity that «makes sense» contributes to the common debate about societal values. Due to the potential for the creation of meaning and for awareness-raising on values, volunteering will not die out – as some fear it happening due to individualization of society.

New forms of organisation are on the rise

The traditional volunteering in bureaucratic organizations driven by a «duty to help» might be on the decline, but new forms of volunteering are cropping up. One of the most impressive examples is

Wikipedia, a «virtual community», made up of more than a million people that have contributed in a self-regulated manner to realize its vision. Exciting, participatory, netlike – these are the buzzwords of future volunteering. Some organisations

FACTBOX

Microvolunteering is made possible by nonprofit initiatives collaborating on internet platforms or via mobile telephone providers, thus, offering tasks that can be dealt with in just a few minutes, e.g. translations. **Whoever wants to volunteer can do so via a mouse click in a minimum of time.** www.sparked.com

have reacted to this movement by offers such as microvolunteering (see Factbox). It remains challenging to cover all areas of voluntary service in an adequate way – also the ones requiring long-term engagement.

Sibylle Studer

Further Readings:

J.L. and L.C.P.M. Meijs, It Ain't Natural: Toward a New (Natural) Resource Conceptualization for Volunteer Management. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 2009. 38(4): p. 564-581.

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Schumacher, B. (2010). *Freiwillig verpflichtet: Gemeinnütziges Denken und Handeln in der Schweiz seit 1800*, Zürich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Wehner, T., Mieg, H. & Güntert, S. (2006). *Frei-gemeinnützige Arbeit: Einschätzungen und Befunde aus arbeits- und organisationspsychologischer Perspektive*, in: Mühlfordt, S. & Richter, P., *Ehrenamt und Erwerbsarbeit München: Hampp*, 19-39

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY UNIVERSITY BASEL

In the context of the European Year of Volunteering, the sixth European University on Voluntary Service (EUV) took place in Basel between August 31st and September 3rd. The EUV explored the issue of «Volunteer work, between freedom and professionalism».

Approximately 500 persons in total, coming from the areas of research, politics, NPO and volunteers themselves participated in the different events. The participants originated from ten European countries; one researcher even made her way from New Zealand.

A mixture of practical examples, theoretical considerations, empirical analysis and case studies created a vivid exchange between theory and practice. In order to bring the University figuratively out into the wider population, a «city session», open to the public, was organised in the center of the old town of Basel and transmitted live on radio. In addition, a conference volume will be published in 2012 that will present the state of the art on the topic of volunteering.

During the presentations and discussions some general tendencies could be detected. First of all, volunteering is strongly bound to «having fun» nowadays. Theory and practice are both asked to sustain this joyfulness by providing an appropriate framework for volunteering. NPO are faced with the challenge to find a balance between the qualification of volunteers and to flexibly respond to a volunteer's wishes for personal development and to make a difference. The best

practices presented at the EUV support NPO in this endeavor.



Lively discussion at the opening ceremony of the EUV

Furthermore, regional differences became apparent in the way volunteering is lived, structured and supported. Apart from the cultural factors, the prevailing understanding of which role the state should play in the social service delivery has an influence on the regional specificities of volunteer work.

While the first days of the EUV were dedicated to scientific debates, the last day was fully reserved for the volunteers of the Triregio at the borders of Germany, France and Switzerland. A varied program of keynotes, workshops and a festive event provided the participants with a space for an exchange on their own activities.

CEPS INSIGHT

Research Awarded

At the annual conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), which took place from 17–19 November in Toronto, Canada, a research project from the CEPS was honored with the Best Poster Award. The study «Governance of Grant-making Foundations» by Steffen Bethmann, Georg von Schnurbein and Sibylle Studer examines the compliance of good governance practices and governance patterns within grant-making foundations.

Positive Evaluation

After being three years in operation, the CEPS has undergone an extensive scientific evaluation. The rector's office of the University Basel and SwissFoundations as initiator of the CEPS came to a very positive verdict and decided to support the CEPS without reservation until the end of the five year start-up funding period.

Successful Bachelor Degree

Sara Stühlinger, student research assistant at the CEPS, completed her Bachelor of Arts in Business and Economics in spring. With the beginning of the fall semester 2011, Sara went on to do the interdisciplinary Masters of Sustainable Development.

New Staff Members

Jonas Kipfer and Lucas Rizzo-Arrivillaga were employed, which strengthens the CEPS' legal competence. Mr. Rizzo-Arrivillaga studied law at the faculty of law of the University Belgrano in Argentina. Jonas Kipfer is a master's student of law at the University Basel.

Volunteering and the Big Society

David Cameron and the conservative party put the idea of a «Big Society» at the centre of their policy making. The CEPS speaks with Colin Rochester about the implication of the Big Society for volunteering in the United Kingdom.

CEPS: Which roles do volunteers play in the provision of social service in the UK?

C.R.: In the past, volunteers played a wide variety of roles across the field of social welfare but during the past twenty years their involvement has been under threat. Social policy has increasingly focused on the welfare of the most vulnerable and those needing the most intensive forms of care which are seen to require professional staff. It has become more and more difficult to attract funding for the kinds of provision in which volunteers were heavily involved – such as lunch clubs for older people, adventure playgrounds, youth clubs and other services for young people, and groups for parents and their young children. Organizations are also reluctant to rely on volunteers to provide services delivered under contract with local government agencies. At the same time, informal volunteering which includes helping friends and neighbours in need and thus reduces the pressure on public services appears to be diminishing.



Colin Rochester
Colin has been involved in voluntary action for more than forty years as practitioner, manager and trustee. He has written extensively on volunteering and the voluntary and community sector for both academic and practitioner audiences. Among many other positions he currently is a Honorary Research Fellow at Birbeck College, University of London.

CEPS: The concept of the Big Society wants to strengthen civic engagement. Is that happening?

C.R.: Not to any great degree. The Government believes that cutting state provision and giving people the right to challenge local authorities will automatically lead to greater involvement but this seems to me to be based on ideology rather than evidence. Civic engagement and volunteering flourish when the state is strong enough to promote them. And the Coalition government's policies are contradictory: they want to see more volunteering but it is increasingly difficult

for small groups like local branches of the scouts and guides to find places to meet which they can afford because they are being asked to pay market rents for the use of public buildings like schools. The great majority of involvement in various kinds of pro-social behaviour is undertaken by a small minority of the population and this does not appear to be changing. And growing distrust of government's ability to manage the economy and maintain employment is more likely to fuel apathy than engagement.

CEPS: Due to the cost cuts many non-profit organizations cannot pay staff. Can volunteers fill the gap?

C.R.: The first area in which this has become a matter for public debate is about the extent to which volunteers can keep open public libraries which would otherwise be closed because of the cuts. Many people think it will not work unless they receive some professional and financial support. A more important development, however, is that many volunteers are being «made redundant» because there is no funding for the paid staff that support and organize their activities.

CEPS: If the implementation is not right, is the general idea of the Big Society a good one?

C.R.: Opposing the idea is a bit like being against motherhood and apple pie and it is important to note that the previous Labour government also tried to promote greater civic engagement and more volunteering. But it is difficult to see how it can work as a «top-down» policy initiated by government rather than a popular movement «from below».

CEPS: What could the government do to strengthen volunteering (instead)?

C.R.: The single most useful contribution that government could make would be to provide adequate and secure funding for the network of local volunteer centres. The current provision is patchy and uneven while even the minority which have been adequately funded are in a precarious position. Governments are too fond of launching new national initiatives rather than building on the often

excellent work being undertaken at local level.

CEPS: How will the future of volunteering in the UK look like? What will be the driving forces?

C.R.: I am pessimistic about the immediate future for volunteering in England. (There are significant differences between what is happening there and the situation in the devolved administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.) There is evidence that the rates of involvement have begun to fall and would expect that trend to continue (although we will not be able to measure it because the Coalition has cancelled the Citizenship Survey which provided the evidence about volunteering and civic participation). Experience suggests that volunteering falls as unemployment rises and growing anger as the cuts begin to bite will not motivate people to volunteer in the conventional ways. Where there might be an increase in activity it will be in informal volunteering – as people take greater care of their neighbours and friends in need – and in campaigning activities aimed at changing government policies and priorities.

CEPS: Thanks!

NEWS

BERN Resolution Passed

On 11 November, the Peoples Assembly of Volunteers passed the resolution with the wording: «The state should support and encourage voluntary and honorary work of its citizens as part of civil society and create the appropriate framework to this end». The resolution was handed to the President of the Council of States.

www.freiwilligenjahr2011.ch

ZÜRICH New Online Platform by Socontial

The social enterprise Socontial has launched a new web platform with the name sosense.org. Donors looking to support innovative social enterprises can screen and choose them online.

www.sosense.org

THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING IN SWITZERLAND

Denise Moser, president of the forum freiwilligenarbeit.ch, looks back at the aims and activities of the European Year of Volunteering in Switzerland.

Among the aims of the European Year of Volunteering were the demonstration of the significance of volunteering for society as well as optimizing the recognition of volunteer engagement.

The national committee, a public private partnership, took on these objectives also for Switzerland on a national level. The activities for the Year of Volunteering were put under the guiding theme «engaged.voluntarily.». The theme became the label for the Swiss Year of Volunteering and a rubber stamp in all four national languages was produced and distributed to everybody interested. This way, the year 2011 was quite literally stamped to be the national Year of Volunteering.

On 4 December 2010, the Year of Volunteering – in the presence of the new elected president of the national council – was solemnly declared open in a ceremonial act at the town hall in Bern preceded by a speech in front of the parliament building. The website www.freiwilligenjahr2011.ch was established as a platform for general information and offering an agenda for local events. The platform was visited 4.300 times per month. A newsletter provided monthly information on current events and planned activities.

The final national celebrations of the Year of Volunteering 2011 in Switzerland were organized on 11/11/11 by the Volunteering People's Assembly in the PostFinance Arena in Bern. Dr. Michael Reiterer, EU-Ambassador in Switzerland, opened the event with a welcome speech. After lively discussions under the direction of Markus Notter, the nearly 200 attendees passed a resolution. It requests the government agency to support voluntary and honorary engagement of citizens in the context of civil society and to develop an appropriate framework. The resolution was handed to the President of the Council of States, Dr. Hansheiri Inderkum, for the attention of the parliament.

We have achieved the aims of the Year of Volunteering. The topics volunteer work and honorary office were omnipresent throughout the entire year. Volunteers were portrayed and their efforts were shown. The Label «engaged.voluntarily.» appeared everywhere and will almost certainly live on beyond the year 2011. An official recognition of voluntary engagement was expressed throughout Switzerland in multifaceted ways. I agree with the President of the National Council, Jean-René Germanier. In his opening speech in December 2010, he called volunteers «the sealant that welds society together» and that Switzerland needed them more than ever. In contrast to this, the newest results of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office show a massive decline in commitment when there is an increasing need for volunteers.

What can be done to counteract or invert this downward trend? There is no panacea. Innovation, different ways of thinking and new concepts on how to get commitment for cooperation are needed. The public authorities are required to build good frameworks and reduce barriers to enable volunteer work. This is the only way we stand a chance.

Denise Moser

Did you know?

2'400'000

The Federal Office of Statistics has published a study on volunteerism in Switzerland. Observations show that 2.4 million people are formally or informally voluntarily engaged. A tendency of decline can be observed.

www.bfs.admin.ch

CALENDER

CEPS ADVANCED STUDIES

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Philanthropy in the Morning

«Calculating a Social Return on Investment (SROI)»
February 9, 2012, WWZ, Uni Basel

Intensive-Course Foundation Management

March 19 - 23, 2012, Sigriswil

CAS Governance & Leadership

Module 1: Strategic Management
May 7 - 11, 2012, Sigriswil

Module 2: Leadership
June 4 - 6, 2012, WWZ, Uni Basel

Module 3: Organisation
June 25 - 28, 2012, WWZ, Uni Basel

OTHER DATES

**German Fundraising Association
German Fundraising Congress**
April 18 - 20, 2012, Berlin, Germany

**10. Internationale NPO-
Research Colloquium
Performance Management in Nonprofit-Organisations**
March 29 - 30, 2012, Uni Fribourg

**2. Zurich Day of Foundation Law
Stiften und Gestalten - Requirements
for a contemporary legal environment**
June 15, 2012, Uni Zürich

**ISTR Conference
Democratization, Marketization, and
the Third Sector**
July 10 - 13, 2012, Siena, Italien

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